

Filling in a Historical Gap:
Post-Primary English Curriculum in South Australia –
from the 1920s to the 1950s

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Introduction

The 1920s to the 1950s are something of a grey area in the history of English curriculum in Australia. In the main, curriculum historians have concentrated on either the period of the formation of public schooling in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or the period of the rise of the so-called 'New English' in the 1960s and 1970s¹. For example, one recent historical review of the so-called New English, *Re-Viewing English*, (Sawyer, Watson, & Gold, 1998), nominates in its introduction (Little, 1998, pp.ii-iii) four periods of English teaching for attention. These are the 1880s-1910s; the 1960s; 1975-1997; and 1998 and subsequently².

While these are clearly periods in which significant events and changes in English teaching took place, the bracketing of the period between the 1910s and the 1960s represents an interesting historical move. Are we to take it that nothing of note happened in this period, or that at least no significant change occurred after the 1910s until the 1960s? This paper takes up the challenge of exploring these largely unexamined years of English teaching, in order to *supplement* available forms of English curriculum history. In our view, it is important to examine those years *before* what is commonly understood as a renaissance from the 1960s on, when English teaching attained new agency with regard to curriculum reform. As it happens, the years from the 1920s to the 1950s represent a fruitful site for examination of the discourses that shaped English teaching, in order to understand how they may have been sustained, rejuvenated or re-articulated in the 'New English' of the 1960s and 1970s, or perhaps overlooked and even suppressed.

The research reported here seeks to 'supplement' the history of English teaching in Australia in another way. There is a tendency in curriculum-historical studies for the most populous eastern states to operate as a 'stand-in' for Australia as a whole. For example, in the same introduction to *Re-Viewing English* referred to above, Little states:

... I attempt to place English teaching in the context of education and the politics of education, using New South Wales as a case study in the knowledge that developments in other States have not been dissimilar (Little, 1998, p.ii).

Later (p.vi), he remarks: "'Tripod' English [grammar, composition, literature] was taught under the syllabus of 1911, which was not amended until 1943, and then only slightly". The question for us has been, how true is this in other parts of Australia – does the use of, say, New South Wales in this period provide a truly national perspective on the English curriculum at a particular time, or did different states have different experiences? Our work reports on the history of English curriculum in South Australia over this same period, in a way that we hope contributes to a more elaborated and nuanced national perspective on the history and politics of English in Australia.

¹ For exceptions to this, see Brock (1996), Reynolds (1996) and Cormack and Comber (1996)..

² For a similar account, see Davis and Watson (1990).

Mapping the post-primary curriculum

This paper is part of a larger project, investigating the formation of the English subjects in Australia in the first half of the twentieth century (Green, Cormack and Reid, 2000; Green and Reid, 2002; Cormack, 2001). That story necessarily embraces the extension of public education provision, from primary ('elementary') to secondary ('post-primary') schooling, and due attention accordingly to primary as well as secondary English teaching. 'English' as such first emerged in the primary school curriculum. Only as the public high school became a feature of the Australian educational landscape was secondary English developed along these pre-established liberal-bureaucratic lines, as a distinctive school-subject in the modern guise. However, it became clear, very early in our work, that we had made a problematic assumption that there was indeed a singular 'secondary' English curriculum to 'map'. Much early and ongoing work had to be conducted to identify and trace the different versions of post-primary schooling that were established, reviewed and reconstituted in the period under review. Each of these versions of post-primary schooling had their own curriculum that had to be found or identified and mapped.

As we soon discovered, this involved taking account of a myriad of post-primary options made available in South Australia during the period under study. Although secondary education had been available to those who could afford the private schools and colleges established many years earlier, the evolution of state post-primary education for students in regional and metropolitan areas was particularly complex during the first half of the twentieth century. It also became apparent from our mapping that there was no singular English curriculum on offer. Here, we outline the various kinds of post-primary options made available, map the range of subjects on offer within each type of school, and thus provide a background to the analysis we conducted of the secondary English curriculum offerings over the forty year period.

