

## **C**hapter 9 Subject to English Part 2 – English as an expression of the self

In Chapter 8 I focussed on two subject positions which had strong continuities with approaches to education that had been established in the nineteenth century in South Australia through the ways in which they emphasised education as an initiation into a particular culture. In this chapter, I consider two subject positions which represent a clear break with what had come before. The focus for these subjectivities was less on the view of the world the child was to take from the study of English, and more on the nature of the relationship the older child was to have with English as a means of shaping herself or himself as learner and future citizen. Another way to characterise this is to say that there is a shift here from a curriculum focus on the *what* to the *who* of English. I begin by examining the older child as a meaningful and expressive language user and then move on to discuss the older child as a desiring and free learner. As with the other older child subjects I explored in the previous chapter, these subjectivities are not positions that can be confined to a particular curriculum document or period, but which are best seen as ways of thinking about the education of the older child that were foregrounded at different times and in different ways over the period of my study.

### **9.1 The older child as meaningful and expressive language user**

As a meaningful language user, the older child was an ‘active’ and ‘expressive’ member of the class, and someone who, to an extent at least, was the *author* of written and spoken texts. In some ways this can be seen as a reaction against the perspectives on English associated with Faculty Psychology and Liberal Education approaches and a taking up of the discourse of the New Education. However, as I argue in this section, this view of English can also be seen to grow out of Liberal Education discourses and to maintain some important continuities with it, such as the grammatical emphasis on rule-based learning and correctness. The discourse of Social Efficiency can also be seen to be deployed within this perspective on English through its focus on the everyday and the practical application of reading, writing and speech in the ‘real’, especially in connection with the older child’s transition into work. In what follows, I describe the way the older child was ideally seen and the English teaching technologies that were deployed in constituting this subject.

### 9.1.1 The older child as meaning maker

In Chapter 8.2, I have already noted the emphasis on the ideal of the 'older child with taste' that was prominent in the first decade of the century. At the same time, and established in opposition to this view of English, especially the drill and memorisation emphases of Faculty Psychology, there was a strong push for bringing 'understanding' and 'meaning' into the English subjects. This was certainly evident in some Inspectors' comments that there was more to reading than correct oral performance and fluency, and that understanding should also be aimed at. As is shown by Inspector Neale's comments, this was seen as especially important in the upper classes where extended reading was both desirable and possible:

From the very first stages we need, then, to make thinking prominent. In our lower classes the absence of a sufficient quantity to read has tended to produce only the mechanical side of reading. In the upper classes this tendency has been counteracted by the *Children's Hour*. Still more is wanted. The best literature, history, geography, and science, as material for thought, should be presented in additional reading-books... (Insp. Neale 1902 *EG*, p.113)

The main objection of the Inspectors was to the traditional emphasis on verbal accuracy gained through constant repetition and 'simultaneous' reading. The result of this, according to Inspector Maughan (1903 *EG*, p.160), was 'a dull uniform flow of words, almost as incomprehensible to the reader as to the hearer'. What was required, he noted, was a focus on 'thinking the thoughts' and 'expressing the ideas' even, in what must have seemed a radical statement, 'at the risk of trifling verbal errors' (p.160). In these early years of the century, it should be noted, the focus on meaning was very much built around constructions of reading as oral performance. One of the problems that the Inspectors were confronting was what today might be called transfer of skills. It was plain that the approaches to teaching reading and writing through drill and memorisation which were dominant in the nineteenth century worked to the extent that a proportion of children could read accurately, at the annual examination, a selection from the reader set for that year. However the question was how this basic training might be the basis for reading where the child engaged with the ideas, rather than simply reproducing the words. Significantly, Social Efficiency discourse had raised similar questions about the transfer between skills learned in school, and those which would be used in the 'after life'. For example, Sir Langdon Bonython, said in 1905:

It is not a question of cultivating the mind of a child, of giving the child or student a certain amount of knowledge, and trusting to the future to bring that knowledge into useful effect... (Bonython 1905 *EG*, p.116)

Such a comment is an example of the way that Social Efficiency discourse required of educators the application of knowledge and skill in the present as a demonstration of its potential utility. Educators evidently struggled to apply this ideal to reading, especially as the technologies of drill, memorisation and analysis were the only ones with which they were familiar in the classroom. This struggle was evident in the following quotation from Walt Whitman, from an article originally published in *School Index*:

... the process of reading is not a half sleep, but in the highest sense, an exercise, a gymnastic struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself *construct* indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay - the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or framework. (Penniman 1912 *EG*, p.208, emphasis added)

There was a hint here of both Faculty Psychology (the 'exercise' and the 'gymnastic struggle') but also something more, which involved readers *constructing* the text for themselves, using the text as only a partial guide and starting point. Through such thinking, the subjectivity required of the reader changed from someone who gathered thoughts and reproduced them as the author intended (a notion of 'thought getting' that was consistently promoted in the definitions of reading found in the *Primary School Course of Instruction* up to 1907), to someone who had to activate that reading and do something with it. This involved 'study of books' according to Inspector McBride:

Reading is the process of arousing certain definite conscious activities, by means of printed language. Study of books is precisely the same process—with added intensity; this added intensity is produced by holding and reflecting upon the thoughts brought into consciousness by means of the printed words. The value of reading depends, primarily, upon the conformity of the thought to the immediate needs of the growth. (Insp. McBride 1907 *EG*, p.234)

This focus on the active construction of meaning was consistently opposed to 'traditional' approaches of memorisation and drill which had been emphasised in Liberal Education approaches to reading (see box 'Memory as a mark of inferiority' on the next page). Eventually, the fact that silent reading overtook oral reading as the key activity for older children after World War I, meant that teachers had to look for new kinds of evidence beyond oral performance that children were doing something meaningful with their reading. The technologies developed included various kinds of record keeping in which children listed titles read, and noted information about the texts. The supplementary reader and the class and school library were important in driving this process, especially by the late 1920s and the introduction of 'class readers', which were multiple copies of supplementary texts for children to read simultaneously and then respond to as a group. Inspector Williams gave a feel for the ideal requirements of such activities:

### **Memory as a mark of inferiority**

*One of the features of the discourse which promoted the child as expressive and as a meaning maker was the way it was set up in opposition to traditional approaches to teaching, especially drill and memory work. In this example from the 1925 Education Gazette (p.116), good memory was set up as a mark of inferiority; as something at which 'inferior races' and women excelled. Good memory was also cast as a marker of ill-health and illiteracy.*

The inferior races of mankind, such as negroes, the Chinese, etc., have more memory than those of a higher type of civilization. Primitive races which were unacquainted with the art of writing had a wonderful memory, and were for ages in the habit of handing down, from one generation to another, a collection of hymns as voluminous as the Bible. Professors of elocution know that women have better memories than men. French women will learn a foreign language quicker than their husbands. Youths have better memories than adults. Memory, if well developed in children, attains its maximum about the fourteenth or fifteenth year, and then decreases. Feeble individuals of a lymphatic temperament have better memory than the strong. Students who obtain prizes for memory and recitation chiefly belong to the former class. ... From a physiological point of view memory is diminished by over-feeding, by physical exercise, and by education, in this sense—that the illiterate have potentially better memories than those who know how to read and write...

*Medical Press and Circular*

In the upper grades, the children are being trained to read for the 'content'; the provision of class readers in all grades should help the teachers to develop this power in their pupils. Some teachers think that they have done all that is possible when their pupils can tell in their own words the stories they have read. A much higher form of self-expression is to develop the powers in the pupils of expressing their own thoughts and feelings on the characters and incidents of the stories read. (Insp. Williams 1927 *EG*, p.183)

It was not surprising that 'some teachers' were satisfied with the test of asking children to retell stories to demonstrate understanding, as this had been a recommendation in the *Course of Instruction* and Inspectors' reports over many years. However, by 1927 even more was required in the form of a personal response—students were to 'express their own thoughts and feelings' on the content of the stories. This was a key point of difference from the emphasis in Chapter 8 which was about received understandings, not making one's own.

This classroom technology of note-taking received attention from a number of

commentators and in the official curriculum materials. In 1907 a completely revised introduction to the Reading subject in the *Course of Instruction* included instruction on 'silent reading lessons' which required students to read individually and to keep their own notes of their reading. This new focus on individual meaning making was both required and made possible by the introduction of supplementary readers and the silent reading lesson. It was especially the focus with the older child (as in the reference to the 'upper classes' in the quotation above) and silent reading and note-taking were seen as opportunities to promote 'concentration of mind and independence of thought' in the older child, as the *Education Gazette* editors said in their review of a new series of books especially published for 'silent readings' in 1912 (p.46). In 1910 (*EG*, pp.35-36), the editors noted in their review of another book on 'learning to read' that the author made a 'radical

suggestion' that silent reading should precede oral, because it was only through the former that meaning could be established. As noted in Chapter 8, oral reading was the key means of teaching reading in the early years but, by the 1920s, silent reading was the dominant mode recommended for the older child. In 1917 the newly elected President of the teachers' union summarised this view and called for a new goal and test for reading in the *Course of Instruction*. He demonstrated the way that meaning—'a grasp of the subject matter'—had become centred in the subjectivity of the older reader:

Just now, great stress is being laid on silent reading, and rightly so. But quite oblivious of the fact that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of men and women derive their pleasure and solace and instruction from silent reading, the test remains the same - To read, with fair fluency and good expression, a certain number of lines from a prescribed book. This may be necessary in the lower grades, but unless the aim is to produce a nation of elocutionists, it surely might be dispensed with in the higher. Moreover, the test is not infallible. A boy may read fluently and with excellent expression, and have but a very hazy idea of the matter read; while another may stumble over his words, forget all about modulating his voice, and have an intelligent grasp of the subject matter ... Let us have silent reading by all means, but let the test be *on* silent reading. (Pres. Bronner 1917 *EG*, p.136, emphasis in the original)

Throughout the 1920s there were many comments in the Inspectors' annual reports on the successes and difficulties associated with managing silent reading, especially the record-keeping aspects of the work. Some of the apparently minor revisions made to the Course of Instruction over time provided evidence of the way in which incorporating silent (or 'free choice') reading into the curriculum was a cause for anxiety. Table 9.1.1 shows four notes that referred to silent reading that were inserted into the course content for the Reading subject between 1914 and 1924.

**Table 9.1.1: Anxieties about silent reading**

1914	Teachers are expected to encourage silent reading.
1916	Silent reading must be largely practised in all classes; in the upper grades it may be made of much value in the preparation of History &c. In this connection the books in the School Library should be often used. The Dictionary should be freely consulted.
1917	In addition, by the end of the year, each child will be expected to have carefully read three books. These may be chosen from the school library, or from any source; the greater the variety the better. From this it follows that the whole grade need not necessarily read the same book. It is hoped the opportunity thus afforded, will give the subject a broader application and allow the teacher a wider field of selection.
1920	Free choice reading from the class library. Each pupil should keep a record of the books he has read.
1924	Free choice reading from the class library <u>under the direct supervision of the teacher</u> . Each pupil should keep a record of the books he has read*.

\* Underlined text shows what was added to the wording of the previous version of the course.

These comments in the *Course of Instruction* show that teacher supervision and child record keeping were emphasised. Teachers were praised for ensuring that children made notes of their responses (for example, Insp. Hosking 1928, p.174). They were sometimes admonished for not carefully reading and supervising these records (for example Insp. Pitt 1928 EG, p.170). In 1927, Inspector Hosking (EG, p.185) suggested that such records 'carefully compiled by the pupil, and corrected by the teacher' were useful written language exercises. He noted that such records included 'reproducing the subject matter of the book' as well as 'interesting scenes in these books'. He also noted with approval that some students recorded a 'decided preference' for some books over others which he saw as 'evidence of their genuine interest in this department of their work'. Here meaning making was evidenced by more than recall and understanding, it also involved 'genuine interest'.

### 9.1.2 Oral and written language—the expressive older child

This new focus on meaning and its production, alongside its recall or reproduction, was even more emphasised in the realms of Oral and Written Language than in Reading. The expressive child had to produce their own meanings through talk and writing. This was not the kind of older child that had been sought in the classroom of the nineteenth century. In those classrooms the emphasis had been on transcription (handwriting produced in 'copybooks' which involved the emulation of correct forms) and on 'clear' and 'correct' speech. The goal was production of correct forms, often from memory as in the case of a poetry recitation. According to Inspector McBride it was common for teachers in Composition lessons to require students to reproduce stories from memory:

I do not think that the habit of reading to classes stories for reproduction is conducive to much mental effort, Occasionally this may be good for testing memory, for practising variety of expression; but when teachers regard it as the be-all and end-all of the teaching of composition, or when no steps are taken to induce children to *express their own ideas* fully, freely, and neatly, there remains much to be desired in the teaching of language. (Insp. McBride 1906 EG, p.252, emphasis in the original)

Here Inspector McBride outlined new requirements for the child in the language lesson—to express their *own* ideas fully and freely (but still neatly). In the official curriculum this was generally to be accomplished through ensuring children had a 'stock of words':

The school seeks to enlarge the child's circle of ideas and at the same time strives to increase his power of expressing them. We think in words, and it is plain, therefore, that to increase the child's power of thinking we must add to his stock of words and his command over them. (Insp. McBride 1907 CI, p.47)

Building words as a basis for expression would become known as ‘vocabulary’ work in the 1920s:

For precise thinking the young writer needs a vocabulary; there are many who cannot think to any purpose because they have so few words to think in; and so the teaching of English should aim always at an increase in the pupil’s vocabulary (Boas 1926 *EG*, p.51)

The responsibility of the teacher involved ensuring that the children felt confident and had enough information at hand in order to be able express themselves. This meant that the teacher had to engage the students’ attention in a subject or idea, ‘excite’ their interest in it, and help them understand it—a process of ‘impression’ that preceded the child’s expression:

Every effort should be made to cultivate the child’s power of expression, but always *and first*, it is necessary to make sure that he has something to express. In other words, care should be taken to see that the *impression* is made before a demand is made for *expression*. (Insp. Cole 1912 *EG*, p.128, emphasis in the original)

In the 1920s an alternative explanation for children’s lack of expression came into use which showed the impact of Developmental discourses on views about learning. This explanation moved the responsibility from the teacher on to the child and labelled some children as ‘backward’. An extract from an article by Professor Adams in the 1925 *Education Gazette* (p.193) noted that the ‘best speakers ... want to speak, they thrust themselves forward’ but that there were ‘poorer speakers’ who were ‘naturally backward’ and had to be ‘prodded into saying anything at all’. A range of guides and technologies were developed for teachers to elicit the kinds of expression which it was assumed all but the most ‘backward’ children could provide (see box for guidance provided by Professor Adams on avoiding ‘speechlessness’). The older child was a target for many of these new classroom technologies, which were aimed at

**Avoiding ‘a state of speechlessness’**

*The child as meaning maker could not be allowed to be seen and not heard. Now all children were required to express themselves actively in the classroom. Professor Adams (1925 EG, p.193) noted that some children were ‘backward’ as speakers and provided advice for teachers to engage these children in active speaking.*

Practical hints for overcoming these difficulties are—

- 1) Depend a good deal on the interest of the subject. Once this is roused, you will find reticent pupils quite eager to get in their word—particularly to correct a trifling error.
- 2) Find the co-efficient of talkativeness of every pupil in your class, and make it a point of conscience to see that every low co-efficient pupil is forced to say something at least four or five times in a lesson. It is fatally easy to allow such pupils to sit through lesson after lesson in a state of speechlessness.
- 3) Get your low co-efficient pupils to do some talking for which they have to make preparation beforehand. The confidence acquired by a sense of special knowledge of the matter with which they have to deal is a great encouragement to easy speech.

them becoming more expressive in writing as well as in speech. In oral language these included the introduction of debates and short talks to the English lesson, and even versions of student government featuring meetings run by the children. In written language it included the writing of essays based on their own words, rather than from teachers' models. There was also a taking up of the New Education ideal of basing talk and writing on the observation of nature—this being a concrete basis of experience from which the children could express themselves. Sometimes reading was used in this way as the basis of preparation for speeches or debates, with the school library and reference books forming a starting point. This use of resources, often across a range of subjects, is discussed further below in relation to the emphasis on more realistic contexts for language use.

