

# **Adolescence, Schooling and English/Literacy: Formations of a Problem in Early Twentieth Century South Australia**

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# Table of contents

<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Acting the fool: adolescence in the Minister of Education’s press release .....	5
1.2 Watching Australian soap operas: adolescence in the school advertisement.....	7
1.3 The shape of this study .....	9
1.3.1 A guide to the structure of the thesis .....	10
<b>SECTION 1 FRAMING THE ‘PROBLEM’</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Framing an historical study of the ‘problem’ of the older child, English/literacy, and schooling</b> .....	<b>14</b>
2.1 An overview of the study .....	14
2.1.1 The problematisation in relation to social practice: the <i>dispositif</i> .....	16
2.1.2 The historical period and sources of data for this study .....	17
2.1.3 Fields of study .....	18
2.2 Theoretical tools .....	23
2.2.1 Discourse .....	23
2.2.2 Subjectivity .....	26
2.2.3 Governmentality .....	28
2.3 Methodologies .....	30
2.3.1 Genealogy .....	31
2.3.2 Curriculum-historical Inquiry .....	34
2.3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis .....	41
2.4 The data corpus .....	49
2.4.1 The Education Gazette.....	52
2.4.2 Curriculum documents .....	53
2.4.3 Parliamentary Papers.....	58
2.4.4 Other educational reports.....	59
2.5 Conclusion.....	60
<b>SECTION 2 TRACKING THE DISCOURSES OF ADOLESCENCE, SCHOOLING AND THE ENGLISH/LITERACY CURRICULUM</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Historical constructions of adolescence and childhood</b> .....	<b>62</b>
3.1 Sociohistorical perspectives on adolescence .....	63
3.1.1 Ariès and the ‘discovery’ of childhood .....	64
3.1.2 Historical studies of adolescence following Ariès .....	67
3.1.3 The limitations of sociohistorical studies .....	75
3.2 Adolescence and childhood as discursive sites.....	82
3.2.1 ‘The child’ and ‘the adolescent’ made possible by the Enlightenment.....	83
3.2.2 The formation of new pedagogies and sites for a moral upbringing .....	91
3.3 Childhood and adolescence in the late nineteenth century .....	94
3.3.1 The racialised child/adolescent and curriculum design .....	95
3.3.2 Child Study and developmentalism .....	96
3.3.3 Childhood and adolescence as projects of nation and empire .....	99
3.4 Conclusions.....	101

<b>Chapter 4 Schooling and English/literacy as sites for shaping the student subject.....</b>	<b>104</b>
4.1 Schooling adolescence in Australia .....	105
4.1.1 South Australian studies of schooling and adolescence.....	107
4.1.2 Australian studies of schooling and adolescence .....	114
4.2 The English/literacy curriculum as a site for shaping the student subject .....	121
4.2.1 The origins and place of English/literacy in the school curriculum .....	122
4.2.2 Studies of English/literacy in England and other British colonies .....	131
4.2.3 Australian studies of English/literacy .....	138
4.3 Conclusion.....	146
<b>SECTION 3 SCHOOLING THE OLDER CHILD IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1900-1929.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Chapter 5 ‘The children in after life’: the late nineteenth century child after primary school in South Australia.....</b>	<b>150</b>
5.1 State involvement in education prior to 1881 in South Australia .....	151
5.2 The Commission on the Working of the Education Acts 1881-1883 .....	152
5.2.1 The development of the moral citizen in a secular school system.....	153
5.2.2 The limits of the state in providing schooling for the population .....	158
5.3 The older child and schooling in the late nineteenth century.....	162
<b>Chapter 6 The older child in the early twentieth century: three (inter)national reports ...</b>	<b>164</b>
6.1 ‘Our own boys leave school much too soon’: the <i>Mosely Report</i> .....	166
6.1.1 Linking the older ‘boy’ with the nation and empire.....	167
6.1.2 The ideal ‘boy’ .....	168
6.1.3 Extended, specialised schooling as preparation for work.....	171
6.1.4 Recasting the extension of education as a technical problem.....	172
6.2 ‘More intelligent workers and citizens’: the <i>Knibbs-Turner Report</i> .....	174
6.2.1 The inferiority of the local education system .....	175
6.2.2 The older child with talent.....	176
6.2.3 Balancing liberal and scientific education: the Commission model for post-primary schooling .....	177
6.2.4 An efficient system with no wastage: Social Efficiency and bureaucratic reasoning .....	180
6.3 ‘Our girls and boys during the trying years of their lives’: the <i>Williams Report</i> .....	184
6.3.1 The importance of education to the nation, state and race.....	184
6.3.2 Education and democracy: New Liberalism and Social Efficiency .....	187
6.3.3 A general and liberal education.....	192
6.3.4 Adolescence.....	193
6.3.5 The school structure recommended.....	195
6.4 Conclusions.....	199
<b>Chapter 7 Changing shape: the older child in the Education Gazette .....</b>	<b>204</b>
7.1 Discourses of culture: Educating the older child through the knowledge of most worth..	206
7.1.1 Liberal Education: the knowledge of most worth in providing a ‘general education’ .....	208
7.1.2 Literary-Cultural Education: the formation of culture based in the vernacular .....	217
7.1.3 Reviewing the field of culture .....	224
7.2 Discourses of development: education through stages of growth .....	225
7.2.1 The New Education: constituting adolescence through a scientific gaze .....	226
7.2.2 Educational Psychology: measuring and managing the capacities of the adolescent.....	241
7.2.3 Reviewing the field of development.....	250