The Education Act of 1905 was significant in that it formalised compulsory attendance in primary schools, and paved the way for more debate on the systematic development of post-primary education. The newly appointed Minister of Education, Alfred Williams, undertook a year-long tour of Europe and America in 1907, and on "the director's return, the Government and Education hastily set about solving the crisis of youth and expiating the cardinal sin of lagging behind overseas developments" (Miller, 1986, p.135). Initially, public post-primary education was only available in the form of Continuation Classes, or extensions of primary schools. However, in 1908 Adelaide High School was officially opened with an enrolment of over five hundred students, a significant number of these training to become teachers, and in the following year eight District High Schools were opened. This marks the beginning of a period of expansion and debate focused on the purposes and forms of secondary education in South Australia.

For the purposes of this study, four major threads have been identified in the development of post-primary education. These were:

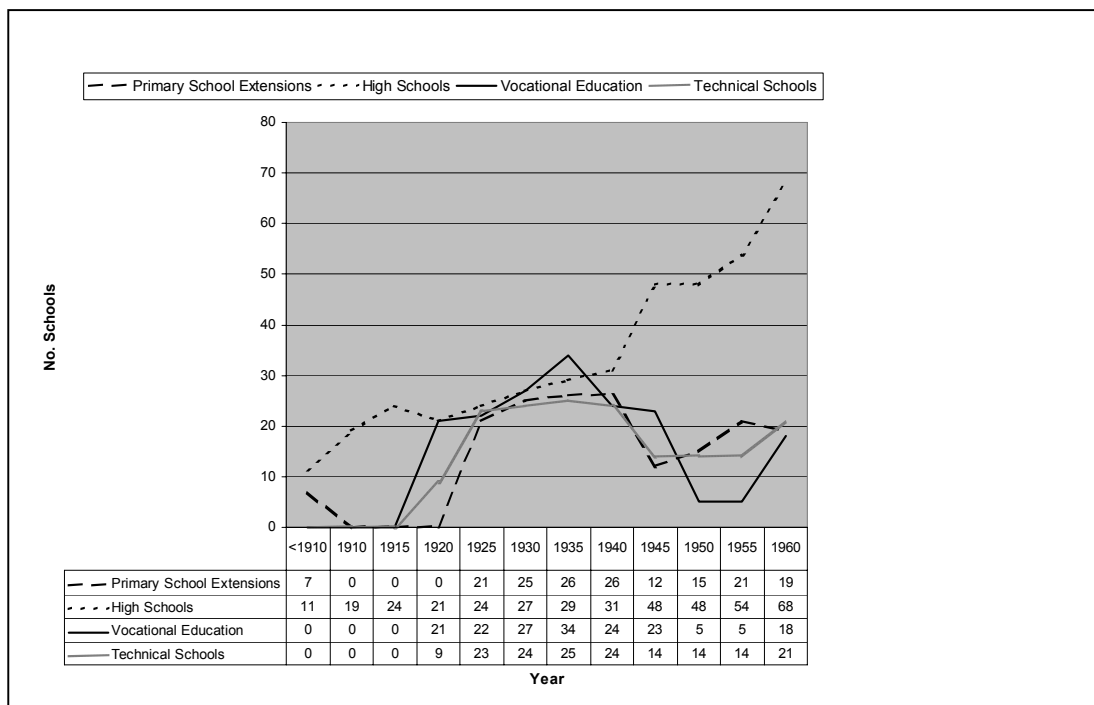
- extensions of primary schools

(continuation classes and higher primary schools with English as a compulsory subject)

- vocational training centres
(special vocation schools, apprentice trade schools etc. which offered specialist training in apprenticeships and trades without a general curriculum or English; these were often part-time, evening and adult classes)
- technical education
(central, technical, junior technical and country technical schools, offering a general curriculum, including English as a compulsory subject at all levels, in addition to some vocational training)
- high schools
(including district high schools and area schools offering both academic and vocational courses, including English as a compulsory subject).

Figure 1 is a representation of the development and changes of post-primary institutions from 1910 to 1960. It can be seen that the 1920s-1950s was a period of flux, particularly in relation to vocational and technical training. From the 1950s on, high schools came to dominate.