Overall, the ideal was that the curriculum and teacher should take as its starting point the *need* for the child to be expressive, bolster that with a focus on topics and issues of interest to the children, and provide contexts in which children would produce their own language. A new kind of subjectivity was required from the teacher who had to move away (literally and figuratively) from the front of the class. The teacher no longer spoke all the time, but discussed issues with children and established contexts in which the children would be expressive. Rather than having the first (and only) word on the subject, the teacher might initiate the topic but allow the children to run with it:

The teacher's share of the conversation is to guide it, to prevent it falling off, to keep it to the subject in hand. It is not that the teacher should be dry, remote, unfriendly; but merely that he should keep himself under such restraint as will give the pupils their chance. (Prof. Adams 1925 *EG*, p.193)

Indeed, this required the teacher to be a listener. According to Professor Adams, the 'successful teacher not only listens to his pupil, but makes it clear that he is listening' (p.193). The teacher here was moved to a more responsive mode, having the last rather than the first word, which was as much an evaluation of the expressiveness of the children as it was of the content of the language:

Teachers should encourage the students and show them how to use the reference library. Probably the best use is made in preparation for a school debate, which is conducted once a week. Sides are chosen and a chairman appointed, whilst the teacher looks on and finally gives his opinion as to the merits, matter etc. of the debaters. (Insp. Fairweather 1929 *EG*, p.73)

This concept of the teacher taking more of a facilitative role was matched by an emphasis on children being seen as individuals rather than as a class. There were attacks on

'simultaneous' teaching (such as a class reading, reciting or answering in unison) and encouragement for children to talk 'individually', for 'collective answering or collective repetition of the words of the teacher ... is an actual hindrance to development of genuine thought and free expression' (Board of Education for England 1908 *EG*, p.278). Thus the expressive older child worked independently, operated as an individual within the English classroom, and was an active constructor of meaning rather than a passive receptacle for it.

### 9.1.3 English in the realm of the 'real'

Closely related to the discussion above about the older child as meaning maker and as 'expressive', was a move to make the study of English (as a set of subjects and as 'mother tongue') more connected to 'real' life. An early version of this move was the Herbartian concept of 'correlation' of subjects—an approach promoted as part of the New Education which involved incorporating a range of subjects into work that 'interested' children and provided the basis for expression. Inspector Neale (1902 *EG*, p.112) labelled Literature, History and Geography as the 'subjects of culture' that would be correlated to excite children's interest in the world around them:

We miss the aim of our work if our children leave us without an intense interest in the thoughts of men as recorded in our peerless literature, in Nature and in other lands and her influence there on men, and in the story of how men and institutions came to be what they are. ... The teaching of these subjects is disconnected, superficial, and lacking in *reality*. We now want such a stimulus as would produce a revival of the teachers' interest in them. A complete rearrangement of the curriculum would at once excite interest and involve study of principles, methods, and subjects, especially if the revision was based on a correlation of history and literature with geography and teachers were allowed some choice and freedom. (Insp. Neale 1902 *EG*, p.112, emphasis added)

It is worth noting that Inspector Neale's argument for the correlation of subjects was designed to excite the teachers' interests in the subjects of culture, and that teaching these subjects would require choice and freedom for the teacher to adapt and mould school work around children's interests. English, via its literary elements of reading and poetry, was seen as one of the main means of correlating work along Herbartian lines (see Chapter 7.2.1 for a discussion of Herbartianism in South Australia). Stories and poetry provided ways of bringing to life the history of the empire or nation, or putting children in touch with the natural surroundings that might be studied in Geography. Importantly, the combination of these subjects was seen to be a likely way to engage children's interests and provide them with content which they would want to express through talk or writing. In addition, the introduction of new Drawing and Nature Study curricula in

the early 1900s were seen to add to children's ability to observe and have something concrete to express in the classroom. For example, the following justification by the newly appointed adviser on Nature Study for the inclusion of that subject in the curriculum made the point that it contributed to, and correlated with, the 'expressive subjects' and engendered an active engagement in the child:

The claims of Nature Study to a prominent place in our schools are many and strong. It arouses interest, develops power of observation, self-activity, independence of thought, initiative on the part of the child; it supplies ideas, thereby enlarging the apperceptive groups in the child-mind, and provides its value by making itself strongly felt both in attitude towards school work and an improved standard of excellence. Demanding, as Nature Study does, the teaching of all the expressive subjects, it must be judged not as a formal subject but by its effects upon the attitude of the children towards their work, and upon such subjects as reading, composition, poetry, geography, drawing, and brushwork. (Edquist 1908 *EG*, p.72)

The correlation of the 'expressive' subjects along with the use of Drawing, Observation and Nature Study, was seen to be the basis of a less formal and more 'real' approach to the curriculum in which 'expression' was a key indicator of engagement and learning.

Every lesson should provide full occupation for all the activities of each child: he should, through his own senses gain sense-impressions which he should instantly express in symbols, in writing, in drawing, and in speech. He should then, in the presence of the *real* things, revise and recapitulate his statements and expressions, repeat the same process when the objects are removed, and finally repeat it in the absence of both objects and symbols of expression (Insp. Neale 1903 *EG*, p.138, emphasis added)

This emphasis on the 'real' was also evident in suggestions to teachers of the English subjects to follow Parker's advice to use 'concrete' aids to supplement their instruction. This included the use of the 'chalk-talk' (basically a process of drawing on the blackboard to illustrate a text being read) in the early part of the century (Insp. Nicolle 1912 *EG*, p.39), and using maps, gramophone, pictures and slides as they became available. It was also evident in the advice to teachers to set up reading centres and libraries that provided dictionaries, atlases, encyclopedias and magazines—the last of these would appeal to the 'practical' boys (Insp. Jefferies 1928 *EG*, p.168)—especially for children in the upper classes who were expected to be more active and individual in their reading and writing.

Last of all, there was a concern that the English subjects, particularly writing and speech, should provide an adequate preparation for the older child's life beyond the school. In general, it was recognised that English was important because it was the language of international commerce and, indeed, a number of commentators pointed to the way that the Kaiser had made English compulsory in German schools for this very reason (for

example, Insp. Smyth 1901 *EG*, p.51). Writing, especially, was linked to the world beyond the school through an emphasis on the older child developing a 'bold business hand with freedom and speed' (Insp. Whillas 1904 *EG*, p.145), although the ability to influence others through talk was also occasionally emphasised (Insp. Whitham 1907 *EG*, p.206). Letter writing was introduced into the *Course of Instruction* in 1920 in the subject 'Language (Written)' and connected with the ideal of the older student as expressive:

There should be in the middle and upper schools free composition on current events, based on the child's actual experience. By this, observation as well as expression is encouraged, while if told in the form of a letter, the lesson is serving a twofold purpose, for, of all the forms of composition, letter writing will be the one that will be the most widely used in after life. Every pupil in the upper school should be able to write a thoughtful business letter, correct as to form, spelling, and punctuation; and a friendly letter should be included in the exercises in all divisions of written composition. (1920 *CI*, p.60)

Here the older child's expression was to be channelled into a form that would be useful in the world beyond the school. Overall, this emphasis on correlation of studies and the focus on the use of English in the world beyond the school bolstered the place of the English subjects at the very centre of the school curriculum. The high point of this position was the catchcry of the *Newbolt Report* that 'every teacher is a teacher of English because every teacher is a teacher *in* English' (cited in 1922 *EG*, p.139) which emphasised the use of the language across all subjects. Expression of and through English had become central to the child's place as learner in the whole curriculum.

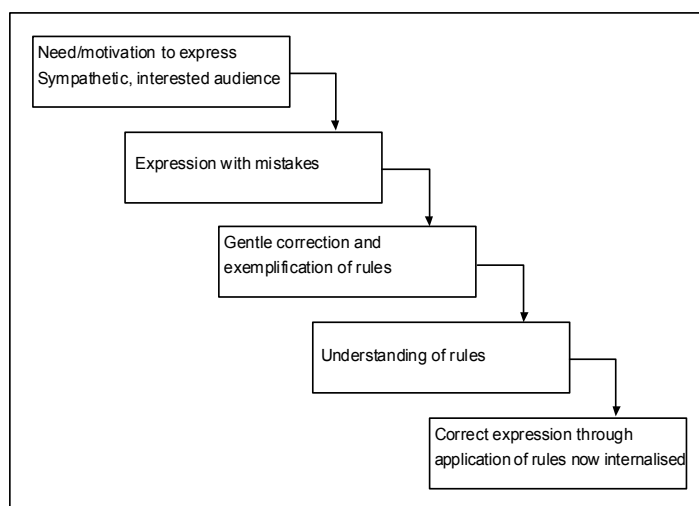
#### **9.1.4 The place of correctness and correction**

The teleology that informed this new requirement for the child to express themselves showed that it did not necessarily mean an abandonment of the focus on correctness and on learning the grammar and rules of the language that was so emphasised for the 'older child with taste' discussed in Chapter 8.2, but more a new way into this process. The learning of grammar remained important, but now it was built on a foundation of the expressive child:

The problem of the teacher of grammar is to show that, in one way or another, the study of grammar will promote the efficiency of expression. If he can do this in such a way that the child will see the connection, grammar will mean something to the pupil, will have a vital relation to his life. It is to this end that the teaching of the mother-tongue attempts first of all to give the child a motive for expression—something to talk about, a sympathetic ear to listen. Improvement in expression may then follow by the gradual correction of mistakes, the imitation of correct forms, and the application of principles gained from the study of grammar. (Bagley 1908 *EG*, p.107)

The ideal, then, was to provide the space for the children to express themselves—the ‘motive’, the sympathetic ear—and then to apply corrective technologies gradually and carefully so that the children would come to see the need for grammar as an aid to clarity<sup>133</sup>. This thinking drove a line of argument about the proper place of grammar and rules in teaching and the role of correction as coming later rather than earlier in a pattern of teaching (see Figure 9.1.4).

**Figure 9.1.4: A pedagogic pattern of expression and correction**



This required a new kind of classroom which provided a space for expression of the child’s meaning in their own words; was tolerant of error (at least at first); and which provided gentle feedback and correction. The teacher had to be sympathetic to the child’s attempts and, above all, patient, in order to wait for the older child to understand and internalise the rules being taught:

Thoughts are more important than mechanical accuracy of expression, and it is a great mistake to interrupt the pupil’s continuity of thought and free flow of language. Correction of the more glaring errors should be made at the conclusion, and these, noted by the teacher, should form subjects for future language lessons. (Introduction to Oral Language subject 1929 *CI*, p.84)

Instruction, or even drill<sup>134</sup>, might still be necessary, according to this advice in the *Course of Instruction*, but it would come later. This was not a teleology that applied just to the concept of a teaching pattern of expression leading to later correction that might run over

<sup>133</sup> This is a version of a pedagogy of kindly supervision and correction, developed in the primary school, that is discussed in Chapter 4.2 (Hunter, 1988; King, 1982; Patterson, 1997b). Interestingly, here it is being used in relation to grammar and not literature.

<sup>134</sup> This instruction from the introduction to the Language (Oral) subject was revised in minor ways in the 1929 *Course of Instruction*. In the earlier, 1924 version, the second sentence read: ‘The corrections should be made at the conclusion, and a note taken of the more glaring errors to be used as subject matter of drills to secure correct language forms’. By 1929, references to ‘drill’ as a classroom technology were rare.

a lesson or series of lessons; it also came to be applied to the child's age. It tended to place the free expression of the child's own ideas and meanings in the early stages of development—the domain of the younger child—while the process of learning the rules and applying them came later and was appropriate to the older child. This was related to two curriculum recommendations: first, that Composition and Grammar should be combined because children needed to be composing text that would later be corrected through grammar<sup>135</sup>; and, second, that the teaching of the formal rules of grammar should be deferred until the child was older and in the higher grades. The editors of the *Education Gazette*, reviewing in 1906 (p.97) new overseas materials being published for the teaching of English, commented on 'the fault of too much attention being given to the teaching of formal grammar, at an age when the pupil's mind is not sufficiently developed to understand the subject, and too little attention being given to training the child to think and express himself clearly and readily'. They praised new books from Edward Arnold in which:

...lessons may be described as a carefully-arranged effort to combine spelling, composition, and grammar so as to teach expression to the lower classes. Formal grammar is omitted in these classes, but is introduced in Classes IV to VI. (1906 *EG*, p.97)

Grammar terminology was not something to 'burden' children with in the lower grades (Insp. McBride 1906 *EG*, p.252) and should be the second half of a pairing with the 'Language' subject. To some, such as Inspector Clark (1901 *EG*, p.49), Grammar should also have been the lesser half of this pair, but they allowed that it should continue to be taught because the University of Adelaide 'insisted' on its incorporation into the public examinations. Indeed, as the state system was geared up in the early years of the twentieth century to teach more older children beyond the Compulsory Certificate, Grammar was more formally assessed via a written examination rather than an oral test from the Inspector each year.

It was clear that this requirement for the children to compose, both in writing and in talk, was seen as an important starting point for the teaching of the rules of grammar and language at all levels. However, this must have required patience from the teacher. For teachers trained in a Liberal Education tradition of close monitoring, instant error

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<sup>135</sup> Note that Composition and Grammar were, in fact, placed together under the heading of 'English' in one version of the *Course of Instruction* in 1885, suggesting that such thinking about the relationship between the two subjects was available in the nineteenth century.

elimination and correct drilling, it would have meant something close to a complete change of professional subjectivity. Inspector Charlton hinted in 1910 that this new teacher subjectivity was not exactly widespread:

Language:- Children are slowly acquiring the facility in expressing their thoughts in writing, and in a few of the schools, I have been much pleased with the essays of the upper children. As a rule, this has happened in schools which contain well-used libraries, and where the teacher himself, resisting temptation to loquacity, encourages the children to do most of the talking during the lessons. (Insp. Charlton 1910 *EG*, p.153)

This combination of a teacher who was more patient and who listened, with the need to introduce rules later rather than sooner, was most obvious in the idea of teaching while the students were writing. Now the teacher had to be guided by the students' understandings when deciding what rules to teach; 'only so much of the grammar is taught as is necessary to make the instruction in composition both clear and useful' (Insp. Smyth 1905 *EG*, p.79). The teacher also had to become more mobile as students' work became more individualised. A good example was the introduction of the silent reading lesson, using supplementary readers. Teachers of the 'upper classes' were told in the introduction to the 1907 *Course of Instruction*:

In the upper classes an occasional lesson, once a week if possible, should be given when each pupil reads for and to himself. A good library would be invaluable for this purpose. With his note-book beside him, the pupil reads and makes notes as he proceeds. The teacher moves about among his class and discusses the notes made by the pupils, to discover what mastery of the subject matter the pupils have obtained. Some teachers may feel that in such procedure they are wasting time, because they are not *doing* enough themselves, but the best school is that in which the pupils learn best to do things well for themselves under the guidance of the teacher. (*CI* 1907 *EG*, p.45, emphasis in the original)

Here the teacher was in different relation to the students—moving to them, listening to them, and engaging in discussion with them—as a basis for deciding what to teach and when to teach it. The rules and grammar were still vital, but emphasised later in the process and as guided by the student.

The perceived need both to incite children to express themselves, and to note and correct errors over time, presented new challenges to the subjectivity of the teacher. Teachers were now required to be more 'conversational' (Nicholson 1921 *EG*, p.195) in their approach to children in the English classroom. Teachers also were not to call the children names or ridicule them for their errors:

He wished the child not to be afraid to tackle a difficult question. But for the development of this quality the child must be treated with tolerance, and consideration, and sympathy. If a child in reply to a question answered wrongly it should not be called a 'silly little goose,' or told it did not think. It should be encouraged to give an answer, though it might be a wrong one. The correction should be gently made. (Chief Insp. Maughan 1906 *EG*, p.78)

This greater tolerance of 'incorrect' forms, along with the belief that there was an ultimately correct form, led to some anxious discussion of the implications for teaching and the curriculum. The *Newbolt Report* raised the issue of children who spoke different (English) dialects and discouraged teachers from suppressing non-standard forms in children's spoken language (1922 *EG*, p.139). The 1920s data also suggested a fascination with children's language errors, with common mispronunciations by school children (such as 'libery' for library) featured in one *Education Gazette* (1928, p.131). Spelling errors were a particular focus of attention, with one report in the *Education Gazette* (1926, p.50) listing more than 150 ways the word 'abattoir' was misspelled in the 1925 Qualifying Certificate examination (after the word was 'inadvertently inserted' in the dictation test). There were also reports of attempts to simplify the spelling system in order to reduce the difficulties it offered students. It was even suggested in more than one place that in English 'the standard of correctness is custom and the common usage of the community' (1925 *EG*, p.75).