7.3 Talent .....	251
7.3.1 Social Efficiency: directing the talents of the older child in the service of the state .....	252
7.3.2 New Liberalism.....	267
7.3.3 Reviewing the field of talent .....	271
7.4 Conclusion: patterns of change and persistence in constituting the older child .....	271
7.4.1 Patterns of discontinuity: the changing shape of the older child.....	272
7.4.2 Patterns of persistence: regularities in the practice of the discourses of the older child.....	275
7.4.3 Patterns of interaction: the effect of changes to the discursive constellation.....	277
<b>SECTION 4 THE OLDER CHILD AND THE ENGLISH SUBJECTS .....</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Chapter 8 Subject to English Part 1: Formations of the English subjects and English as access to culture .....</b>	<b>282</b>
8.1 Mapping the English curriculum for the older child .....	285
8.1.1 English as a set of component subjects .....	285
8.1.2 Patterns of revision in the English subjects .....	290
8.2 'Reading maketh a full man': the older child with taste .....	293
8.2.1 Literary studies as a basis for a general education .....	295
8.2.2 Literature as a storehouse of wisdom and taste.....	297
8.2.3 The reading habit .....	299
8.2.4 Demonstrating taste through oral performance .....	303
8.2.5 'A season of travail': underpinning a general education with technologies of mental discipline.....	307
8.2.6 Summary and review: the older child with taste as a relational subject.....	312
8.3 'An initiation into the corporate life of man': the older child as an English colonial citizen .....	315
8.3.1 A colonial English heritage .....	316
8.3.2 An Australian citizen?.....	321
8.3.3 The 'mother-tongue' .....	323
8.3.4 Providing the appropriate English literature for the older child .....	325
8.3.5 Summary and review: the older child as English colonial citizen, as a relational subject .....	330
8.4 Conclusions.....	333
<b>Chapter 9 Subject to English Part 2 – English as an expression of the self.....</b>	<b>337</b>
9.1 The older child as meaningful and expressive language user.....	337
9.1.1 The older child as meaning maker .....	338
9.1.2 Oral and written language—the expressive older child .....	342
9.1.3 English in the realm of the 'real' .....	345
9.1.4 The place of correctness and correction .....	347
9.1.5 Summary and review: The meaningful and expressive older child as a relational subject .....	353
9.2 The older child as desiring and free learner.....	355
9.2.1 The older child as a naturally desiring learner in English .....	357
9.2.2 Towards a pedagogy of freedom and correction .....	360
9.2.3 Summary and review: The desiring and free older child as a relational subject .....	371
9.3 Conclusions.....	373
<b>Chapter 10 Conclusions .....</b>	<b>376</b>
10.1 History matters: the constitution of adolescence within Enlightenment concepts of race and culture.....	377

10.2 Adolescence as a shifting and relational site .....	380
10.3 Post-compulsory state schooling as an element of a <i>dispositif</i> constituting adolescence .....	384
10.4 English/literacy as a key site of subjectification .....	388
10.4.1 The centrality of the English/literacy curriculum .....	389
10.4.2 The variability of English/literacy as an assemblage .....	390
10.4.3 Points of diffraction across the subjects of English/literacy .....	394
10.5 For the future: historically informed curriculum and schooling practices .....	396
<b>References .....</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Appendix 2.4 Administrative arrangements for the post-compulsory state schooling in South Australia, 1875-1929 .....</b>	<b>415</b>
<b>Appendix 2.4.1 Sample pages from the <i>Education Gazette</i> .....</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>Appendix 2.4.4 Table of Ministers of Education and Education Department Officers, 1900- 1929 .....</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>Appendix 8.3.4a Set and supplementary readers in 1929 Grade VII Reading courses.....</b>	<b>424</b>
<b>Appendix 8.3.4b English syllabus for 1929 English courses in First, Second and Third Year.....</b>	<b>426</b>
<b>Appendix 8.3.4c Central school syllabus for 1924 and 1929 in the ‘General Literature’ and ‘Poetry’ subjects, Grade VIII &amp; IX.....</b>	<b>427</b>