Figure 1: Post-primary schooling in South Australia from the 1920s to the 1950s



*This illustrates the number of schools (not enrolments)

*Area/Consolidated Schools created in 1942 included as High Schools

*Adult Education Classes in regional areas created in 1957 included as Vocational Education

Summary of data used in the analysis of post-primary schooling

The Education Department of South Australia published complete and distinct Courses of Study for three post-primary educational settings: Central Schools (1924), Technical Schools (1929) and High Schools (1929 – for 1st Year and 2nd Year). The senior secondary years in High Schools (Intermediate, Leaving and Leaving Honours) were governed by the syllabus and examinations as set by the Public Examinations Board of the University of Adelaide. The division in High Schools shifted in 1923 when it was decided to delay by one year the first Public Examinations Board syllabus, thus allowing more time for students and teachers to satisfy the demands of the curriculum leading to that first public examination. Thus, in 1923, what had been the Junior Examination at the end of the 2nd Year, became the Intermediate Examination at the end of the 3rd Year.

The Public Examinations Board released a new document each calendar year to be implemented in High Schools. In contrast, the Education Department produced distinct documents for each of the post-primary options and such courses were used over many years with only minor revisions (eg: titles of “approved books”) and these were noted in the *Education Gazette*. The only other official Education Department of South Australia post-primary course of study or syllabus we were able to locate that was released during the period of our study was *A Course of Study for Central Schools (Boys)* (1939). This came at a time when boys’ enrolments in Central Schools were falling dramatically, against the trend of increasing numbers of boys at similar technical school settings in the eastern states of Australia.

It is worth noting that Higher Primary School students undertook the syllabuses of the Correspondence School or that set by the Public Examinations Board of the University of Adelaide. Further references to Higher Primary Schools were to be found in Courses of Instruction for Primary Schools (1929). Higher Primary Schools were seen to be extensions of primary schools, and were staffed by teachers trained in primary, rather than secondary, teaching. The Syllabus of Subjects and Courses in Technical Schools (1929) included details for part time and adult vocational classes including the Apprentice Trade Schools, and for the purposes of this study, the only section referred to is the Thebarton Technical High School Course that included English as a compulsory core subject. In the specialist vocational settings, students usually studied part-time or in the evening, and undertook apprenticeships or training in a trade without a general curriculum or English.

Differentiation of post-primary offerings

Each of the documents identified above, as well as any references to Higher Primary Schools in the Course of Instruction for Primary Schools (1929), were analysed to consider:

- which students the designated school type was designed for
- what the school type was intended to offer these students, if stated
- the source of the curriculum/syllabus
- the grades or year levels covered
- the certificate(s) offered on completion

This analysis (shown in Figure 2) gives some sense of the claims made for each kind of post-primary schooling and a description of their purposes. It would appear from this analysis that gender, social class, location, and local industries impacted on what was made available for those students who stayed on beyond the ‘qualifying’ certificate or the age of compulsion.

Figure 2: Post-primary education offerings

	Higher Primary Schools	Central Schools	Technical Schools	High Schools
Education Department documents	Course of Instruction for Primary Schools (1929), Appendix III, Education Department of South Australia	Courses of Study for Central Schools (1924) Education Department of South Australia,	Syllabus of Subjects and Courses in Technical Schools (1929) Education Department of South Australia	Courses of Study for High Schools with Notes and Suggestions (1929), Education Department of South Australia
Who attends?	pupils who have gained the Qualifying Certificate*, or are unable to attend a High School	the large number of children who will leave school at or about the age of 15 or 16 to proceed to posts, either in the public offices or in the commercial and industrial world.	*full time (day) boys	*the large number of children who will leave school at or about the age of 15 or 16 to proceed to posts, either in the public offices or in the commercial and industrial world; *those who desire to enter occupations or professions which require highly-trained intelligence *those who desire to make teaching their profession, to enter the University, to take up a commercial career, to follow rural pursuits, or in the case of girls, to fit themselves for duties in the home
What they are offered	opportunities for more advanced instruction for two or three years	an education and training, modified to some extent by a vocational basis	Not specified	*good general education; *a general preliminary education, combined with a small measure of specialised training, that will form a sound foundation for the work of higher institutions
Syllabus	As set by the Correspondence School or Adelaide University (eligible to sit for the Junior Examination, Adelaide University)	As set by the Education Department: Courses of Study for Central Schools (1924) and Courses of Study for Central Schools (Boys) (1929)	As set by the Education Department: Syllabus of Subjects and Courses in Technical Schools (1929)	As set by the Education Department (in 1 st and 2 nd Year) and Public Examinations Board of the Adelaide University (2 nd or 3 rd Year to Leaving Honours)**.
Gradings/ Year levels	Grades VIII & IX (extension of primary grades I to VII)	Grades VIII & IX, and later Grade X (extension of primary grades I to VII)	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th year (distinction and separation of primary and secondary gradings)	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Year and Leaving Honours (distinction and separation of primary and secondary gradings)