One area in which the anxiety about correctness was most evident throughout the first three decades of the century, was in relation to the Australian accent, or 'twang' as it was called. This was a concern common to the child with taste and the child as an English colonial citizen that were described in Chapter 8. In the early part of the century, the goal was an elimination of the accent, as in the following from Chief-Inspector Maughan:

With careful and clear enunciation we may effect an improvement in vowel sounds, and a gradual elimination of the "Australian twang," about which so much has been said and written. I think that considerable progress has already been made in this direction, though there is still much to be done before we can hope that a pure English speech and accent shall be general. (Chief-Insp. Maughan 1907 *EG*, p.204)

Some twenty years later Inspector Jefferies addressed the same point. While the goal of 'cultured' speech remained the same, there was an acceptance that other forms of English were spoken and were even legitimate. However, the classroom was cast as a refined alternative to the 'ungrammatical and poorly enunciated' speech emanating from the home and from children's peer groups and a place where the children had the opportunity to speak 'correctly' (see also box 'Language and correctness' over the page):

Even where oral reading is well done, it is often found that voluntary statements are put together crudely and the language of the playground contains much that is harsh, ungrammatical, and poorly enunciated. This state of affairs is largely attributable to ... the influence of the home and the influence of the crowd, for children dislike being conspicuous in language, as in dress. Almost invariably a child who is asked to remodel an incorrect statement will do so quite readily, showing that it is not a lack of knowledge, but rather carelessness and a desire to be like others that is the root of the trouble. How necessary it is then that the school environment should be strengthened at all points, that the teacher's speech should be cultured though not pedantic, that all reading matter should be of a high standard, that fine phrasing when met in reading lessons should be dwelt upon, that all wrong oral speech should be tactfully corrected, and that much construction work should be done in language lessons... (Insp. Jefferies 1927 EG, p.180)

Here, the teacher was still to be alert for error, but it was to be 'tactfully corrected'. The assumption was that children had the knowledge but did not take the care to speak correctly, and therefore the teacher needed to work hard to help the children to

care. Later in that same year, a guide to pronunciation of words, taken from a book on 'broadcast English' published by the British Broadcast Corporation, was included in the *Education Gazette* (1928, p.287), presumably as another kind of model for both the teachers' and the students' speech.

By the 1920s there was a small number of examples of developmental theories of learning incorporating staged development in evidence in discussion of error. One example of this was work by Cyril Burt on children's spelling errors (1922 EG, pp.221-223) which suggested that the individual's 'orthographic stage' or 'degree of backwardness' should be noted when analysing errors. Other factors to be taken into account included 'special psychological disabilities' and 'neuroses' that might help explain the nature of errors

#### Language and correctness

*The following appears to be a letter to the editor of the New Zealand Herald that was republished in the Education Gazette (1928, p.130) in a regular section called 'From a Teacher's Commonplace Book'. The story and the commentary illustrate the way that what might once have been condemned as 'error' was recast as the language of different environments. Nevertheless, the ideal for language in the classroom was still 'perfect English'.*

A school inspector visiting a London school met a boy hurrying out. Asking the boy where he was going, he received the answer, "Ome," and asking why, was told, "Because I done my composition good." Astounded by such a reply, the inspector made a point of seeing the piece of composition that the lad "done good," and to his surprise found that in the whole essay the simple ideas were expressed in perfect English, with quite a show of appreciation of the matching of word and thought. The fact is that in the playground the children speak a language derived partly from home and partly from playground environment, and not influenced at all by the schoolroom, to which possibly it affords a welcome relief. Possibly a 30 per cent admixture of watchful teachers in the playground would cure the evil, but then the playground would cease to be a playground. Anyhow, while a child is able to "do composition good" he has a standard by which to form his speech in later life in accordance with the environment to which he attains. What more do your correspondents want or expect? Can parents not exercise sufficient influence or authority to keep such language out of the home as teachers keep it out of the classroom?

*New Zealand Herald*

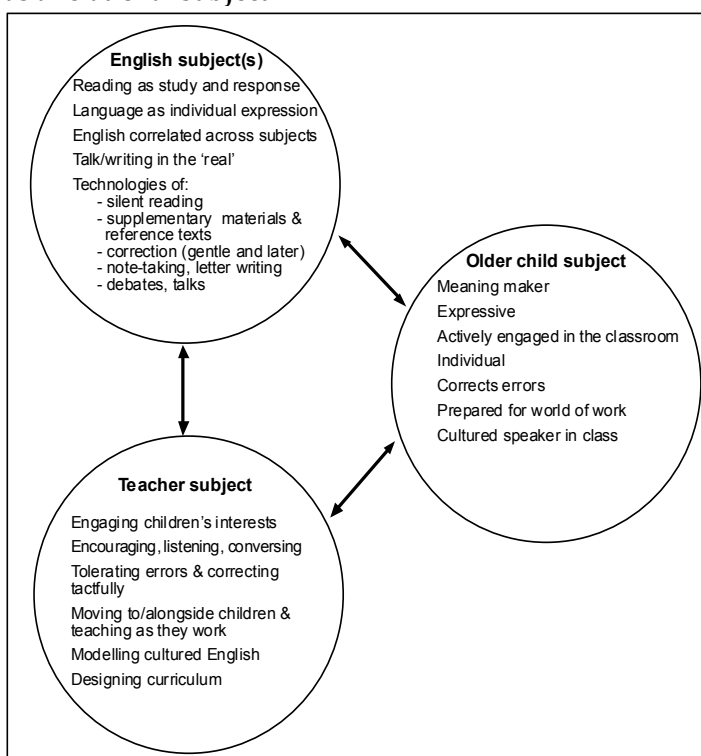
being produced. In the main, however, error was not overtly related to these new theories of development or the psychological child subject.

### 9.1.5 Summary and review: The meaningful and expressive older child as a relational subject

The subject position of a meaningful and expressive language user was related to a different version of the English subjects compared to the two discussed in Chapter 8, and to a new kind of teacher subjectivity. Figure 9.1.5 is a visual representation of the construction of the English subjects and the teacher-subject in relation to the subjectivity of the older child as meaningful and expressive language user.

The explicit focus on the older child as someone who would make their own meanings from texts and be able to express themselves in the classroom setting required a subjectivity very different from those discussed in Chapter 8. This older child would work individually and be actively engaged in reading, writing and speaking. This active involvement would inevitably lead to error which could be seen as a sign of

**Figure 9.1.5: The older child as meaningful and expressive as a relational subject**



engagement and interest. Error needed to be eliminated through learning the rules and grammar of English, but this would come later with an emphasis on children learning rules as they expressed themselves and understanding that those rules were an aid to clarity. Active and expressive work required that children be interested in what they were studying, something more likely if English was used as a subject that correlated study across a range of subjects and which emphasised learning in the 'real', rather than in traditional classroom exercises. It was important that the older child understood and used English to learn across all subjects as well as being prepared for using English in the world of work.

This kind of engaged, expressive, meaning maker was related to a version of English which made use of new technologies and resources. For example, the emphasis on silent reading was enabled by the availability of supplementary reading materials. Also, the need for children to study independently and follow their interests was related to newly available reference materials written for schoolchildren. Classroom activities such as debates and talks required individual expression of the older child, and some of the requirements of the English subjects were related to the world beyond the school.

Implicated in all of this was a new kind of teacher subjectivity which required the teacher to take up a new position in the classroom. The teacher was more mobile; going to and standing alongside the children. The teacher designed activities to arouse students' interests and expected that they would make errors as they expressed themselves in response to these activities. The teacher took the time to observe and listen to children in order to encourage expression, but also so that the important rules and grammar of English could be taught later, when children understood their importance. While errors were corrected, this was done 'tactfully' in order not to stifle the children's expression, the goal being that the children would learn to care about 'correct' spoken English as used by the teacher, and wish to emulate that model as they grew older.

The older child subject discussed here represented a break from the positions discussed in Chapter 8 which were concerned with the nature of the cultural outlook that the child took up. In contrast, the older child as meaningful and expressive language user was the source of his or her own meanings which were to be shaped towards 'correct' forms through the support and intervention of a more patient and watchful teacher. In the next part of this chapter, I consider a fourth subject position that was evident in the material analysed which also represented a significant break from the positions emphasising culture. The older child to be discussed in 9.2 had a natural desire to learn and required certain kinds of freedom to exercise that desire. The English subjects were an important site for the formation of this older child as a desiring and free learner, and for the development of technologies that would ensure that the child used his or her freedom in appropriate ways.

## 9.2 The older child as desiring and free learner

I am credibly informed that the children to-day actually enjoy going to school. That is a revolution, for which no historian or sociologist has given you adequate recognition. (The Right Honourable Stanley Baldwin, at the London Teachers Dinner 1925 *EG*, p.202)

The British Prime Minister's comments in 1925 (reproduced in the 'From a Teacher's Commonplace Book' segment of the *Education Gazette*) captured the way that a new kind of child who 'actually enjoy[ed] going to school' had become imaginable by this time. The English subjects, particularly Reading, had an important role to play in constituting a new kind of older child subject who 'enjoyed' going to school because they possessed a desire to study and learn in and through the texts of the English subjects. This represented a taking up of New Education discourse discussed in Chapter 7 that emphasised childhood and adolescence as stages of development and where the child's growth was driven from within the very nature of the organism. It was also connected to movements such as Child Study and Herbartianism which emphasised watching the child and a curriculum built around the nature of the child's mind. The key teleology was that children wanted to learn and could gain pleasure from learning.

One of the first places that the desiring learner appeared in the South Australian data was in an essay on 'How the child becomes a learner' by James Sully in the 1902 *Education Gazette*<sup>136</sup>. In it, Sully presented an argument for learning as different from the Faculty Psychology ideal which he characterised as like 'packing new stores in a warehouse' (p.145) through processes of 'memorising [and] cramming' (p.144). Instead, he argued for the child as an active participant in the process of learning and posited that the child was actually disposed to learning:

[A child's mind] sees, for example, the rainbow, and begins to wonder where it comes from and how long it will be before it comes again, or it hears a fact about Africa, and begins to wonder how far away it is and how long it would take to get there. The

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<sup>136</sup> Sully was the Professor of Mind and Logic at the University of London and an early developer of educational psychology. His publications included *Outlines of Psychology, with Special Reference to the Theory of Education* (1892), *Teachers Handbook of Psychology* (1886), and *Studies of Childhood* (1903). (See [www.psychol.ucl.ac.uk/info/history.htm](http://www.psychol.ucl.ac.uk/info/history.htm) for more detail.) The article discussed here (already referred to several times in Chapter 6 in relation to the New Education) was the subject of an unpublished article by Garth Boomer written in 1979 and entitled 'Learning—1902'. Boomer's use of the Sully article is an illustration of the links it was possible to make between some of the ideas expressed by Sully and what would become known as the 'New English' in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s—a movement with which Boomer was strongly connected as an Education Department English consultant and, later, as a senior bureaucrat—see discussion in Green, Cormack and Reid (2000).

child's intelligence is, when normally active, continually engaged in such organising work. And now, what follows from this? That its mind is on a look-out attitude for new facts. It feels there is more to know, and *it reaches out in desire* towards this knowledge. (Sully 1902 *EG*, p.145, emphasis added)

For Sully the desire to learn was encouraged by education and was not something that happened without the teacher setting it in train; thus he argued for the importance of the teacher in promoting a desire to learn (p.146). Sully's article was remarkable in the context of its time for the way it posited children's learning and development as a process that was driven largely from *within* the child's mind or consciousness, once desire had been awakened through a teacher's intervention. Sully also connected his theories of learning with Froebel's concept of development, with 'statistical analysis of the child mind', and with other elements of the New Education.

The theme of a self-generating interest and effort in the learner, noted in Sully's article, was picked up by the newly appointed Director Alfred Williams in 1905. As a promoter of New Education ideas, Williams wrestled with a way to provide for schooling which successfully moralised students and established them as citizens who did things because they were 'right in themselves' and not out of 'fear of certain ... consequences' (*EG*, p.118), such as punishment. The answer, he stated, lay in instilling in children an understanding that the:

... pleasure of pursuit, the feeling of power and the joy of conquest are the result of self-effort and self-activity only. See to it then, that the aim of the young teacher shall be to encourage in his pupils *self-control* and *self-effort*, and that no opportunity of developing these be lost. (Dir. Williams 1905 *EG*, p.118, emphasis in the original)

Williams emphasised both effort and control as arising from within the child (suitably encouraged by the teacher); in other words, that the child needed the freedom to drive and monitor his or her own learning. Notable here was the combination of a traditional emphasis on morality and effort—important elements of a Liberal Education—but now these came from within the child and were driven by feelings of 'pleasure' and 'joy'. Implicit in this view of learning was an economy of desire involving personal pleasure in learning and a degree of freedom or power to seek that pleasure and monitor its attainment. The teleology was an older child who had internalised self effort<sup>137</sup>:

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<sup>137</sup> An internalised system of effort was also the ideal for the older child with taste discussed in Chapter 8.2. However in that case the control was the result of internalising taste through habituation, rather than the incorporation of desire.

We want the child to be a learner, not altogether that he may learn this bit of Latin to-day and this portion of English history to-morrow, but that he may be fitted and disposed to go on learning all his life through. (Sully 1902 *EG*, p.145)

These ideals of self-effort from the New Education were taken up in the English subjects which constituted the older child subject as a desiring learner who required freedom and self-discipline to ensure appropriate development. In some ways, this desiring and free learner in English can be seen in complementary relation to the expressive, meaning making older child discussed in the previous section, especially in the more benign and 'sympathetic' kind of relationship that child was to have with the teacher, and the more active role the child was to take in the classroom. However, the desiring and free older child I discuss in this part of the chapter was different from the meaningful and expressive older child discussed in 9.1, in the amount of freedom the child was to require in the classroom. Also, in contrast to the meaning making subject of English who would strongly engage with the 'language' side of the subject to learn the rules for its operation, the desiring child subject was formed primarily in relation to the reading and literary elements of English.

### **9.2.1 The older child as a naturally desiring learner in English**

One of the earliest indications in the English curriculum materials of the emergence of the child as a desiring learner was in the 1907 *Course of Instruction*, in the introduction to the Reading subject. This curriculum document represented a major revision of the previous version written in 1900 and was the first produced after Williams became Director. One of the goals for Reading was presented as developing a 'love' of reading, which was not in itself unusual, as that had been a goal since the 1890 version of the curriculum where it was connected with 'loving' the stories the teacher read aloud to the class. However, in 1907, a new element was introduced which involved the child being led to 'desire' books and to increasing the child's 'happiness':

The teacher should regard the power to extract the thought from the printed page as the test of his children's power to read. If this thought content is suited to the child's [sic] stage of mental development, if it is interesting, and if it is handled in a sympathetic manner, the teacher is doing much to lay the foundation for a love of reading. This is of the highest importance, because it may create in the minds of the children a desire to possess and use books; and this may do much to break the monotony and increase the happiness and usefulness of their lives. (Introduction to Reading 1907 *EG*, p.45)

Nearly two decades later in 1924, again in the introduction to the Reading subject, this issue of a love for reading was revisited. This time the concept was discussed at length in

a new section on 'supplementary readers'. In an example of what Fairclough (1992, p.193) calls 'overwording', a plethora of verbs, and nouns was used to explain the relationship the child was to have with books and reading. Fairclough describes overwording as a sign of 'intense preoccupation' with an idea or object in a discourse, and the italicised words in the following quotation show the way that the child's desiring and pleasurable relationship with reading was the subject of overwording:

First *excite* interest: this will develop *enjoyment*, and the child will read with *pleasure* and *profit*. It is a matter of first importance that children should be *encouraged* to form the reading habit, and, when the *desire* is present in the child, it should not be *frustrated* by a lack of books. Those who are *lovers* of good books give no cause for *anxiety* about their education when they leave school. They will then have the opportunity of *satisfying their desires* by joining a public library: but while at school all children should have scope for wide and varied reading, and in this connection the supplementary readers will be found very helpful. (Introduction to Reading 1924 CI, p.62, emphasis added)

Interestingly, in this introduction, the case for a desiring and pleasurable relationship with reading was put as much in the negative as in the positive, as the children were not to be 'frustrated'. The implication was that teachers should be anxious lest children do not develop a desire for reading. The 'reading habit' (a carryover term from Liberal Education and Faculty Psychology) was now invested with new meanings, becoming the indicator of a child who desired to read and found enjoyment in it. The two examples just discussed from the *Course of Instruction*, nearly two decades apart, are an indication of the way that the child as a desiring learner was constituted through the discourse of the New Education and became an important figure in the post-war period of the 1920s, especially in the Reading subject.

Central to the idea of the child desiring to learn and read was that they should take 'pleasure' from their reading. This involved a change in the kinds of reading materials that might be selected, so that teachers could be advised in 1926 that one of the 'cardinal rules which should govern the choice of at least half the books in a school library should be not "What should the little things like?" but, "What will they like?"' (no author 1926 EG, p.170). Teachers were also to avoid 'a too pedantic insistence upon the exclusive claim of the great classics' (p.170) in the goal of increasing children's pleasure in reading. The principle at work here was that children could not be 'forced' into the development of a 'taste' for reading, as was the tradition in Faculty Psychology inspired approaches. The Senior Master at Adelaide High School wrote, 'instead of force we must try allurements' (Allen 1923 EG, p.251).