## List of figures

Figure 1.2: Middle school advertisement .....	7
Figure 2.1.3: The fields of study for my research.....	19
Figure 2.3.3: Dimensions of discourse.....	44
Figure 2.4.2: Courses for the older child that were mapped for this study .....	58
Figure 6.2.3a: Primary school as preparation for secondary school.....	178
Figure 6.2.3b: Five pathways for post-primary education .....	179
Figure 6.3.2a: Metal Workshop in USA.....	190
Figure 6.3.2b: Preparing decorations for the nursery, Stout Training School.....	191
Figure 6.3.2c: Decorating the walls, Stout Training School .....	191
Figure 6.3.5a: Elementary school in Berlin .....	195
Figure 6.3.5b Interior of Girls School, Zurich .....	195
Figure 6.3.5c: West Leeds High School.....	196
Figure 7: Discursive fields constituting the older child as a subject of education in South Australia 1900-1929 .....	205
Figure 7.1a: Boys miniature rifle training, Woodville Primary School .....	216
Figure 7.1b: Girls learning club-swinging, Woodville Primary School.....	217
Figure 7.2.1a: Studying the child—hand-grip .....	234
Figure 7.2.1b: Studying the child—head height .....	234
Figure 7.2.1c: Excursions as a technology of the New Education .....	240
Figure 7.2.2a: Normality as defined by the bell-curve.....	243
Figure 7.2.2b: Charting an educational trajectory .....	243
Figure 7.2.2c: Linking mental age and occupations.....	246
Figure 7.3.1a: Mapping the older child's schooling.....	261
Figure 7.3.1b: Populational reasoning—tracking girls' occupational patterns .....	262
Figure 7.3.1c: Technologies of the Vocational Guidance Scheme .....	263
Figure 7.3.1d: Specifying students' occupation on an educational grid.....	264
Figure 7.4a: The axis of discipline.....	275
Figure 7.4b: The axis of learning.....	276
Figure 8.1.2: A map of the 'language' group of the English subjects for Class V/Grade VII .....	292
Figure 8.2.5a: Writing and drilling the body .....	309
Figure 8.2.5b: Analysis guide in the 1924 English Primary <i>Course of Instruction</i> .....	311
Figure 8.2.6: The older child with taste as a relational subject .....	314
Figure 8.3.5: The English colonial citizen as a relational subject .....	331
Figure 9.1.4: A pedagogic pattern of expression and correction .....	348
Figure 9.1.5: The meaningful and expressive older child as a relational subject .....	353
Figure 9.2.2: A pedagogy of freedom and correction.....	360
Figure 9.2.3: The desiring and free older child as a relational subject .....	372

## List of tables

Table 1a: What adolescents will become in <i>Turning Points</i> .....	4
Table 1.1: The tying together of adolescence and literacy in Ministerial speeches and press releases.....	6
Table 2.1.3 Labels for the older child.....	20
Table 2.3.3: Dimensions of discourse in relation to the data of this study.....	44
Table 2.4 Numbers of children above the age of compulsion attending primary and post-primary schools, 1907 to 1916.....	51
Table 2.4.2a: The class system 1876 to 1915.....	53
Table 2.4.2b: Years of publication for the <i>Course of Instruction</i> .....	55
Table 2.4.2c: Education Department courses of study for post-primary schools.....	58
Table 2.4.3: Major documents analysed from the Parliamentary Papers.....	59
Table 6.2.1: Descriptors for NSW education in 'preliminary observations' section of the <i>Knibbs-Turner Report</i> .....	175
Table 7.2.1: Pedagogical methods and plans emphasising freedom.....	238
Table 8: Major subjectivities made available in the English curriculum 1900-1929.....	284
Table 8.1.1a: English subjects in the 1907 Primary <i>Course of Instruction</i> .....	286
Table 8.1.1b: Labels for the English subjects in the primary school curriculum 1878-1929.....	286
Table 8.1.1c: Labels for the English subjects in post-primary courses 1899-1929.....	287
Table 8.1.2a: Revisions to selected Class V/Grade VII English subjects.....	291
Table 8.3.4a: Set and supplementary readers in selected Class V/Grade VII Reading courses.....	326
Table 8.3.4b Set texts in the Junior Public Examination for selected years.....	327
Table 9.1.1: Anxieties about silent reading.....	341