Certification	Students may choose to sit for the Junior Intermediate Examination (set by Adelaide University)	Central School Certificate (Endorsed by Inspectors)	*Departmental Junior Technical Certificate (2 nd Year) *Intermediate Technical Certificate (3 rd year) *Those who stay for 4 th year are permitted to sit either for the Leaving Technical Certificate (set by Department) or the Leaving Exam (set by Adelaide University)	*Junior Examination (2 nd Year) *Intermediate Examination (3 rd Year) *Leaving Examination (4 th Year) *Leaving Honours Examination (5 th Year) (set by Adelaide University)
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**The Qualifying Certificate marked the completion of primary school. Students were examined in English, Mathematics, History and Geography up to Grade VII standard.*

***The Junior Examination has held at the end of 2nd Year until 1923, when it was replaced by the Intermediate Examination held at the end of 3rd Year.*

In Central, Technical and Higher Primary Schools, there was no direct affiliation with the University of Adelaide Public Examinations, and the curriculum, examinations and certification were overseen and administered by Inspectors of the Education Department. While Education Department Inspectors were also responsible for the curriculum during the junior secondary years in High Schools, it is apparent that the syllabus for the Intermediate Examination administered by the University of Adelaide formed the curriculum. The Intermediate Examination was marked as something that distinguished between those “who desire to enter professions which require highly-trained intelligence” (Courses of Study for High Schools with Notes and Suggestions, 1929), and those who would “proceed to posts either in the public offices or in the commercial and industrial world” (Courses of Study for Central Schools, 1924). It should be pointed out that students in Higher Primary, Central and Technical Schools were able to sit for the Public Examinations set by Adelaide University, though their potential for success in these exams may have been limited by the range and focus of their educational experience.

It is also interesting to note that the Preface to the syllabus for Technical Schools was very brief while other course prefaces gave detail about purpose and student populations. Technical Schools trained pupils for non-professional destinations of lower status than High Schools, whereas the Central Schools suffered a reputation as being little more than annexes to primary schools and this was said to account for their declining enrolments, particularly in the ‘Boys Departments’. The resultant closure of Central Schools in 1939 made way for the expansion of Technical Schools in metropolitan and regional South Australia.

Timetabling English in post-primary education

Before focusing on subject English, it is useful to consider how it fitted into the range of subjects on offer across post-primary schools. Again, we refer only to those forms of schooling that place English as a compulsory subject, but in this case the inclusion of Higher Primary Schools was no longer necessary since those students were supervised as they studied the curriculum on offer in department high schools.

We found that students in Central Schools were given about double the lessons in English than provided for students in the Technical and High Schools. The accompanying notes within the Central School Course booklets suggested that much of this time was spent

revising skills already taught to these same students while in primary schools. In the High School curriculum, the label ‘English’ was used for the subject, as it was in Technical Schools. However, in Central Schools there were three subjects: ‘General Literature’, ‘Composition’, and ‘Grammar’. This use of the title ‘literature’ in the Central School syllabus signalled that we should consider the role of literature within English in our analysis of the curriculum documents themselves. Overall, it was clear from our analysis of the timetables that studies in English (or its component parts) formed a core of the curriculum (along with Physical Training, Civics, Geography and forms of Mathematics) across all forms of schooling on offer, no matter what the imagined destination of the pupils the schools served. One obvious question raised, though, was whether or not the kind of English curriculum offered in each site would be the same. The use of a different title such as ‘General Literature’ in Central Schools indicated that there would be differences evident on closer examination of the materials.