The need to increase the appeal of reading also involved understanding the older child subject as an ‘individual’ with specific tastes and interests (which in a circular fashion could only be satisfied by individualised silent reading practices). Teachers were urged to select a variety of materials that ‘would satisfy every need’ (1928 *EG*, p.320). This in turn involved a closer study of children (in echoes of the Child Study movement) in order to determine those interests (see box ‘An inquisition’). Surveys of children’s reading interests and popular books were occasionally featured in the *Education Gazette*—the first of these came from the *Newbolt Report* and its survey of the most popular ‘juvenile literature’ (1922 *EG*, p.129)—and there was even a survey of children’s cinema-going habits (1927 *EG*, p.160). One of the outcomes of this interest in ‘interest’ was that the differences between boys’ and girls’ reading preferences were ‘studied’ and constituted as ‘individual’ differences as in the following example:

#### An ‘inquisition’

*City librarians were active in promoting children’s reading. Here the Chief Librarian of Croydon Libraries (England) reported on an ‘inquisition’ of his older child borrowers in an example of early surveys of children’s reading preferences. (Sayers 1927 EG, p.53)*

Mr Sayers described an inquisition which he had made at Croydon. Every child who entered the library was asked to name his or her three favourite authors, and lists were procured from 752 boys and 674 girls. The boys’ first favourites in order of preference were Westerman, Strang, Henty, Dickens, Brereton, Stevenson. The girls’ list was headed by Angela Brazil (303 votes), Dickens (90), Alcott (53). There was no adequate type of books for girls between 13 and 16; they lost interest in boys’ books and had recourse to sentimental, tearful, love stories.

The more one studies children by exact methods, the more one is impressed by the individuality of differences. One boy leaves fiction untouched and devotes himself entirely to science and other abstract subjects. Another prefers mechanical magazines and technical articles, sets up radio outfits, constructs model engines, and insists on having his own scientific reference books. Another cares little for these things but prefers the excitement of adventure stories or tales of warrior heroes. As for girls, one revels in historical novels; another prefers poetry or books on pictures and art; a third will develop, with a little encouragement, a taste for books of nature study or travel; some will read nothing at all but stories of school life. These individual differences are very real, and they cannot be too carefully considered in the selection of children’s books. (Extract from *Children’s Reading* in ‘A teacher’s commonplace book’ 1928 *EG*, p.320)

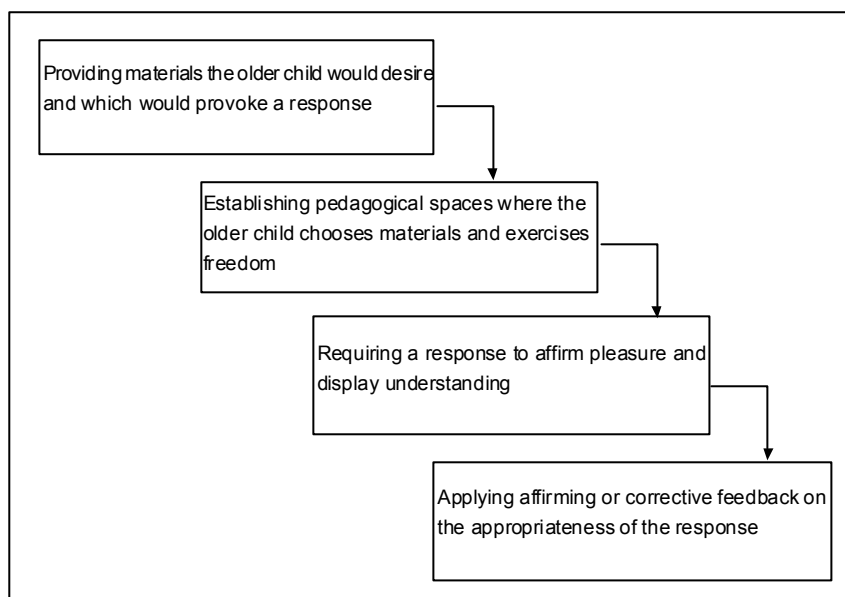
For the older child subject, the emphasis was on exercising an individual freedom and gaining pleasure from the work. Inspector Neale noted in 1904 (*EG*, pp.138-139) that times were changing and the Australian population was experiencing liberties previously unknown to the ordinary citizen. How, he wondered, could children be turned into moral citizens in a secular society that allowed such freedom? He claimed that the problem was that ‘the creed of young Australia is rather “liberty to do what we like” than “liberty to do

what we ought''' (p.139). Promoting New Education approaches in schools, he urged that 'extrinsic rewards must give place to work for the love of work' (p.139). The approach was based on the 'application of the general principle of freedom to the life of the child' (Prof. Findlay 1914 *EG*, p.320) in that children needed to be given freedom in school if they were to learn to use it appropriately beyond school. In exercising that freedom, children were to be engaged in work which was its own motivation and to be rewarded through the pleasures it offered and the desires it satisfied. However, the problem of how to ensure they used that freedom 'as they ought' required a new kind of pedagogy, which is the subject of the next part of the chapter.

### 9.2.2 Towards a pedagogy of freedom and correction

One of the pedagogical problems that arose from the ideal of the older child as a desiring and free learner was that no one could be sure of the way that the child might use her or his freedom, and whether the pleasures thus gained from the work were illicit or legitimate. One answer found in the English classroom, and especially in the Reading subject, was the application of a pastoral pedagogy whereby the teacher, as someone who was close to the children, who knew their interests, and who was trusted by the children, could cultivate the expression of individual responses and subject those responses to reinforcement or correction. This was a 'pastoral' form of pedagogy (Hunter, 1988; King, 1982; Patterson, 1997b) discussed in Chapter 4.2, in that it relied on the establishment of non-coercive and trusting relationships between teacher and student in the English classroom. It was a pedagogy that incited the production of a response to texts so that the response could be examined and moulded. In the English subjects, four elements were

**Figure 9.2.2: A pedagogy of freedom and correction**



important in this process which are shown in Figure 9.2.2. These involved providing materials (especially reading resources) which the older child would 'desire' to use and which would provoke a response. The teacher also had to establish pedagogical spaces where children 'chose' to use these materials and exercised their freedom to follow their interests and desires. The third step involved the teacher establishing classroom technologies which required the older child to respond to those materials as an affirmation of their pleasure and as a display of understanding. Finally, the teacher gave affirming or corrective feedback to the older child on the appropriateness of their response and understanding. Each of these steps is discussed in turn below.

*Materials the older child would desire/respond to*

I have already discussed above the advice to teachers to choose books on the basis of children's preferences, and some of the technologies employed for teachers to find out what these books were. This shows the way that the Reading subject was the centre of efforts to find materials the children would desire. Texts of literature and poetry, as well as reference and non-fiction material, were included in this range. However, this was not simply the canon of great texts of a Liberal Education or English Literature of the kind valued for the child as an English colonial citizen and discussed in Chapter 8, although it did include such texts. Other kinds of texts were allowable/required if all children were going to desire and respond to them.

One response was to identify texts that were seen to be appropriate to the 'stage' of development of the children. Based on the Developmental discourses discussed in Chapter 7, the idea was that materials matched to a child's stage of development would have a 'natural' appeal. Thus, one author in 1907 could recommend:

For boys of a certain age—which varies from 12 to 14 years of age—we find books of adventure are the favourite reading matter. Those dealing with the contact of civilized with savage life, as in exploring or in settling a new country, are read with great interest. (Roach 1907 *EG*, p.79)

Following of the 'natural order of the child's awakening interests' (Editor of *The Practical Teacher* 1908 *EG*, p.240) ensured that children were provided with material that they would naturally desire. This author mapped out the developmental route children would take, concluding with the older child wishing to read material drawn directly from literature:

In prose the way lies through the fairy tale, the folk tale, the heroic story, the legend both purely imaginative and semi-historical, the poetic myth, the parable, and the fable, up to the shorter, complete story drawn from literature proper. (Editor of *The Practical Teacher* 1908 EG, p.236)

In addition to such a staged developmental approach, there was something even more radical suggested for initiating children into reading that would be driven by desire—a tolerance, and even an incorporation, of the texts of ‘popular culture’. The English Senior Master (Allen 1923 EG, p.251), referred to above, noted that ‘cheap penny papers’ were a boy’s introduction to ‘tales of adventure’ and that it was ‘of no avail to forbid them to read these “thrillers”’. He went on to say that they were ‘healthy enough in their way, and fill a void in the imaginative life of the boy debarred from access to a good library’. In 1926 the Head of the Board of Education in England was cited as saying that educators should not be too ‘pedantic’ in their claims for the classics and that libraries should ‘provide an abundance of good, attractive and wholesome literature’ as a basis for building taste towards the great books (Fisher 1926 EG, p.170). Some went much further than this and claimed that the popular forms of fiction that were so attractive to older children were the inspiration for the superior ‘dramatic and rapidly moving story’ of the late nineteenth century:

It was a great genius, the inventor of “penny dreadfuls” who had given the deathblow to the didacticism of the early Victorian books, and substituted a dramatic and rapidly moving story. Dr Macnamara had said that every boy worth his salt read every “penny dreadful” he could lay his hands on. The best examples, in fact, of the “penny dreadful” in its highest form were John Buchan’s *Thirty-nine Steps*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. (Sayers 1927 EG, p.53)

Sayers’ comment about the ‘didacticism’ of the early Victorian books provides an intertextual link to comments in the *Education Gazette* by Inspectors and others about the failure of traditional approaches to moral lessons in primary schools (such as temperance charts, and moral tales) to actually have any impact on children’s beliefs or behaviour. For example, as early as 1906 an article extracted in the *Education Gazette* from the *Australian Journal of Education* (Hodge, p.143) noted the lack of appeal of ‘so-called moral stories in which the virtuous and somewhat priggish child was always rewarded, and the vicious and interesting child met with a merited punishment’. Such a representation of justice, according to Hodge (p.143), had ‘one insuperable radical defect, it is untrue to life’. Here Hodge identified an important characteristic of the kind of book that should be employed for children to respond to—it must relate to their lives and not deal with those lives in a simplistic way. In other words, some moral ambiguity was required if the book was to raise ethical issues that might be deployed in the moral supervision and correction of the

children. This was especially true for the older child, who was seen as particularly averse to simplistic moral tales in the forms of poems, myths and legends which were more suitable for younger children. The idea was to select literature which 'held up worthy examples of conduct, while avoiding that direct moral instruction which—alas for human nature—seems to act as an incentive to naughtiness' (Editor of the *Practical Teacher* in 1908 *EG*, p.240). Such moral ambiguity, as will be seen below, was important for the way that it might become the focus for discussion and reflection under the supervising eye of the teacher.

#### *Spaces for exercising freedom and encouraging desire*

In Chapter 7.2 I discussed the way that, under the auspices of the New Education, a variety of 'plans' and 'methods' were recommended to teachers during the 1920s for opening up spaces of freedom for students. This focus on freedom was reflected in the spaces provided in English classrooms for students to exercise choice and determine elements of their work. In a series of articles in the *Education Gazette* in 1922 and 1923, Edgar Allen, English Senior Master at Adelaide High School, outlined the way that the English classroom could be inspired by approaches such as 'The Play Way' and the 'Mason Method'. What these approaches had in common, according to Allen, was that they were 'not repressive' and that 'they reach, however indirectly, the goal of stimulating the individual activity of the pupils' (Allen 1922 *EG*, p.233). The Play Way, especially, focussed on the classroom as a space of supervised freedom where the child's expressiveness through play took precedence over correct form, even at the expense of traditional classroom order:

[I]t is impossible to play without a little noise, and it is unwise to keep intruding one's authority when work is afoot. Under a natural system of education there can be no standard of discipline. "Right behaviour is a relative condition to be determined by its appropriateness to the occasion." (Allen 1922 *EG*, p.234)

Here Allen was not talking about very young children, but the 'teaching of English to boys from 10 to 14 years of age' (p.233). This focus on the classroom as a site of 'play' and freedom, promoted in the 1920s, had discursive links to discussions of the playground as a site of freedom and moral intervention, that were undertaken by New Education proponents in the first decade of the century. For example, Senior-Inspector Burgan had noted in 1904 (*EG*, p.123) that teachers must involve themselves in the lives of their students and that the 'freedom of the playground' was an ideal place to do this:

... it is in the play-ground that the real character of the child is seen to the best advantage, for it is here that the true moral character and nature of the child display themselves, and can be studied with profit by one who is anxious to draw out all that is good and to repress all that is evil in human nature. The child in his home is often a very different being from what he is at school, and in the freedom of the play-ground he generally comes out in his true colours. The teacher, consequently, who neglects his duty in this respect may lose the best opportunity of moulding the child's mind and of forming a noble and truthful character. (Senior Insp. Burgan 1904 EG, p.123)

Inspector Burgan's focus on providing spaces of supervised freedom<sup>138</sup> where the older child would reveal 'his true colours' had strong echoes in the various plans and methods promoted in the 1920s and which were taken up in the English classroom. By the 1920s, showing 'true colours' had become the ability for the child to be 'natural' and to express their own understandings and feelings in the interior playground of the English classroom (see box 'A snail coming out of its shell').

There is little indication in the *Education Gazette* about how much such radical suggestions were taken up by teachers<sup>139</sup>, but there were areas in which this concept of classroom freedom was officially promoted. It was in the Reading subject that this ideal of freedom was most pronounced, especially around silent reading lessons for the older child. Inspector Noack (1920 EG p.164) commented that 'free-choice reading' had been instituted for all upper primary school grades in the 1917 *Course of Instruction* 'when regular set readers or class

#### 'A Snail Coming Out of Its Shell'

By the 1920s, and with the introduction of various pedagogical schemes such as the 'Play Way', which is the subject of this extract from the *Senior Master of English at Adelaide High School* (Allen 1923 EG, p.251), the willingness to freely choose was highly valued in English. Here Allen painted a picture of the typical Australian older boy as 'a snail coming out of its shell' when provided with the freedom to express a response to literature in his English classroom.

After long periods of repression it is by no means easy for a boy to express himself in speech and in action. We had been reading Tanglewood Tales and some of the class volunteered to improvise the scene. King Aegeus, fat and complacent, is seated on a chair, with Medea wrapped in a blackboard duster at his side. The door bursts open and in rushes a messenger who announces unceremoniously: "There's a chap out here says he's come to kill you." This news does not appear to affect the King who preserves a strong silence and stolid demeanour. Medea then takes a hand, and leaning forward says in a whisper, "You leave him to me, mi-lord." The King still sits as silent and motionless as a statue of Buddha for a few awesome moments, and then with a Jove-like nod of the head he briefly announces his portentous decision with a whispered, "Right-ho". This is typical of their first attempts when they either say nothing at all or speak in the language of the playground: their gestures are those of a wooden image, and shyness is disguised by a petrified grin or the immobility of a sphinx. But watch the snail crawl out of his shell. It is not long before all barriers are broken down, and, rejoicing in the release of pent up feelings, they enter whole-heartedly into their playing.

<sup>138</sup> Also, the links are obvious to Hunter's (1988, p.17) discussion of Stow's use of the playground as the 'principal scene of the real life of children' in establishing a pastoral pedagogy.

<sup>139</sup> It should be noted that Allen became an Inspector and had the opportunity to directly influence curriculum and teaching policy. His first Inspector's Report appeared in the *Education Gazette* in 1927.

readers were virtually abolished in those grades'. In 1920 teachers were advised in the introduction to the Reading subject (*CI*, p.59) that 'free periods for general reading [were] desirable and necessary', although this advice was immediately followed by the caution 'but the teacher should so organise the lesson that no child is left entirely to himself, and his interest should be tested by skilful questioning on the subject matter'. Thus while the child should exercise 'free' choice, it was important that the teacher monitored those choices and that the children should justify them—these were spaces of *supervised* freedom.

This practice was connected to silent reading, which was seen as a respite from the traditional 'simultaneous' work of reading aloud which did not allow for individuality. Silent reading, through the provision of supplementary readers, and school and class libraries, became the primary site for children to exercise their freedom through choice:

... let the teacher set aside at least five hours a week as the minimum for reading, and let the pupils read during that time just whatever they like, provided only that they keep silence and read. (Mayor Cohen 1910 *EG*, p.175)

As well as providing the silent reading materials, schemes were adopted for providing freer access to them. For example, the new central schools, established in 1925 to provide various kinds of post-primary technical education to boys and girls not going to university, included innovations such as allowing the students go to their classrooms for private reading when lessons were not in progress (Insp. Pavia 1927 *EG*, p.71). One primary school allowed Grade VII students into a specially established 'school reference library' during the lunch break (no author 1927 *EG*, p.225)—in other words, as an alternative to the playground. There was also an emphasis on making these libraries attractive to the students:

No longer are there books, filthy with age and neglect, mouldering in heaps. But dressed in their new covers they are beginning to adorn shelves, specially constructed in some schools by woodwork enthusiasts, and in this way they make an irresistible appeal in each classroom. (Insp. Allen 1928 *EG*, p.115)

The emphasis on freedom of choice in reading led to a variety of schemes for building class libraries, including encouraging families to buy children books to bring to school which would be rotated among the class during the year—such a scheme was suggested in the Reading section of the 1924 *Course of Instruction* (pp.62-63). In this way, freedom and choice came to be associated not only with silent reading, but also with an increase in

the quantity of reading for the older child reader. Describing such a sharing scheme in operation in 1920, Inspector Noack reported:

It is not uncommon to find the best school pupils who have read twenty, thirty, or more books by the end of the year. In a large school, recently inspected, about 10 books was the average number read by all pupils from Grade IV.-VIII., and they were able to discuss freely the salient features of each book. This was the result of about four month's work. (Insp. Noack 1920 *EG*, p.164)

Inspector Noack showed here that new measures of classroom success were being developed. In teaching the child to be desiring and free, success was to be measured by the amount that they read, and the enthusiasm of their response to that reading. This was a very different measure from the child reading expressively and correctly to an audience that had been so much the focus of Inspectors' comments in the first decade of the century.