# Tables of abbreviations

## Abbreviations used for titles of historical documents

CI	Course of Instruction for Primary Schools
Ed. Acts Comm. FR	Final Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts (published 1883)
Ed. Acts Comm. PR1	Progress Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Education (published 1881)
Ed. Acts Comm. PR2	Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts (published 1882)
Education RC PR1	First Progress Report of the Royal Commission on the Adelaide University and Higher Education* (published 1911)
Education RC PR3	Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education (published 1912)
Education RC FR	Final Report of the Royal Commission on Education (published 1913)
EG	Education Gazette
Knibbs-Turner Report	Report of the Commissioners, Mainly on Secondary Education, Containing the Summarised Reports, Recommendations, and Extended Reports of the Commissioners (published 1904). NB: the letters SR (for Summarised Report) and ER (for Extended Report) are appended to the page number to indicate the appropriate section referred to
Mosely Report	Report of the Moseley Educational Commission to the United States of America, October-December 1903 (published 1904)
MPEB	The Manual of the Public Examinations Board
Newbolt Report	The Teaching of English in England (published 1921 by the Board of Education Great Britain)
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SAGG	South Australian Government Gazette
Williams Report	Preliminary Report of the Director of Education Upon Observations Made During an Official Visit to Europe and America, 1907 (published 1908)

\* This royal commission changed title between 1911 and 1912 to reflect the fact that it considered and reported on all matters relating to the Adelaide University in its first year and thereafter concentrated on schooling. No second progress report could be found and the three reports listed here contained all the evidence given over the period of the royal commission.

## Abbreviations for organisations

Department, the	Education Department of South Australia
SCC	State Children's Council
PEB	Public Examinations Board

## Abbreviations for titles

Comm.	Commissioner
Dir.	Director or Director-General of Education. The position title for the Head of the Education Department of South Australia from the early twentieth century
Insp.	Inspector of Schools
Insp.-General	The Inspector-General of Schools. The position title for the Head of the Education Department of South Australia until the early twentieth century
Princ.	Principal
Rev.	Reverend
Supt.	Superintendent

## Other abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
NSW	New South Wales
SA	South Australia
USA	United States of America
WWI/WWII	World War 1/World War 2

## Summary

This research examines the history of a contemporary problem—the positioning of adolescence as a dangerous turning point between childhood and adulthood and the hope that school and literacy can make adolescence safe. This problematisation is examined genealogically to consider how adolescence, schooling and English/literacy were placed together in the first three decades of the twentieth century in South Australia. The study utilises curriculum and educational texts from the early twentieth century as data which are examined using methods of genealogy, curriculum-historical inquiry and critical discourse analysis. The methodological and theoretical tools employed in the study are explained in Section 1.

Section 2 surveys the literature which considers the history of the ideas of childhood and adolescence, as well as studies of adolescent schooling and English/literacy curriculum. This survey provides analytic categories for the examination of the data corpus as well as an historical context for schooling and English/literacy curriculum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Section 3 explores the discourses that operated to constitute schooling and adolescence in South Australia and shows that these discourses clustered around three major problems—the training of the older child into appropriate forms of *culture*; the growth of the older child through racially informed stages of *development*; and the efficient management and promotion of the *talents* of the older child. The adolescent can be seen, not as shaped by a conscious coordinated project operating in the interests of a particular ideology or class, but as constituted within a range of overlapping, parallel and contradictory teleologies, programs and practices.

Section 4 examines the English/literacy curriculum as a particularly open and productive site for constituting the adolescent in the early twentieth century. Four major subject positions formed within English/literacy are explained. The first two—the older child with taste and the older child as an English colonial citizen—are shown to be organised around considerations of the most appropriate knowledge and culture needed by future citizens. The second pair of subject positions—the meaningful and expressive older child and the older child as desiring and free learner—are concerned with how best to manage the freedom of adolescents, and turn them into productive and self-managing citizens.

A concluding chapter summarise the key insights from this study. It shows that adolescence has been formed around concerns about race and culture based in European thinking well before the twentieth century. Adolescence has operated as an open site onto which were written a variety of anxieties and hopes. Schooling itself cannot be seen as a singular program of reform in relation to adolescence; rather, it was a disparate set of programs that derived its strength from the variety and adaptability of the technologies it incorporated. The English/literacy curriculum was a particularly important site for the constitution of adolescence within schools, especially for the way that it offered technologies which might control the excesses of adolescence, but also help them to manage their own freedom as adults-to-be.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Phillip Anton Cormack

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