Table 20: Timetabling of English in post-primary schools

Central Schools	Technical Schools	High Schools
<p><i>Three distinct courses on offer</i></p> <p><u>Commercial</u> -General literature (6) -Composition (oral and written) (3) -Grammar (1)</p> <p><u>Junior Technical</u> -General literature (6) -Composition (oral and written) (2) -Grammar (1)</p> <p><u>Home-making</u> -General literature (5) -Composition (oral and written) (2) -Grammar (1)</p>	<p><i>Reference here to Thebarton Technical College only.</i></p> <p>English (5)</p>	<p><i>Three distinct courses on offer</i></p> <p><u>General Course</u> -English (5)</p> <p><u>Commercial Course</u> -English (5)</p> <p><u>Agricultural Course:</u> -English (5) reducing to four by third year</p>

**Number in brackets refers to number of 40 mins lessons/week – usually 8 lessons per day for a total of 40 per week .*

Different forms of English?

To consider the different forms of subject English across these three forms of secondary education, we examined the content and accompanying notes/introductions for the teaching of English that were included in the documents.

We found that the English syllabuses offered in 1st and 2nd Year High School mirrored the University syllabus for the Intermediate exam set by the Public Examinations Board (PEB). In other words, 1st and 2nd Year High School were preparation for the Intermediate exam. In contrast to this ‘push down’ from the exam to the curriculum in the High School, the other post-primary options tended, particularly in subject English, to be an extension of primary school curriculum. Here the emphasis was on consolidation of skills, with little of the literary and cultural appreciation on offer in the High Schools.

For example, oral language and grammar were not signified as concerns within High Schools, but receive considerable treatment in the content and notes for Central and Technical Schools. In relation to oral composition, it was assumed that there were gaps to be filled and deficits to be corrected in Central School students, and accordingly there was to be “practice in courteous forms of speech, and discouragement of slovenly and inelegant expression”. The Course of Study for High Schools made no mention of oral language, and it was, perhaps, assumed that those gaps and deficits did not exist for High School students. However, in the High Schools aural work was emphasised within the notes for the teaching of poetry, and the students were seen to have an inclination and undiscovered appreciation for beauty: “Taste for good poetry can be cultivated incidentally ... by training their ears to appreciate the music of rhythm, rhyme and words... Students not only find pleasure in listening to music, but are very responsive to its emotional appeal; they seem intuitively to understand the meaning of sound.” The notes for the teaching of poetry in Technical Schools suggested that, in this setting, the study of poetry focused less on lyrical beauty and more on poetry as entertainment and for memorisation: “It is very important that the pupils enjoy the poems set... Pupils should be encouraged to learn poems which appeal to them... such studies should lead to an appreciation of the rhythm and melody of verse”.

In High Schools, the notes for teachers emphasised literary studies and directed that “works... are to be treated as a valuable means, not only of obtaining information, but also of inculcating high ideals in the pupil, and of cultivating in him an appreciation of good books” (Courses of Study for High Schools, 1929). This was in contrast to the organization of the subject English in Central Schools where there were three divisions: General literature, Composition (oral and written) and Grammar. In the Central Schools, rather than a detailed examination of approaches to teaching the novel as in the Courses of Study for High Schools, the study of novels was much more briefly introduced: “the books to be read during the year will be selected from the following lists: at least three books per annum are to be read” (Courses of Study for Central Schools, 1924). In the High Schools, “the teacher will emphasise the intellectual and aesthetic sides of literature, especially the aesthetic”. In the Central and Technical Schools, it was recommended only limited attention should be paid to details, and books should not be “torn to tatters” to avoid “mar[ring] the joy of reading”.

Having mapped the curriculum offerings in the range of post-primary schools, and sampled the flavour of course outlines and notes, it is clear that there were different forms of English on offer to students. We now turn to a more detailed examination of the curriculum in one of those sites.