In relation to the reference materials that were made available, there was also an economy of desire to be generated. Dictionaries, atlases and other reference books were placed in classrooms as symbols of the child's desire to know, and the teacher had to ensure that the children exercised that desire:

To impart desire for knowledge and the power of getting it is, next to character-building, the most important work of the school. Encourage self-activity to the fullest extent. When the child asks a question be careful not to put him off or discourage him, but if it is possible show him how to find the answer for himself do so, even at the expense of considerable time and trouble. (Penninen 1920 *EG*, p.167)

This was another radical change being suggested to the teacher's role. No longer was the teacher a provider of information, not even an answerer of children's questions, but rather someone who took 'time and trouble' to help children meet their own desire for knowledge. There were also implications for the design of the classroom and the disposition of space within it:

As the child gradually becomes able to use them, show him how to employ books as tools. Keep reference books on low shelves or tables in convenient places, where it is easy to get at them. Show the child that the dictionary, the atlas, and the encyclopaedia contain stores of knowledge accumulated by the work of many scholars for many years ... (Penninen 1920 *EG*, p.167)

The ideal subject of English here was the child who desired to read and had a thirst for knowledge. Reading should also drive a further desire for reading and knowledge which the older child was able to meet through their own efforts. The teacher stood alongside the child, helping to maintain this system of 'self-effort'.

### *Classroom technologies of response*

The third element of this pedagogical approach was the application of classroom technologies for producing a response in students. This ensured that what was envisaged as a largely internal process of desire, and the satisfaction of desire, could be made visible to the supervising eye of the teacher.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this requirement that the child respond was the role of the teacher in establishing a space where the child felt safe to reveal their response. Central to this was the figure of the teacher, who was to be 'sympathetic' to children. This concept of 'the modern spirit of sympathy with child life' (Insp. Neale 1900 *EG*, p.83) was consistently raised in discussions of the New Education (see Chapter 7.2.1). Sympathy involved being interested in children, a desire to lead children more gently to a moral outlook and, often, the placement of the child within a new kind of Child Study-inspired, teacherly gaze:

The teacher ... must know the children and must sympathize with them, for it is of the essence of teaching that the mind of the teacher should touch the mind of the pupil. He will seek at each stage to adjust his mind to theirs, to draw upon their experiences as a supplement to his own, and so take them as it were into partnership for the acquisition of knowledge (Board of Education 1906 *EG*, p.56)

Developmental theories of adolescence as storm and stress made the older child a particular target of sympathy and an important focus for the scientific gaze of the teacher, who must know what was in the mind of the child:

Knowledge of the child and youth, both boy and girl, is needed—needed especially in the case of the adolescent. Above all is needed loving care and sympathy. Care to discover, so far as you may, what is in his or her mind, sympathy to deal with him, and especially with her, and to gently lead through darkness and difficulty into light. (Chief-Insp. Maughan 1910 *EG*, p.180)

In order to care and have sympathy, then, the teacher needed to discover what was in the mind of the older child, and this was the focus of some of the classroom technologies developed in English. The most common tool for knowing what the older child preferred was the silent reading record, where the older child was to register their response to a book and be able to justify this choice to the teacher (see the discussion of reading records in the previous section on the older child as meaning maker). The emphasis on the child expressing a personal response also brought oral language activities to the foreground, along with those involving written responses. There were class and group discussions,

questionnaires and 'impromptu' dramatisations (Insp. Miethke 1929 EG, p.76) which required of the student a personal evaluation and response to literature:

... many of the older pupils have very decided likes and dislikes where books are concerned, showing that, along with their reading, there goes a valuation and comparison of books read ... (Insp. Martin 1929 EG, p.139)

As well as the specific focus on recording responses in records and processes of group discussions and dramatic responses (see box on 'A snail coming out of its shell' earlier in this chapter, for an example of a dramatic response), there was a general desire that the teacher and students should interact informally, much as they might in that ideal playground space. The key indicator of such informality, and therefore a sign of the genuineness of the response, was that the older child might respond in the vernacular. This is how Allen put it:

I remember reading to the class that magnificent storm scene from *David Copperfield* in which Dickens tells of the death of Steerforth. They listened spellbound, and at the end one boy said to his mate, "Wasn't that bonser!" Despite the inelegant remark, this youth is not the lost soul that some teachers think him. It was really a great tribute from a boy, who, afterwards, in a story of his own, reproduced many of the phrases he had heard, descriptive of the grandeur and menace of the storm. (Allen 1923 EG, p.254)

In his retelling, Allen matched the boy's colloquialism of 'bonser' (meaning wonderful) with his own description of the boy's friend as his 'mate', emphasising how the use of the 'inelegant' language of the street or playground was to be valued as an indicator of an authentic response. The English classroom had become a space where such language might be used, albeit 'corrected' or at least evaluated. Inspector Miethke (EG 1927, p.74), commenting on the teaching of literature to girls in the newly formed Central schools, praised Hindmarsh Central School for 'the unconsciousness with which the girls dramatised passages and impersonated individual characters' in the classroom. The primary school playground had been inserted into the post-primary classrooms through the 'play' and drama of the English lesson as a space for the older child to be themselves, and display an authentic response.

#### *Applying affirming or corrective feedback*

The final phase in this pedagogical pattern was the response to the child where feedback was given and correction made if necessary. The focus in this discourse was not on the kind of correction discussed in the child as meaning maker section, where grammatical accuracy and correctness was the aim. Here the correction or affirmation was aimed at the older child's ideas, and the moral lessons they were taking from the text.

The most explicit description of this approach came in a book review published in the 1922 *Education Gazette* (p.150) on the topic of 'moral and religious education'. In it, the pedagogical pattern being discussed here was laid out. First, the review began by noting that most moral education occurred in 'reading lessons and later in English literature lessons', and signalled that much 'literary matter' raised 'critical questions of character and conduct' (the provision of texts featuring moral ambiguity referred to above). Second, the review suggested to the teacher that, in response to such critical questions, '[t]he teacher, as mere teacher of literature, will be wise to give the members of the class an opening for the expression of their thoughts' (requiring a response within a space of supervised freedom). Finally, the teacher had to take advantage of these responses to engage in 'incidental teaching' which promoted a process of reflection in the students:

The important thing to realise in all these incidental teachings is that the social sense, the duty sense, the sense of personal rectitude and honour should develop together as one interrelated whole, by the double process of intelligent reflection and unremitting practice, both to be undertaken as far as possible on the child's own initiative. (no author 1922 *EG*, p.150)

Here the ideal older child (with personal rectitude and honour) was to be developed under the guidance of the teacher through processes of reflection and practice. The figure of the teacher as a model in this process was also emphasised, and the teacher needed to be equipped with 'ethical interest and scholarship' for this purpose. A footnote to the review noted that 'no one ...is qualified to teach literature effectively who is, either by nature or for lack of education, deficient in ethical interest and psychologic insight' (no author 1922 *EG*, p.150). In this brief book review, the scope of a pastoral pedagogy was laid out for teachers, from the provision of materials, the spaces of freedom, the requirement to respond, and the supervision and correction from a teacher who was a person of ethical interest, but also someone who knew the children (through 'psychologic insight'). Further, the review noted that such a system needed to be internalised by the age of ten or 'before the self-conscious age is reached when the motive of calculating self interest begins to assert itself' (that is, by adolescence). The moral technology was to be enlisted in order that this older child was appropriately tamed. The reviewer put it in more 'legendary' terms, casting the arrival of adolescence with the emergence of the dragon:

If St. George is on the spot before the dragon comes out of his lair, so much the better for St. George (no author 1922 *EG*, p.150)

The ideal of the teacher having an understanding of children's minds was one way in which the discourse of Educational Psychology and its precursor in Child Study could be seen to connect to the English curriculum. The teacher with 'psychologic insight' was better able to read the child and respond appropriately, especially if they understood the dangers of adolescence. The teleology that informed this pedagogy was that the processes of response and self-reflection would eventually be internalised by the older child. Praise or criticism could come from the 'sympathetic' and understanding teacher as an acknowledgement of the effort and as a guide to an appropriately ethical stance; however, in the end, the child had to be able to take on this role for himself or herself and internalise this critical reflection. To help students to do this, teachers were encouraged to design activities where the children did this for each other, so that criticism and reflective comment could be modelled by peers as well as the teacher and this was a feature built into many of the activities already described such as discussions, talks, and dramatic play (see box 'Interested spectator' for one example). In these situations, the teacher was an interested spectator, but still had the final say if necessary. Ideally, though, that

#### **'Interested spectator'**

*This extract from an article on a 'new method' of teaching of 'oral composition' from the Perse School, the home of the 'Play Way' approach, is from the Victorian Education Gazette, written by the Vice-Principal of the Melbourne Teachers' College, G.S. Browne (1923 EG, pp.228-229). This story of an ideal classroom session shows the teacher becoming an 'interested spectator' who allows the students to manage their own topics and monitor each other's performances but who is also available as a final arbiter. In many ways this story is an example of the idealisation of the expressive older child, but two things also relate to the child of desire and freedom—first, the way that ethical topics are allowed (should the Kaiser have been hanged?) and second, the valorisation of the child as authentically and emotionally committed to their work ('his own eyes shine') as evidence of a desire to participate and of pleasure gained from the activity.*

What is this new method? It was first given prominence at the Perse School, Cambridge by that gifted teacher of English, Mr. Caldwell Cook. Many Victorian masters have occasionally used similar methods, but rarely as an organized system of teaching the subject. The teacher gives up his sceptre and sits at one side, an interested spectator. The chairman, one of the class, advances to the platform, calls for order, and reads from his list: "The first speech today will be by Rogers Minor on 'A New Method of Fishing'." Rogers Minor, having chosen the subject himself and worked it up carefully for some days beforehand, probably with the assistance of his whole household, comes forward and describes how tarpon are caught off the coast of Florida. The speech lasts some six minutes, at the end of which the chairman calls for questions. Rogers Minor has to face one or two shrewd questions from his class-mates. Then the chairman asks for criticisms. The speech has been interesting and well delivered, so there are no criticisms. The chairman finally asks the class to award marks (ten being the maximum), by show of hands for style and matter, these being entered in a book by another boy official called the chronicler. The next speaker is Winterson, who describes Argentina, but is heavily criticised on a novel ground. "Oh! there is nothing original about that; we had it all in geography last week." The next boy, whose self-appointed subject is "Should the Kaiser have been hanged?" is taken up on a point of grammar. Animated discussion ensues as to whether he was right or not, and the teacher is appealed to for a settlement of the question. Then comes Wilson, a boy just 12 years of age (an actual case witnessed by the writer at the Perse school), armed with a model and a diagram, who is to speak on "How an Electric Car is made to Move." He is very keen, and soon has the class spell-bound. His own eyes shine as he feels the power of holding an audience by the sheer compelling interest of the topic and his own enthusiasm. It turns out afterwards that his father is chief engineer of the local Tramways Board, but that makes no difference. The boy has felt his own power, and will be a good, confident speaker from that day on.

arbitration role arose from the children's acknowledgement of the teacher as a kindly figure, who worked alongside the students, and out of a deeply internalised interest in their work. Senior Master Allen recommended that teachers produce Shakespearean plays with their class, rather than lecturing to them:

... in the producing of a play the questions which spontaneously arise from the pupils' interest give ample scope for the imparting of necessary information and guidance. (Allen 1922 *EG*, p.234)

For teachers like Allen, who described and promoted the pedagogies discussed here, the classroom ideally resembled a workshop where the students were engaged in producing plays and talks, and even writing for production themselves—the whole class combine in a joint authorship, workmanship, and craftsmanship [sic]' (p.234). This enabled the teacher to be alongside the students, ready with advice and help that was all the more effective because it was requested by the child, out of a desire to know and as a result of the freedom to choose the work being done.

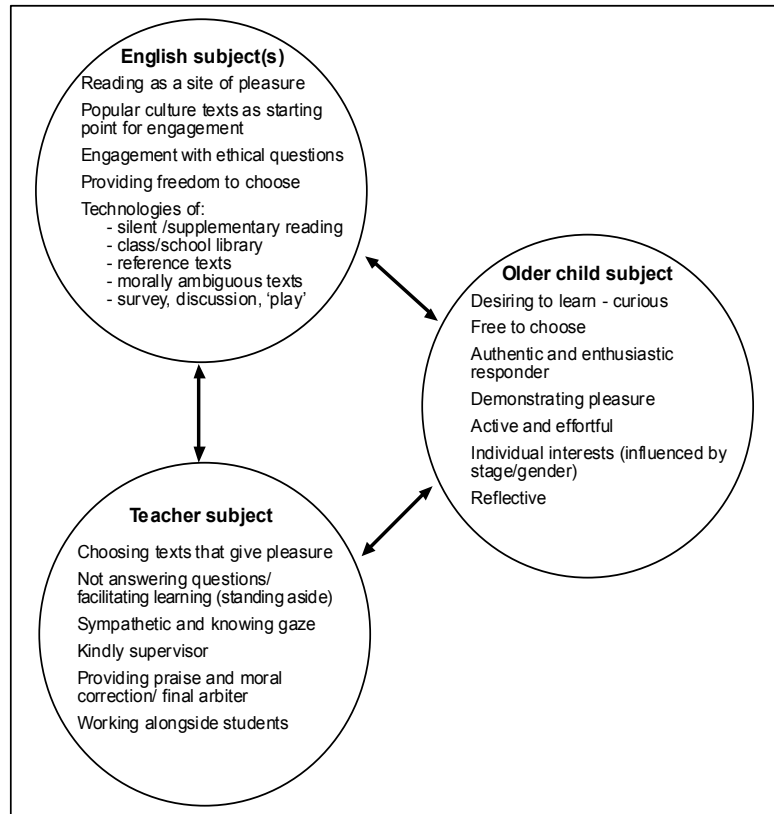
### **9.2.3 Summary and review: The desiring and free older child as a relational subject**

The representation of the older child as a desiring and free subject was largely to be found in the data during the 1920s. However, there were strong discursive links between this child in the English classroom after World War 1 and the discourse of the New Education which was a feature in the first decade of the century. Appropriated from this discourse was, especially, the figure of the teacher as a sympathetic observer and guide who encouraged rather than ordered, and who was positioned alongside the pupil as co-worker and work supervisor, rather than in front of the class as a lecturer and corrector. This required a new kind of teacher who established an English classroom that provided spaces of supervised freedom where the older child was placed within an economy of desire in relation to the pleasures and the affirmations provided by responding to texts. Figure 9.2.3 shows the way the older child as desiring and free, the teacher, and the English subjects, were formed in relation to each other.

The figure of the teacher was shaped in this discourse in relation to an innovative pedagogical approach which insisted on the importance of providing spaces of supervised freedom for the child subject to exercise choice and find pleasure, especially the Reading subject. While the teacher was to remain the ultimate arbiter of appropriate morality, this standard could not be forced on a child who was free, and who was to be led to choose wisely and make ethical decisions based on their own judgement. The

pedagogy required the teacher to be positioned differently in relation to the child, providing choices and facilitating learning, rather than imposing taste. As a sympathetic figure or 'wise counsellor and friend' (Princ. Scott 1906 *EG*, p.181), the teacher was to be someone sought out by the child to answer questions and to pass judgement on the most difficult of issues that could not be solved by the child, alone or with peers.

**Figure 9.2.3: The desiring and free older child as a relational subject**



The teacher was responsible for applying classroom technologies that would require the child to respond to, and grapple with, moral issues. The older child was to read silently, choose texts, and use reference materials to satisfy a desire for knowledge. As part of this process, the students were to be supplied with texts that they would desire, and which would provide the moral ambiguity that required a response and ethical reflection. Even texts of popular culture could be included in this approach because of their appeal to the older child, but also because they offered a pathway to more respected literary forms. The older child was required to respond to these texts in ways that signalled their engagement and enjoyment, while also grappling with the ethical issues that they raised. The ideal older child was active, effortful and reflective, and called on the teacher only when help was needed or a dispute was unsettled.

This desiring and free older child subject was the least common of the four discussed in this chapter in terms of the number of places it was inscribed in the documents I examined. This older child subject remains an important figure, though, for the way that it shows that some of the emphases and teleologies of a 'failed' program—that of the New

Education, which had flourished in the first decade of the century—were available to be taken up in a different form in a different context. A few imaginary lines can be drawn here between the New Education and post-WWI English: the focus of the New Education on the connection with 'real life' became, in the English classroom, an authentic and engaged response with texts that related to the child's life; 'child sympathy' and Child Study became the caring and knowing eye of the teacher who 'knew' the students and monitored their ethical responses; and, recapitulation theories became grounded in selecting texts that were judged to match the stage of development of the child and their interests. The English subjects, especially Reading and also Oral Language, were sites where a new kind of freedom might be located and managed.