Post Primary English – the Intermediate Syllabus

As has been indicated above, the Intermediate year was a significant year because it shaped the schooling of students at High Schools and, by implication, the schooling of students in Higher Primary, Central and Technical schools. We therefore decided for the purposes of this study to focus on the Intermediate year level, to explore how and by what means the post-primary student was constituted by the English curriculum. To do this, we analysed the following documents for the period 1920 –1960: 1) The

Intermediate English syllabuses 2) the introductions/notes accompanying the syllabuses 3) the examinations and 4) the examiners' comments. For our purposes here, we focus upon the syllabuses and the introductions/notes. We begin by mapping the content of the syllabuses and describing the role and extent of the syllabuses' introductions and notes.

Mapping the Intermediate English Syllabus

The content of the Intermediate syllabus changed little in the forty years from 1920 – 1960 although, as we explain later, the interpretation of the syllabus did undergo change during this time. The English syllabus was described as 'English literature' and was invariably written as a list of titles to be studied. These titles included poetry, drama and prose. The other aspects of the syllabus, grammar and either essay or precis writing were separately listed. The 1920 syllabus, outlined in its entirety in Figure 3, shows how typically the content was described.

Figure 3: English Literature section of the Junior Public Examination syllabus, 1920*

1. ENGLISH LITERATURE	
(a) Jennings, J.G. <i>English Poems I</i> (Macmillan. 1s. 3d) with repetition of 'Sweet and low' (p 2), 'Daffodils' (p9), 'Under the Greenwood tree' (p14). 'Three fishers' (p35), 'Destruction of Sennacherib' (p42), 'Solitary reaper' (p47), 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun' (p54), and 'The year's at the spring' (p57).	
(b) Hawthorne, N. <i>Tanglewood Tales</i>	
(c) Grammar and composition: Exercises in analysis and parsing, and on such topics as are dealt with in Arnold's <i>Shilling English composition</i> , ch.i-xii.	
(d) An English essay	

* later to become the Intermediate examination

The content of the Intermediate syllabus during the period of our study was remarkably similar in form. Prose, poetry and either essay or precis writing was prescribed every year. A play (or plays) was prescribed every year except 1920. Grammar was specifically prescribed in only twenty of the forty years that this study covers. Figure 4 below reveals this similarity of content.

Figure 4: Summary of content in the Intermediate Syllabus 1920 – 1960

Content form	Dates	Major aspects
Poetry	1920 -60	<i>The Poet's Commonwealth</i> and/or <i>The Poet's Way</i> were used from 1928 –1959
Drama	1920 1921 –1942 1943 – 48 1949 - 1960	Not listed 1 play by Shakespeare Choice of modern plays (no Shakespeare) Shakespeare or <i>Modern Short Plays</i>
Prose	1920 1921 – 1930 1931 –2 1933 – 36 1937 – 1941 1942 - 60	Book of tales 1 novel only listed for each year Narrative and descriptive prose passages (no novel) Choice of a novel or prose passages Choice of novels and/or prose passages Choice of novels
Grammar	1920 – 22 1923 – 30 1931 1932 – 39 1940 – 1952 1953 - 1960	Exercises in analysis and parsing Not listed Accidence(part of grammar that deals with the inflexions of words) Descriptive grammar Not listed Grammar exercises on sentence structure, usage and arrangement

Writing	1920 – 1939	An essay
	1940 – 1952	Precis writing
	1953 – 54	Unprepared prose writing
	1955 - 1960	A comprehension (no prose or essay)

Changes in content largely focused on the inclusion or exclusion of grammar as a specific study and the issue of how much choice was offered with regard to the poetry, drama and prose texts to be studied. In 1920 there were no choices to be made. *English Poems I* and *Tanglewood Tales* were the set texts. Only gradually was choice introduced throughout the following decades. In the 40s and 50s, several choices of plays, poems and novels to be studied were listed. Interestingly, these choices were often between classical and popular (or contemporary) texts or between fiction and non-fiction. For example, the 1950 syllabus asks students to choose from a range of titles including fiction such as John Buchan's *Thirty-Nine Steps* and non-fiction such as *Real Adventure* (an anthology published by Longmans). Such choices prefigured some of the categories of texts included in the national English curriculum documents of the 90s.

Aside from the increased choice of texts offered for study, the syllabuses themselves remained very similar in content over this time. However an analysis of the introductions/notes accompanying the syllabuses reveals some very real differences in how the content was to be interpreted by teachers. These introductions and notes took the form of instructions to teachers on how to interpret the syllabus. Up until 1943, the notes were brief and chiefly referred to “the correctness of the English [to be] used by candidates”, the need to “employ the methods and terminology prescribed in the report of the Joint Committee on Grammatical Terminology,” and the importance of candidates being able “to mark stresses, and to display an understanding of ordinary metrical forms [in poetry]”. Such notes indicate a focus on correct grammatical form and analysis. The 1930 syllabus note in Figure 5 was typical.

Figure 5: Note attached to the 1930 Intermediate syllabus

N.B. An essay of about a page and a half, or 350 words, on some general subject will be set in the examination, and special regard will be paid by the examiners to the correctness of the English used by candidates throughout the paper. Teachers will find the abridged edition of Fowler's *King's English* exceedingly useful on general matters of composition and the use of words. *Although grammar is not directly prescribed for examination, teachers of English composition are strongly advised to employ parsing and analysis regularly with their classes* and to adopt the terminology prescribed in the report of the Joint Committee on Grammatical Terminology: *On the terminology of grammar* (Murray). The books and extracts prescribed in (a), (b) and (c) should be studied in relation not only to their content, but also to their distinctive qualities of style. Candidates will be expected to illustrate their answers with apposite quotation and allusion. In the case of poetry they must be able to mark stresses and to display an understanding of ordinary metrical forms.

Teachers here were left in no doubt about the importance of grammar and correct English. Although grammar “is not directly prescribed for examination”, teachers “are advised to employ parsing and analysis” with their classes and, moreover, this should be done “regularly”.

The 1943 syllabus heralded a change. There was a change in the type and variety of texts to be studied and, for the first time, an introduction to the syllabus was written. This was more detailed than the notes of the previous twenty-two years. Now the syllabus was

introduced via a set of aims (see Figure 6). Also, for the first time, statements were included about the kinds of reading and writing in which students would be expected to engage. This 1943 introduction was used in slightly amended form for ten years, with the addition in 1953 and 1954 of a paragraph on the teaching of grammar. Clearly the introduction to the 1943 Intermediate syllabus was important. It signalled a change in how teachers were to approach the teaching of English, and it appeared to be constructing a new kind of English subject. Hence we decided to look more closely at this 1943 introduction.

Constituting the English subject – the 1943 Intermediate syllabus

The introduction to the 1943 syllabus begins by outlining three aims for an English literature syllabus. These aims listed in Table 24 are the first indication to teachers that they are to have a different teaching role, albeit within the confines of a relatively unchanged syllabus content. It should be noted here that there were changes in the types of texts that were to be studied.

Figure 6: Extract from the introduction to the 1943 Intermediate syllabus

An English Literature syllabus at the Intermediate stage should be designed i) to reveal the pleasures of reading by prescribing for study such works of good literature as children may at this stage read with delight; (ii) to cultivate habits of concentration and exactness in reading, and to inform the power of elementary critical judgement; (iii) to enable the writing of a simple, lucid, and correct English prose.

This extract points to some of the changes and the continuities in the 1943 syllabus. “Good literature” was still prescribed for study and there was still an emphasis on writing “correct English prose”. Teachers who had taught the Intermediate syllabus prior to 1943 might also have found statements about “habits of concentration and exactness in reading” congruent with their previous teaching experiences. However statements about *how* students would read, such as references to “read[ing] with delight” and “the pleasures of reading”, signalled a significant change for teachers. For students to read in these new ways, teachers would need to relate differently to their students. A reading of the verbs in this extract helps to elucidate this new relationship. The syllabus:

<i>reveal[s]</i>	the pleasures of reading
<i>prescribe[s]</i>	the study of ...good literature as children may ...read with delight
<i>cultivate[s]</i>	the habits of concentration and exactness in reading
<i>enable[s]</i>	the writing of simple, lucid and correct English
<i>inform[s]</i>	the power of elementary critical judgement

Although the syllabus was ascribed with these actions (the verbs), clearly it is the teachers who would enact the syllabus by *revealing, prescribing, cultivating, enabling* and *informing*. Previous intermediate syllabuses *prescribe[d]* and *inform[ed]* but this was the first time the syllabus and, by implication, the teachers were to *reveal, cultivate* and *enable*. There seem to be two different discourses of teaching operating here. Teachers who *prescribe* and *inform* teach directly whilst *reveal[ing], cultivat[ing]* and *enabl[ing]* indicated more implicit methods of teaching – students being nurtured by teachers, rather than simply told what to do. These new ways of being a teacher pointed to new spaces for teacher/student relationships.