### **9.3 Conclusions**

The two subject positions examined in this chapter can be seen to have been produced out of the arrival of a new set of discourses in education at around the turn of the century in South Australia. The discourse of Social Efficiency was in evidence through the way the older child as a meaningful and expressive language user was to do work in English that was related to the real world and to the kind of work they might take up when they left school. Even more in evidence here were the discourses of Developmentalism and the New Education through the way both subject positions were based on the child as a generator of meaning and as the author of their own development. Whereas the subject positions in Chapter 8 placed the need to learn and the initiation of that learning outside the older child, here it operated from within the older child's very nature.

This had enormous implications for the role of the teacher. Rather than being someone who pushed or even forced the older child to learn—leading from the front, as it were—the teacher was now someone who became more of an anxious spectator; fostering that learning, watching it carefully, steering from a distance, but never quite controlling it. To take control of the learning would be to deny the very nature of the older child as someone who had their own meanings, or who had their own desires that needed to be satisfied and driven from within. The teacher had to be sympathetic in order to better understand and be able to work alongside the older child.

Where the two subject positions discussed in this chapter differed was in their stance to correct form which was, to some degree, a reflection of the English subjects that were prominent in their constitution. The older child as a meaningful and expressive language

user was very much shaped around the Language and Composition elements of English and needed to be led toward the use of the correct form and an understanding of the rules that were seen to underpin correct English. This led to an emphasis on understanding the errors the older child produced and to pedagogies that would enable the teacher to decide when to intervene to teach rules. The learning of such rules, however, was always to be subordinate to the older child's intention to make meaning and to express their thoughts. This anxiety produced a pedagogic pattern of expression and correction, where the learning of rules was always delayed to later in the pattern when the child was older and ready to understand the need for correct form to convey the message.

On the other hand, the older child as a desiring and free learner was constituted more in the Reading and literature lesson. Here the emphasis was not on the correct form, but on ensuring that the older child learned to operate on themselves as learners, driving their own efforts and monitoring their responses. Clear models of moral correctness in the literature were of no use in this pedagogy because it was ambiguity and the connection with everyday problems that would engage the older child and help her or him to examine their own moral stance. The teacher's role was to provide the materials and the space to incite that moral problematisation, and to ensure that the students displayed their responses in order that the children themselves, their peers, and the teacher, could reflect on the appropriateness of the response. As a sympathetic and friendly figure, the teacher was in a position to gently shape the contours of the older child's moral response and guide him or her to further development. The texts of popular culture were a resource to be used in this process, rather than something to be rejected. They provided a starting point for the children's interest in literature and models for stories that, because they provided 'dramatic and rapidly' moving stories, and avoided the 'moral didacticism' of traditional school stories (Sayers 1927 *EG*, p.53), were ideal for engaging a response.

The figure of the teacher in relation to both of these subject positions was constituted in very different relation to the students than the teachers featured in Chapter 8. The examples I have provided here are of a pastoral figure who stood alongside, rather than in front of the students. This was a figure who set up the classroom as a workshop where the teacher helped the students to achieve their goals, rather than setting the goals and directing the students to complete them. Such a figure was only imaginable if the older child subject was constituted as a source of meaning and as someone who could sustain the desire to learn if given the right kinds of support. In this way, both the teacher and

older child subject positions discussed in this chapter can be seen as co-constituted, with each established in relation to the other, and reliant on the other's work to successfully perform their own function.

In this summary I have concentrated on the ways in which the subject positions discussed in this chapter differed from those shaped around concepts of culture in Chapter 8. In the final chapter of the thesis I complicate this discussion somewhat by considering a range of ways in which these positions might be seen to be both continuous and discontinuous with one another. It is not my intention to consider the relative importance of these figures for what followed them, or to find in them hints of the older child of English in the present. Rather, it is to consider the implications for curriculum work of the very plasticity of the figure of the older child (and the teacher) within these historical texts.

## Chapter 10 Conclusions

Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. (Foucault, 1977c, p.139)

This 'patiently documentary' study has used historical textual sources to examine the discursive constitution of adolescence in relation to schooling and English/literacy in one local site. Following the lead of the local documentation, however, has led this study to ideas and practices far beyond the boundaries of South Australia. What began (rather naively it now seems) as an examination of the connections between English/literacy and the 'problems' of adolescence in the context of schooling, became more and more an examination of the modes of thought and the historical practices that constituted adolescence as a stage of life, and the ways that schooling and English/literacy were implicated in that process. This has led the study, for example, to eighteenth century Enlightenment thinking, to the writings of German educationalists, to concerns about national economic competition in the nineteenth century, to the travels of educationalists in Europe and America, and to links between Australia and England as 'home', among many others. At the same time as it has ranged so widely, however, this study has also demonstrated that local concerns, resources and histories do impact strongly on the way global ideas and practices can be taken up and used. What has emerged has been a story of flows between the local and the global, so that the history of schooling and English/literacy education in South Australia is understandable as *both* particular to that place *and* connected to wider educational contexts.

This study, therefore, has sought to make two kinds of contribution to research in the fields of English/literacy and schooling for adolescents. First, it has provided a (supplementary) contribution to the history of schooling and English/curriculum for adolescents in South Australia for the first three decades of the twentieth century through the documentary analysis provided in earlier chapters. Second, it has worked at a more conceptual level to consider the ways that institutions such as schools and the English/literacy curriculum are historically constituted ensembles of actions on the human subject. It is this second level that is the focus for my concluding comments which pull back somewhat from the detailed documentary analysis that has characterised the analysis presented in earlier chapters, to undertake a 'pragmatically guided reading' of the practices that have constituted adolescence, schooling and English/literacy in South

Australia in the sense suggested by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1986, p.124) in their discussion of the work of Foucault.

Interpretive understanding can only be obtained by someone who shares the actor's involvement, but distances himself from it. This person must undertake the hard historical work of diagnosing and analyzing the history and organization of current cultural practices. The resulting interpretation is a pragmatically guided reading of the coherence of the practices of the society. It does not claim to correspond either to the everyday meaning shared by the actors, or in any simple sense, to reveal the intrinsic meaning of the practices. (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986, p.124)

The intention here is not to seek some kind of final statement of truth about the ways that adolescence, schooling and English/literacy are linked, but more an 'interpretive understanding' of the 'coherence of the practices' through which their problematisation has operated. This study contributes to understandings about the practices of institutions such as schools and school subjects and their relation to concepts of human development which are summarised in the four parts of the chapter which follow. In the final part of the chapter I consider what these understandings suggest for ongoing research and practice.

### **10.1 History matters: the constitution of adolescence within Enlightenment concepts of race and culture**

Concepts such as adolescence have long histories and are formed at the intersection of a range of discourses and practices—they do not spring fully formed into existence through a process of 'invention' or 'discovery' by a few reforming individuals. This means that concepts such as adolescence must be historicised in order to understand the rules of their formation leading up to any given period of their use—whether that be in the present or, as in the case of this study, at the turn of the twentieth century. Another way of saying this is that history matters because language and discourse carry with them the struggles over their meaning, and the ways of thinking that were important to their formation.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century Enlightenment thinking had a profound impact on the ways in which adolescence could be imagined in the early twentieth century and beyond. The eighteenth century was a time when humankind's assumptions about being above, or separate from, history were disrupted by new forms of scientific thinking which tied humans to the history of the rest of the world (Foucault, 1994, p.54). One of the responses to this was to develop new concepts of progress and development which posited European 'man' as the pinnacle of a process of growth and development of

humankind. Thus if 'man' could not be seen as above history, 'he' could at least be seen as its finest achievement and, importantly, as fulfilling a divine plan which underpinned history. Key to this notion of a divine plan was the 'ideal type', a concept developed from the work of Kant (Steedman, 1994, p.47) which was a blueprint for the growth of humankind and each individual as a representative of its type. The idea that each individual organism had to grow according to the ideal plan that also shaped the growth of an entire species, constructed childhood as both inheritor of the characteristics of the species and as representative of its future development. Childhood was also a site of anxiety, however, in relation to the possibility that a species might decline and even die out if it did not properly develop according to the ideal plan. Thus childhood represented the hope for a more perfect future, but also the potential for degeneracy and extinction.

The theory of recapitulation took up such racialised understandings of growth by positing that the individual retraced the evolutionary growth of the species through a series of predictable stages (Lesko, 2001). Adolescence was conceptualised in recapitulationist theory as a last stage of growth before emergence into a civilised and properly moral adulthood. Also, adolescence came to be understood as a particularly stormy period of life as represented in the Romantic novels of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these stories, the naturally savage child had to come to terms with the social conventions of civilisation—to balance the authentic self against the demands of culture (Donald, 1992, p.8). The storminess and excess of adolescence were seen as both danger and resource in this crucial last stage of growth through which the entire species might be either condemned to degeneracy or taken to a more advanced level of civilisation.

The insertion of European Enlightenment anxieties and hopes into the nature of human development had important consequences for educational thinking. The idea of European civilisation and culture as the pinnacle of racial development was built into the very concept of growth and learning. Adolescence became imaginable as the final and most important step in achieving an ideal form of culture. Conversely, the ideal cultured adult that the adolescent might become was underpinned by a dark and savage Other—the savage child in themselves that had to be outgrown. Within such thinking neither women nor persons of non-European races could ever outgrow their more natural states, and would deserve to be ruled over by properly enlightened 'men'. These ideas represent the foundations of the construction of adolescence—processes of colonial Othering, naturalised versions of (male) European culture as the ideal type for 'mankind', and

stages of development that would lay out humankind over a continuum of culture from the most savage to the most rational.

This study has considered the way such raced and cultured understandings of adolescence were taken up in the Australian context. In newly federated Australia and its former colony states, adolescence could be readily connected to ideals of imperial and national progress that were so important to visions of the nation as the future of the British race—a kind of adolescent nation itself. In addition, forms of English culture, built around literary practices, could be idealised as the pinnacle of human progress, and as an important goal for the education of children beyond the basic level of the primary school. Further, some of the key understandings about adolescence based in these views were to underpin later developments which were more circumspect in foregrounding racial categorisations. For example, Educational Psychology took up the concept of staged growth and the scientific study of childhood and turned these into normalised stages of development in ‘mental’ and other ‘capacities’. Similarly, concepts of culture which were so connected to racial and gendered understandings of the superiority of European civilisation, could later become naturalised as forms of ‘personal response’ within the study of English literature aimed at all older children. Through such processes, cultural and racial categorisations became naturalised as ‘taste’ or ‘mental capacity’, made respectable by the literary canon in the case of the former, or the rational judgement of the psychologist for the latter.

The constructions of growth and culture which arose from Enlightenment thinking in the eighteenth century did not, in themselves, determine the shape and nature of the education that was to be established for the adolescent in the early years of the twentieth century. However, the teleologies they established, and the forms of knowledge they authorised, would make possible new ways of thinking about the older child beyond the compulsory primary school standard, ways that were implicated in various programs of reform in South Australia. These knowledges centred adolescence as a key stage for intervention to ensure an individual’s development into a proper adult citizen; and incorporated adolescence into teleologies of national and imperial progress.

The racial and cultural bases for the construction of adolescence have been forgotten in present-day discourses of middle schooling. However, they are embedded in the very logic of the idea, as is reflected in the various ‘homiletic’ descriptions of adolescence as

some kind of 'turning point' in development that continue to be used in the present. Compare the idea of 'taking the tide at the flood' used in the advertisement for the middle school, and the concept of 'turning points' for adolescents in the Carnegie Council report of the same name, both discussed in Chapter 1, with the following quotation from State Children's Council Commissioner Rhodes in 1905:

The city arabs of to-day are to be the men and women of tomorrow. "Like a stream that at its source may be readily controlled or directed, but, as it proceeds gathers force and impetus that none can withstand—so the character of a child is formed by early teaching and association, until in a few years it is irrevocably moulded for all time." There is a crucial moment in the life of a child when decision has to be given for a good or an evil life. (Rhodes 1905 *EG*, p.139)<sup>140</sup>

A direct intertextual line can be drawn between the concepts of 'taking the tide at the flood' and 'turning points' that continue to be used in the present, and this early twentieth century view of adolescence. The view of adolescence as a time of decision and of excess remains one of the uncomfortable continuities arising from historical constructions of this stage as the flashpoint of racial development. Similarly, constructions of curricula which consider adolescence as a period of more abstract and rational ways of thinking and behaving than earlier stages of learning, have discursive links to constructions of (white, male) civilised culture as the apotheosis of human development. Constructions of stages of 'development' are also built on a dismissal of Other modes of thinking and acting connected to the histories of women and non-European cultures. Recalling the uncomfortable continuities between adolescence and its historical formation allows the use of history to make the present 'strange'. It is to make statements about adolescents in the present, such as those that were featured in Chapter 1, 'read rather strangely' and to begin to question why we must think about adolescence in this way. It also signals the need to ask *which* children and adolescents might be included or Othered through the use of labels formed out of racial and cultural idealisations of Enlightenment 'man'.

## 10.2 Adolescence as a shifting and relational site

The Enlightenment thinking discussed above made adolescence conceivable as an object and as a site of hope and anxiety about the future. However, there were no guarantees that these ideas would result in the constitution of adolescence in the forms it took in the period of this study. Indeed, the adolescent can be understood as a shifting and relational

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<sup>140</sup> This quotation is from a speech given by Rhodes to teachers about the evils of absenteeism and the problems of 'juvenile delinquency' in South Australia at the time.

figure constituted at the intersection of a range of discourses in the early twentieth century. This was the basis behind my decision to label the adolescent as an 'older child' in order to disrupt any assumptions that adolescence was an artefact of nature, or a stable category. What emerged from my study was a shape-shifting figure that appeared across a range of programs and practices and which, because of its very plasticity, could carry the contradictory hopes and anxieties of educational reformers in a time of great change.

The understanding of adolescence as a discursive site is a point of clear differentiation between my study and the revisionist studies of adolescence. Unlike those studies, I have not assumed that adolescence has a foundation outside of discourse—for example in biology, or in relation to institutions such as family, school or work. Instead, I have examined adolescence as 'a site of a multiplicity of practices or labours' (Rose, 1996a, p.300) that have been shaped within discourses and their associated institutional locations. Foucault (1981, p.67) characterised this process as 'the violence we do to things' by which he meant the ways in which the objects of discourse come to be shaped in relation to it. This does not imply that the experience of adolescents and those who teach them are not 'real'; rather, that the experience of adolescence is something constituted within discourses that, over time, have changed the nature of what is seen and experienced as 'real'.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a particularly volatile and open period in education—indeed, the number and sheer diversity of reforms and programs in play at that time would seem to challenge assumptions that we are experiencing, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a unique period of change. This meant that there were many programs of reform, projects and aspirations attached to the education of the adolescent. Six discourses were identified that, on the evidence of the data surveyed, were implicated in the constitution of adolescence in the field of education at that time. These discourses were shaped around three problems in relation to the older child—1) the problem of the most appropriate *culture* to be promoted for future leaders of society; 2) the problem of managing adolescence through natural stages of *development* and 3) the problem of how best to utilise the *talents* of future citizens for the good of the state. The discourses clustered around these problems provided the focus for practices that sought to educate the older child beyond the compulsory standard of primary school.

Given the contradictions and overlap between the discourses in play at the time, the programs and practices they produced could not be characterised as a conscious program of reform by one group or the state to shape adolescence in certain ways. The practices and programs put in place were contingent and partial attempts to solve a range of problems that were strongly affected by global and local resources and possibilities—the problems of educating the thinly spread rural population in South Australia being one example that was a continuous concern in relation to various discourses such as New Liberalism and Social Efficiency. Adolescence could not be ‘read off’ a single discourse because other discourses were at play simultaneously and because the local and mundane practices in place set limits on what it was possible to do. Indeed it was possible for different versions of the older child to exist side by side in various textual representations of the education system. For example, the *Williams Report*, discussed in Chapter 5, was strongly shaped by Social Efficiency discourse and the need for the state to better plan to use the talents of its ‘boys’ to bolster national competitiveness. However, alongside such ideas, there was a vision of post-primary education promoting culture formed through a ‘general education’, as well as the need for education to better care for male or female adolescents in ‘the trying years of their lives’.

I have explained some of the major changes in thinking about adolescence that occurred over the first three decades of the century through transformations in the ‘discursive constellation’ (Foucault, 1972, p.67) in the field of education. The introduction of new discourses and their associated practices could make a difference within the field to what was thinkable and practicable. For example, the introduction of new practices of mental testing and norms of distribution in Educational Psychology, introduced the possibility of the adolescent being seen as a set of individual capacities that were measurable and which might help predict their likely educational trajectory. Such practices also enabled a new scientific basis for the stages of development that had been a focus of anecdotal study in Child Study. Shifts in the figure of the adolescent were made possible by changes in the modes of understanding and the practices introduced by this new discourse.

The changes to the discourses and contradictions evident between them should not be understood as signalling that the formation of adolescence was somehow any less powerful than if it had been a conscious and planned process within the scope of a singular and unchanging vision. As an ensemble of practices and ideas, the different approaches to post-primary education can be considered a *dispositif*, or an apparatus, that

gained its strength through its suppleness and lack of reliance on any single idea or form. Also, the discourses that were in circulation can be seen as productive rather than simply restrictive or repressive. That is, these discourses made possible new dispositions, new forms of discipline, and new ways of constituting the self in and through education. While some were clearly concerned with strong, even violent, forms of control such as military drill, which were emphasised in faculty psychology, there were others such as the New Education which were concerned with the child exercising freedom and the provision of classroom technologies for inciting, rewarding and managing that freedom.

It was also possible to see that discourses were not automatically taken up and did not inevitably produce intended or desired effects. The data surveyed was full of reminders of the ways that teachers and students failed to enact the subject positions and ideals imagined for them by educational leaders. There was evidence that one discourse could be used to resist the ideals of another—often through teachers holding to the practices and ideals of discourses, such as Liberal Education, with which they were familiar. Thus, multiple discourses offered the possibility of ‘play’ in the spaces, overlaps and contradictions between them and the use of one discourse against or with another. The following quotation provides one example of this process, where a Scottish Professor of Education defended the Liberal Education construction of the remote and authoritative teacher by attacking the New Education ideal of the ‘sympathetic’ teacher and the metaphorical construction of teaching as ‘gardening’.

Common rumour and certain “Boy’s books” tell us that there has been, since Arnold’s time, a good deal of this sort of coddling—a kind of pawing of the tender mind by well-meaning pedagogic moralists ... it is a matter of common observation that if our much-tended plant in our aesthetic flower-pot sprouts at all, it always takes advantage of our absence to do so. (Prof. Laurie 1909 *EG*, pp.146-147).

At no stage were the ideal child and teacher a matter of universal agreement, and it was common to see well-established discourses being used in these ways to resist newer ways of constructing the position of the teacher and student.

Finally, the examination of the subject positions made available in the English/literacy subjects has shown that it is not possible to think about the figure of the older child as standing alone, or as a fully formed figure existing in isolation from other elements of discourse. The adolescent was formed in relation to the ideals and practices of school subjects and, especially, the figure of the teacher who was to variously act as model, inspiration, corrector, guide or sympathetic friend, among other roles. As a relational

subject, the adolescent was dependent on a range of technologies, practices and ideals which would enable aspects of the self to be problematised and subject to various disciplinary practices, managed by themselves, their peers or their teacher.

### **10.3 Post-compulsory state schooling as an element of a *dispositif* constituting adolescence**

The third understanding arising from this study is that post-compulsory state schooling was a significant element of a social apparatus which constituted adolescence. This social apparatus or *dispositif* consisted of overlapping and contradictory programs that, nevertheless, proved to be remarkably resilient and flexible in constituting the adolescent as a subject. Thought about in this way, post-compulsory state schooling cannot be seen as a pre-formed idea or a conscious program of reform imposed on adolescence. Instead, it is more understandable as a set of different strategies that were constituted in and through the very same discourses that made adolescence thinkable as an object of education. This is not to deny the importance of schooling in the process of constituting adolescence; rather, it is to argue that the importance of schooling did not arise from it being a singular and conscious program, but from the very flexibility and suppleness that was inherent in the successes, failures and unexpected outcomes from the multiplicity of strategies and programs that were attempted.

According to Foucault (1991c, p.81), even though a *dispositif* is 'disorderly' and composed of different and often incompatible strategies, these can 'produce permanent and solid effects which can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality'. My intention here is to summarise the kinds of 'rationality' which underpinned the installation of post-compulsory state schooling as central to the experience of adolescence. I take 'rationality' here to mean the principles, practices or logics which might have been involved in making the adolescent thinkable as an object of schooling and as a site for various subjectifying practices.

The first rationality was based on the very success of the primary school as a model for the application of populational reasoning. Such reasoning allowed different segments of the population, such as rural or city dwellers, boys and girls, older and younger children, to be imagined as the objects of state intervention in relation to specific problems and needs. By the turn of the twentieth century, the state primary school had only just left behind its fragile beginnings—the agonising in the Commission of 1881 to 1883 over the

worth of the state providing a 'free' primary education shows just how fragile that beginning was—to become established as a significant state-wide institution. A crucial outcome of this process was that schooling operated across the state around norms of age grading, state-wide curriculum, examination standards, and administrative and inspectorial oversight (Vick, 1997a). Primary schooling demonstrated that particular groups, such as young children, could be made more productive citizens on a widespread and efficient scale through the application of normalised procedures. When discourses such as Social Efficiency and New Liberalism introduced new concerns for the state around the management and care of the 'talents' of its older children beyond the compulsory standard, primary schooling offered a model of normalised practices which could be adapted to the care of such a new group.

Significantly, the regulations requiring the charging of extra fees for children staying on beyond the Compulsory Certificate standard had been abolished in 1898 because they proved unenforceable (see Appendix 2.2a). This provided the opportunity for the extension of schooling to older children within the institution of the primary school where, in Classes V and VI, a different kind of education was installed, aimed at the university public exams and modelled on Liberal Education principles.

A second rationality involved the application of bureaucratic modes of thinking to the problem of how best to manage the needs of the state. This was best exemplified in the discourses of Social Efficiency and New Liberalism which constituted some older children as holding 'talents' that might contribute to national economic success, or be realised in the children of even the poorest parents. Both discourses idealised an education system that coordinated the needs of the state for trained workers with the talents of the individual older child through an 'efficient' education system that eliminated 'wastage'. Such thinking saw the state as an efficient and fair manager of the talents of the children in the population. For example, a great deal of energy was put into imagining various carefully coordinated structures which might provide pathways into the training required by the state and the economy. Both the *Williams Report*, and the *Knibbs-Turner Report* provided elaborate educational 'conspectuses' based on exhaustive study of the organisational structures of overseas education systems. Such plans and schemes, none of which were ever realised in the forms outlined, were nevertheless significant for the way that they made the older child imaginable as a subject of schooling, and tied the formation of such schooling to the very 'health' of the state.

Another example of bureaucratic modes of thinking was the way that discourses such as Social Efficiency were able to turn some of the most intractable political and moral issues facing education into *technical* problems amenable to bureaucratic management and administration. The Knibbs-Turner Commission demonstrated this rationality when it argued that effective educational systems required a 'constancy' that was not possible for political leaders to provide. Instead, it was the disinterested bureaucrat who could stand above politics and make reasoned decisions about the appropriate practices and structures that were needed. In this way, the extension of schooling became, in large part, cast as a problem of administration, rather than a political problem. The positioning of the bureaucrat above politics allowed the educational leaders such as Alfred Williams to have unprecedented powers of decision-making on behalf of the state, with the determinations of the bureaucracy having the force of parliamentary regulations in South Australia through the Education Acts of 1875 and 1878. What was crucial to the impact of educational leaders of the time in extending post-primary education was the bureaucratic modes of thinking which constituted and gave force to their actions.

The third rationality that could be identified through this study involved the development of education as a site for the application of specialist expertise. Once again, Social Efficiency discourse provided important ways of conceiving of education that were able to be taken up in schools. The various educational schemes that were imagined for developing the talents of the older child depended on the application of specialist expertise in training those children for various occupations. Thus training needed to be both extended and specialised if the older child was to develop the skills necessary to make a contribution to national economic competitiveness. One of the effects of this rationality about specialism was that many of the programs of post-primary schooling which were attempted were premised on the need to build specialist training into the curriculum. This resulted in programs for different kinds of schools such as technical schools for vocational training, and high schools for academic training. It also resulted in the differentiation between courses within schools, such as in the central schools where separate courses were offered in homemaking, commercial and technical areas.

The discourse of the New Education was also responsible for introducing different forms of expertise into the field of education. Child Study and the pedagogies associated with Herbartianism were all attempts to make education more 'scientific'. Developmental

discourses allowed issues of what to teach and how to teach children, to become questions of expert scientific study, rather than something that might be known through a generalist knowledge or determined through political processes. This was especially the case with adolescence, which was seen to be a particularly 'trying' period that required special attention and care. Educational psychology was to extend this focus on specific expertise through introducing specialised techniques of testing and counselling that might be undertaken only by qualified personnel, or teachers trained by such people.

The focus on specialist knowledge as central to the education of the older child beyond the basic education offered in the primary school was also implicated in moves to strengthen and lengthen the training regimes for teachers, especially by connecting them with a university education. The *Knibbs-Turner Report* and *Williams Report* positioned the teacher as requiring new kinds of expertise that could only be developed through extended training. Interestingly, in South Australia the first moves by the state to extend post-primary education in the first decade of the century were in the name of providing better education for pupil teachers, and the University of Adelaide became directly involved in teacher education at around the same time.

In many ways, the rationalities of bureaucratic management and scientific and specialist expertise overlapped and were mutually reinforcing. A common element of the discourses of talent and development was that they were attempts to 'fix' the older child as an ultimately predictable artefact of expertly or scientifically managed systems of schooling. I use the term 'fix' in a deliberately ambiguous way here, in that these discourses were both attempts at rescue and repair of the adolescent *and* attempts to make this figure a more stable and accessible target for the guidance offered by the curriculum. These discourses removed problems for the state by turning political concerns of education into issues amenable to expert technical intervention. At the same time, discourses of talent and development produced the older child as a subject that the state had a responsibility to care for and expertly or scientifically train, to ensure the state's own ongoing wellbeing.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that schooling was not the only site in which the older child was constituted in the period of this study. The review of literature highlighted a variety of non-school sites in which the adolescent was made an object of concern in Australia in the first decades of the century. For example, the concern for the

health and fitness of the adolescent that was so emphasised in developmental discourses, as well as in those of national and imperial advancement, was connected to various programs such as schemes of military training, playground movements, urban reform, and boys' and girls' clubs as well as to the school. However, forms of post-primary schooling proved to be remarkably adaptable and enduring sites for managing such problems, and the rationalities described here were significant for enabling schooling to take up a central role in this process.

Each of the modes of thinking and rationalities discussed here made it possible for schooling to be such a successful innovation in relation to the teleologies and practices of the discourses examined in this study. Post-compulsory state schooling was important for the way that it established spaces of enclosure that made adolescents thinkable as a special portion of the population that might be managed and shaped in certain ways. However, there also had to be discursive practices and ideas which would make schooling imaginable as a space that might accomplish those goals. This represents a complex 'chicken and egg' argument which rejects the view that schooling was something imposed on adolescence, as if it existed in some kind of ready-made form. My purpose here has been to show that schooling, like adolescence, was 'made up' out of ideas and practices available at the time and was constituted in relation to adolescence.

Post-compulsory state schooling was important for more than the way that it established specialised spaces of enclosure that made adolescents thinkable as a population that might be managed and shaped in certain ways. If schools were to be successful in these tasks, specific practices and technologies were required which could manage and produce adolescents as productive citizens. This is the focus of the last understanding arising from my study, where I examine the role of the English/literacy subjects in this process.

#### **10.4 English/literacy as a key site of subjectification**

The label English was first used as a subject title in the Education Department curriculum in 1907 in the same year that Director Alfred Williams foregrounded the idea of adolescence in the *Williams Report*, and within one year of the establishment of the first South Australian state high school in 1908. From the very beginnings of the twentieth century, then, adolescence and English/literacy were connected to each other and to the anxieties and hopes that informed the ideals of schooling. This is an indication that the linkages that Minister Kemp was able to make between (English) literacy and the

(misbehaving) adolescent subject in school, in the press releases discussed in Chapter 1, form a continuity that stretches back to the formation of post-compulsory state schooling in Australia.

In Chapters 8 and 9 I tracked the way that the discourses that were significant in constituting forms of schooling for the post-compulsory standard student were connected to the operations of the English/literacy curriculum. There was no simple superimposition of these discourses onto the English subjects, however. The component subjects of English had their own histories which meant that the discourses connected to problems of culture, talent and development tended to be taken up differently in different subjects such as Grammar or Reading. However, the importance of the English subjects thought of as an assemblage was evident in the *centrality* of these subjects to the courses in all the different sites where adolescents were schooled. It was also evident in the *variable* ways that the English subjects became associated with a wide range of discourses constituting adolescence. While it is clear that across the English subjects there were quite different modes of operation and historical traditions in play, these differences can be seen to be part of the strength of the field overall for the ways they offered to both *control* the potentially unruly adolescent and to manage his or her approaching adult *freedom*. In what follows, I briefly track these points before concluding with an analysis of the ways the different traditions evident in the subjects of English/literacy might be seen to contribute to the logic of the curriculum field as a whole.

#### **10.4.1 The centrality of the English/literacy curriculum**

The English/literacy subjects were core to every course offered to the adolescent in post-compulsory standard schooling in South Australia. This included the courses offered in Classes V and VI in the primary school, as well as the courses established in high schools, technical schools, central schools and other sites in the 'super-primary' school system. Common elements in this core were the study of English literature (which expanded to include Australian literature in the 1920s for most courses); Poetry, Grammar and Composition with other subjects such as Spelling, Writing and Oral Language or Speech appearing in most courses, typically those being offered in the primary school or to students in vocationally oriented courses in technical and central schools.

This is a reminder that the English/literacy curriculum had long-established traditions from its foundations in the primary school in the nineteenth century that were largely

maintained into the courses established for the adolescent (Patterson, 1999; Peel et al., 2000). Throughout the first three decades of the century, the Grammar and Composition subjects of English/literacy were maintained as important elements of the curriculum and assessment systems across all levels of schooling, including post-primary schools. In addition, versions of English literature, differently named depending on the site, were compulsory in the curriculum. Older students in the primary school had been studying literature since the 1880s and the role of literature in the Reading subject expanded over the first thirty years of the century as literature written for children became more readily available. Some of the bigger variations between the roles of the English/literacy subjects were to be found between different post-primary school courses. Literature, for example, tended to be emphasised more for students going to university, indicating that as well as influences moving *up* from the primary school, there were also movements *down* from the university. By the 1920s, subjects such as Composition and Grammar were no longer listed for the public examinations for these university-bound students. However, for students going to vocationally-oriented central and technical schools, these subjects, plus Spelling and Writing, were maintained alongside literature throughout the period of the study.

One of the reasons the English/literacy subjects were seen as the most important in the curriculum is because they taught the language, reading and writing skills through which all subjects were to be learned. In this way the English/literacy subjects were a keystone for legitimating the entire curriculum, based as it was on the study of the written word (Goodson & Medway, 1990a, p.vii) and for carrying an overall responsibility for making students 'lettered', or for their 'literacy' as it would come to be called (Green, 1993b). However, beyond this, another reason for the importance of English/literacy was that it was charged with the shaping of the older child as a properly moral subject, ready to take on adult roles in the wider world. As I have shown, this role was not restricted to the study of literature, although that was important, but was also carried by subjects such as Oral and Written Composition, and even the humble writing (transcription) lesson.

#### **10.4.2 The variability of English/literacy as an assemblage**

Different subjects within the English/literacy curriculum carried significant roles in the preparation of the child for adulthood, according to the discourses that were in play at various times. For example, within the discourse of Liberal Education, the drill and memorisation aspects of subjects such as Grammar, Spelling and Writing could carry an

important role in establishing habits of correctness and a commitment to effort. On the other hand, in the discourse of Social Efficiency, Composition could be significant for the way that it prepared the older child to perform the kinds of writing that might be required in the field of business. Again, in the New Education, Reading was significant for the way that it offered the older child pleasure and the opportunity to exercise freedom, as a training in self regulation and self improvement.

Characteristic of English/literacy subjects, then, was their variability as an assemblage. Different components subjects carried varying and even contradictory teleologies in relation to the adolescent, depending on the discourse(s) in play. One of the contributions of this study has been to show how, in one local setting, the English/literacy subjects were deployed as sets of pedagogical techniques for constituting a variety of subjectivities. I have shown how forms of English/literacy utilised the technologies of faculty psychology, such as drill, memorisation, analysis and recitation, to develop disciplined styles of reading, writing and speaking as pathways to desired moral tastes and habits. The discourse of Social Efficiency was associated with the use of Grammar and Language lessons to develop children as skilled and expressive users of English. Literary-Cultural Education discourse could be connected with the deployment of English literature as a technology for developing patriotism and a connection to England as 'home'.

Many of these technologies, and the component subjects with which they were associated had long histories in the primary school. The technologies of freedom and desire generated through the discourse of New Education had their origins in the primary school playground where the teacher was to get to know the students and establish a kindly, supervising gaze, intervening only to settle problems that students brought for resolution (Hunter, 1988). The concept of the 'Play Way', introduced into South Australian high schools in the 1920s, which envisaged adolescent students acting out stories and workshopping their lessons, was an example of the way the playground of the nineteenth century public school was to be transformed into the playful space of the secondary English classroom.

However, as open as they were to deployment within a range of discourses, there was also evidence that the English/literacy subjects were not an empty canvas onto which the discourses of the older child could be written, for they had their own histories and practices which also served to constitute the subject positions that could be made

available in classrooms. In reviewing the kinds of child-subject being constituted, and the versions of English/literacy which were associated with these subject positions, I was very much reminded of Morgan's (1990b, p.329) argument that subjects such as English/literacy can never be thought of as a unity. Speaking of reading, for example, he recommends an historical approach that 'stresses the idea of dominant, subordinate, residual, and emergent forms of reading all in contention at any given moment'. There was certainly evidence of such a process of 'contention' between different forms of the English/literacy subjects in this study. For example, I have tracked the way that silent reading became a dominant form by the 1920s, but noted that practices of oral reading and recitation were also retained in some areas, such as the annual reading examination, and poetry lessons. Similarly, many of the urgings by Inspectors for teachers to promote more 'expression' and 'meaning' in oral and written composition were balanced by their complaints about residual forms of Composition, such as copying from a teacher's model. In a related way, different technologies could be employed to very different ends, depending on the discourse operating. For example, literature could be used in some classrooms as a basis for training in taste and analysis; whereas in other approaches emphasising the *Englishness* of literature, this material could become a training in patriotism and commitment to England as 'home'. And again in the New Education inspired reading classrooms, literature could become a site for affirming the pleasures of choice, and for examining the moral implications of the stories read.

It appears that English/literacy at the time of this study was a site of complex, overlapping and even contradictory teleologies and technologies. These could operate at different times, and in different spaces at the same time. Part of the openness of the English/literacy subjects has been a product of the incredible flexibility of the figure of the teacher across the different emphases discussed above. The teacher has operated as a contingent subject (Cormack & Comber, 1996) and formed one corner of a relational triangle, with the student subject on the one hand and the teacher subject on the other. This was reflected in the different versions of the curriculum materials analysed in this study, as changes in thinking about English/literacy and the child subject it sought to form led to major refashionings of what the English/literacy teacher was to do and be in the classroom. For example, as the 'language' subjects emphasised greater meaning and expression from the older child, the teacher was removed from the front of the class as corrector and director, and needed to move to the children and work among them, talking with individuals and teaching as required.

This discussion of the variation across component subjects in English/literacy has tended to confirm characterisations of the field as made up of different strands or traditions around which particular subjects congregate. Elbow (1990, p.111) argues that English/literacy has operated within two 'traditions' which are 'the teaching of grammar and the teaching of literature' both of which have acted as 'agents of gentility and good taste' which he traces to eighteenth and nineteenth practices of 'civilisation'. Green (1998) also acknowledges these two 'axes' of English/literacy and shows that the grammar axis preceded the literary and was based in primary school pedagogies, something overlooked in histories of the subject that have most commonly concentrated on its secondary school form.

Even as it has confirmed such traditions, however, this study serves to highlight the danger of too easily categorising the English/literacy subjects into simple binaries of 'grammar' versus 'literature', or 'skills' versus 'culture', because for every example of such binaries noted, alternative forms of categorisation also suggested themselves. For example, there was certainly a different set of emphases between the language side of the subject, made up of Grammar, Composition, Speech, Spelling on the one hand, and the literary elements around Reading and Poetry on the other. Clearly the former set was strongly connected to non-academic courses, while literary forms were more emphasised in courses aimed at university. However these two sets of subjects did not allow any easy association across the binary of the subjectivities they promoted or the pedagogies associated with them. It was not possible to simply equate literature with freedom, and grammar with correction, for example. I have shown that there was a strong emphasis for the 'expressive and meaningful' older child on children being free in Language lessons to make mistakes, and taking the lead in talk and learning—the rules of Grammar were to be held back for later learning, when the child was ready. And on the literary side of this binary, there was plenty of evidence of the use of literature as a training in forms of analysis, as a difficult and disciplined study in taste, and as emphasising memorisation in Poetry.

As a result, while I recognise the value of such binary labels in helping to untangle some of the different lines of tradition in the English/literacy subjects, there is a danger in them forcing a false unity onto the component subjects that might be labelled as representing the 'literature' or 'grammar' wings. Also, different traditions and subjects can be too

simply read off political categories of 'right' and 'left', 'progressive' and 'conservative', in ways that deny that *all* the approaches discussed in this study have served to discipline students in relation to particular teleologies. It is to this final point that I now turn as I seek ways of characterising English/literacy across some of the traditions it carries to consider some of the forms of unity that might be evident.

#### 10.4.3 Points of diffraction across the subjects of English/literacy

There is a complementary way of thinking about the differences between the component subjects of English/literacy that might go beyond, or at least supplement, its division into various traditions discussed above. The different ideals and practices these traditions represent may well be part of the strength of English/literacy as a technology of subjectification in much the same way that Foucault regards the variability and suppleness of the *dispositif* as important to its solidity and effectivity. To extend this argument, English/literacy has operated as a relatively 'generous' subject<sup>141</sup> readily given over to a whole variety of projects and ideals for the constitution of the older child as a future citizen—as 'a preparation for the whole of life', according to the British Ambassador in 1921 (Geddes *EG*, p.138). This attribute indicates a kind of 'point of diffraction' (Foucault, 1972, p.66) running across the very differences evident in English. That is to say, English/literacy has operated as a location for a training of the self, or as Morgan (1990a, p.203) puts it, 'a training in how to say I'—'I am British', 'I am Australian', 'I have taste', 'I am a learner', and so on. This study has, therefore, illustrated the way that, in one local Australian site, the different 'traditions', or components of English/literacy have been able to be deployed, to constitute diverse versions of the student subject (Green, 1998).

The binaries around which English/literacy operates can be seen as an indicator of what Bourdieu labels the 'legitimate problematic' for the field, and as suggestive of the stakes at play in the field as a whole:

The stakes of the struggle between dominants and pretenders, the issues they dispute, the very theses and antitheses they throw at each other, depend on the state of the legitimate problematic, that is, the space of the possibilities bequeathed by previous struggles, a space which tends to give direction to the search for solutions and, consequently, influences the present and future of production. (Bourdieu, 1996, p.206)

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<sup>141</sup> I borrow this concept of 'generosity' from Rose (1998, p.264) who uses it in relation to the 'professionals of psy [who] are happy to give away their vocabulary, their grammars of conduct, their styles of judgement to others'.

The question arising from Bourdieu's construction of the legitimate problematic of a field as formed around various issues of dispute is what might be the problematic represented by the grammar versus literature binary. One possible way of answering this question suggested in this study is that English is formed around the problem of how best to balance the need to control (the excessive energies of) the adolescent and at the same time ensure that the adolescent will be able to manage the freedom of (an imminent) adulthood. Such a legitimate, and ultimately unresolvable, problematic could be seen in many forms in this study. For example, forms of discipline built around drill, whether that be on the military parade ground or in the English classroom, sought to establish control in the immediate sense *and* to establish that control as a habit that might be carried forward into adulthood. On the other hand, some of the technologies of the playground and the English classroom, especially in relation to reading and expression, sought to establish the basis for the management of freedom through different means. Students needed to be free to exercise choice, to express themselves, even to make mistakes, under the watchful eye of the teacher who led the children to correct forms of expression, or appropriate moral responses to literature. In this regard the work associated with Hunter (1987; 1988; 1994a; 1996; Patterson, 1993, 1999; Peel et al., 2000) has been particularly valuable in highlighting that approaches in English/literacy which have emphasised student freedom and the teacher as a kindly supervisor, are examples of governmental actions on the actions of others whereby the child is trained in how to monitor and manage their own freedom. The analysis in this study suggests that English/literacy has always operated as a disciplinary technology that has employed both overt control *and* freedom to these ends, and should be seen as complementary forms of discipline.

Such an approach suggests that there is value in exploring the debates that run across the component subjects of English/literacy, or even within individual subjects, as indicators of some of the legitimate problematics, or points of diffraction, around which the field might be organised. Another example suggested by this study is that there is a problematic around the nature of the texts that should be used as a basis for the versions of Reading and Literature. Considering the subject positions described in Chapters 8 and 9, both the older child of taste and habit, and the English citizen-subject, were constituted within approaches to English/literacy which emphasised learning through the texts of high culture, especially the literary forms of culture. On the other hand, the meaningful and expressive older child, and the older child of desire and freedom, could be constituted in English/literacy subjects which allowed for and incorporated, if they did

not completely embrace, popular and 'secular' texts. Thus another binary, or problem which would be useful to explore in studies of English/literacy is that which is constructed around the appropriate texts to be used in the training of the child. Such work remains for the future, however, and it is to the issue of the work that might arise from this study that I turn in the last part of this chapter.

## **10.5 For the future: historically informed curriculum and schooling practices**

There is irony in those efforts one makes to alter one's way of looking at things, to change the boundaries of what one knows and to venture out a ways from there. Did mine actually result in a different way of thinking? Perhaps at most they made it possible to go back through what I was already thinking, to think it differently, and to see what I had done from a new vantage point and in a clearer light. Sure of having traveled far, one finds that one is looking down on oneself from above. (Foucault, 1985, p.11)

Foucault's experience echoed with my own as I explored the ways of using history to rethink my work in the present. There were uncanny moments during the exploration of the archive of educational practice in South Australia, in which I recognised practices, ways of thinking, and events that had close connections with my own experience. There was the Dalton Plan of the 1920s which matched almost exactly an 'innovative' scheme of 'contract work' I planned with teachers in a new open plan primary school near the beginning of my teaching career in the 1970s. Drill in spelling and grammar were also familiar activities in my first school—I caught faint snatches of the singsong reading of the weekly spelling list coming down the corridor as I read inspectors' reports which decried the practice of 'simultaneous work', written some 70 years before I experienced these practices. The inspirational addresses of Alfred Williams at teachers' union conferences in the first decade of the century were matched by my experience of attending workshops and conferences at which Garth Boomer (Boomer, 1992)—then a leading consultant for the Education Department—inspired young teachers to work on 'language across the curriculum'. Such 'sightings' of my own experiences in education three generations before I began teaching served as a reminder of the strong continuities in the present with the practices and ideals that were established in the early years of the Education Department. I was able to 'find' myself in parts of the archive, as it were, even as I also experienced the strangeness of unfamiliar ideas and practices that had not survived to my days in the classroom.

However, beyond such nostalgic reminders of my own classroom teaching experience and the identification of continuities and discontinuities with more recent school experience, I also saw aspects of myself in some of the practices of the early twentieth century educational leaders and commentators. This study has shown how the early twentieth century was a period when the 'expert' became central to the planning and running of educational systems. Since that time, expert commentators have played a key role in circulating, restating and authorising the discourses which serve to constitute adolescence. In the speeches, articles, reports and curriculum materials I read in the *Education Gazette* and other places, I saw echoes of my own work and understood how my own commentaries, reviews, speeches and reports on literacy and middle schooling participated in these very same processes of constitution.

I also understood how my enthusiastic involvement in a variety of school and curriculum reforms through the writing of curriculum and policy was shaped through some of the very discourses I have identified in this study—how these discourses 'spoke' me as well as the students and teachers I studied (Cherryholmes, 1988). Importantly, I could see how my own history was implicated in the advice I provided teachers and the recommendations for practice which I promoted. Dyson (1995, p.4) has captured the ways that adults' visions of children and adolescents are inextricably linked with their own histories when she says that we 'use the concept of "development" to construct a path from the childhood of our past to the maturity we seek in our present'.

Dyson shows how important it is that educators have tools for examining their own histories as well as the aspirations they hold for the children and adolescents who are the objects of the discourses in which they participate. This study has pointed to some of the ways in which history can be used to understand how discourses constitute our own practices. This is not to argue that educators can stand outside these discourses, but more that they can use historically informed discourse analysis as a resource for a more circumspect, and reflexive engagement with education that is alive to their own constitution within the field. With this in mind, a number of directions for that 'engagement' with educational ideas and practices have been suggested by this study.

One of the innovations of this study has been the methodological combination of close discourse-analytic method with curriculum-historical inquiry and genealogy. Such work has the potential to help educators understand curriculum and policy as practices which

constitute children and teachers. The work undertaken here has demonstrated that curriculum and policy texts can be analysed to consider the kind of student subjectivities they authorise—what students must do, say or be in the classroom—and how that is (dis)continuous with earlier versions of the same materials. Close discourse analysis informed by history has the potential to help curriculum and policy writers, as well as teachers, to understand ‘the violence we do to things’, and to consider the possible effects of writing students in those ways. Students, too, could potentially be involved in such work to consider the ways they are being constituted and to participate in such writing practices themselves, not just to critique others’ work, but also to produce new possibilities. Such work also has particular potential for teachers to help them understand the day to day effects of the way the figure of the teacher is continually (re)shaped as a subject in relation to school subjects and to the student. Knowledge about how the teacher is being reconstituted can inform professional development practices to support teachers through change. It can also be used by teachers to speak back to, and shape, curriculum and policy documents in terms of their effects on teachers’ work.

There is also an ongoing need for work that is alive to the productiveness of discourses. Bacchi (2000) has criticised the field of policy studies for turning the analysis of discourses into a kind of ‘ideology critique’ which focusses on the ways that they suppress and dominate certain groups. This study has shown how critical discourse-analytic work can draw attention to the range of possibilities for human subjectivity that discourses provide, and show that there are no singular and totally dominant forms at work at any one time. There are possibilities here for historically informed discourse-analytic work to provide insights into the multiplicity of teleologies and practices available in fields such as middle schooling and English/literacy which may be used in innovative ways. Such work is committed to considering the productive dimensions of discourse in relation to specific locations and contexts, so that teachers can ‘relocate themselves among the actual communities and historical situations they find themselves in’ (Morgan, 1990a, p.231). As Luke (1997) argues:

...critical discourse analysis can be judged, to put it crudely, as social actions—as textual interventions in the public sphere which attempt to make material differences for particular constituencies and interests. (Luke, 1997, p.346, emphasis in the original)

The final set of implications relates to the English/literacy curriculum and to the potential for work that engages with its possibilities *and* limits as a moral technology. English/literacy has proven to be a remarkably durable apparatus both for disciplining

students and for providing a range of 'practices of the self' in which students learn to manage their own freedom. In itself, this insight can provide an indication of the limits and possibilities inherent in the subject. English/literacy can neither be cast as a path to liberation, nor seen as a site of mindless domination. The history of the subject suggests that it always works around a problem of negotiating freedom *with* control and provides techniques whereby students eventually learn to manage themselves; through habit, desire, expression, choice, correction, drill, skills, response, and so on. Different component subjects and levels of schooling may have emphasised different aspects of these, but understood as a sum across the grammar-literature, primary-secondary and other divides it has involved, the negotiation of freedom with control remains a central logic for the subject.

One of the implications is that teachers need access to the history/ies of the subject so that they understand the work that it does, as well as its limits. A grounded and circumspect understanding of the possibilities and limits of English/literacy may enable teachers to put under pressure claims that the subject provides a path to a privileged culture, or a form of personal 'liberation', or even a guaranteed job. It will be also be possible to take up some of the modes of analysis used in this study to help curriculum and policy writers, teachers and students to see that English/literacy has always been built around various inclusions and exclusions in terms of the 'culture(s)' it promotes, the dispositions it values, and the practices it employs. The value of the historical analysis undertaken here has been to show how these inclusions and exclusions are built around ideas and anxieties that were prominent in the period of formation of the subject in the early twentieth century.

For my work with middle school teachers, it will be important to explore the ways in which the constitution of adolescence was built around racial and colonial categories that informed the ideals of *English* literature and the teleologies around which constructions of the ideal student were built. I can also show how the introduction of new kinds of texts and technologies had an impact on English/literacy teaching which opened up fresh possibilities for how teachers and students were to work in the classroom. It will be important to explore the productive dimensions of such change, to consider what possibilities it provides for different groups of students, as well as what might be worth resisting or redirecting.

As I imagined the work that this study might lead to, I was continually drawn back to the triangular representation of the learner, the teacher and English/literacy curriculum as relational subjects which was used in Section 4. The understanding that the adolescent, the teacher and the curriculum do not stand alone, but are formed out of a dynamic relation between each element of the triangle, provides an indication that my work needs to be concerned with just such a dynamic. That involves considering the ways the curriculum, teachers and students might be brought together and examined in relation to each other. Especially, how can the perspectives of the actors involved in this triangle be brought together and used as resources for conversation and debate? Such a process has the potential to put together the broader hopes and anxieties that drive curriculum with the local and contingent practices and contexts that are so important to the way that curriculum is enacted in particular times and places. It is to consider the discursive and non-discursive resources that are at play, and how they might be used with and against each other in the interests of those involved. My hope is that history will prove an important resource in such a process, both for showing how 'strangely' we do things in the present and for helping us understand that things could be otherwise.