Whilst this first section of the syllabus indicated changes to how teachers might be in the classroom, the following sections describe changes in the kinds of reading and writing students would undertake as part of the Intermediate year. We turn first to reading.

Reading

Table 7 is an extract from the 1943 syllabus describing the nature of reading, what should be read and some of the practices associated with reading.

Table 7: Extract from the 1943 Intermediate syllabus

Reading for delight is basic to English and Literature, conceived as an element in liberal education. Little can be built except on this. The syllabus here should not stand in disconnection from the current and popular fiction that children buy and read, but should include analogous matter of more literary substance. (Thus the creatures of Bib and Bub have cousins in the <i>Wind in the Willows</i> , and in fable; the melodramatic strips are paralleled by short stories and novels of romantic adventure – particularly those which, like <i>Treasure Island</i> include juvenile protagonists; the familiar comedy of <i>Ginger Meggs</i> takes literary substance in Mark Twain.) In verse, again, fables, nonsense verse, rapid narrative, familiar pieces like John Gilpin, songs are to be preferred. Reflective and descriptive verse and elaborated lyric is to be avoided, as is verse requiring much linguistic study of historical commentary. Essays of an urbane, reflective, whimsical, satirical or literary-critical sort are to be avoided. Narratives of travel and exploration, and books illustrating social history and scientific discovery are to be considered as within the field studied.

The opening sentence “Reading for delight is basic to English language and literature conceived as an element in liberal education” describes a particular kind of reading (i.e. *reading for delight*) and it places this kind of reading at the centre of a liberal education. (This is the first time in an Intermediate syllabus that the notion of a liberal education is mentioned. In this context, such a statement saw liberal education as taken for granted, as something teachers would know about.) However “reading for delight” was also tied to the new kinds of texts that students were to read. Students would read “books of popular and current fiction that [they] buy and read as well as books of literacy substance”. Books of popular fiction were new kinds of texts in the Intermediate syllabus but they did not replace traditional texts. Rather, they were presented as bridges to texts “of more literary substance”. So children were encouraged to read *Ginger Meggs* as well as books by Mark Twain.

“Reading for delight” also meant taking account of children’s interests through reading “novels of romantic” adventure that involved “juvenile protagonists” and comic strips such as *Ginger Meggs*, Fables, nonsense verse, rapid narrative, familiar pieces (such as John Gilpin), songs, narratives of travel and exploration, books illustrating social history and scientific discovery were also valued as texts for study at the Intermediate level.

However, although such books took account of students’ interests, the comment about books ‘that children buy and read’ suggested particular children and particular reading matter. These were children who could afford books and whose culture involved owning such material. Such statements reinforce the differential nature of secondary schools in South Australia at this time. Students sitting the Intermediate exam largely attended private schools or state high schools, catering for the middle classes and those who were to be university educated. Working-class children attended Higher Primary Schools and Technical schools, which focused on a vocational education. In High School there was a

particular kind of training for those children “who desire to enter occupations or professions which require highly-trained intelligence”.

In 1943 a new category of text was added to the syllabus. This was called ‘general literature’, or what we might now label non-fiction. The following extract describes the new texts to be read and the reason for their introduction.

Table 8: Extract from the introduction to the 1943 syllabus

To take the place of the verse cut, and of the detailed study necessary on a Shakespeare text, there is a new section requiring the reading of three short books of general literature. Thus in 1943 there would be read (a) an account of Lawrence of Arabia, (b) an anthology of ‘real adventures’ telling of an escape from a prison camp, Scott’s last march, a bush fire, an avalanche on Mount Everest, etc., and (c) either a book of natural history or an account of Bligh of the Bounty or a collection of narratives illustrating the history of flight or a collection of real achievements (Dr Barnado, Sir Ronald Ross, etc.)

These books described a particular contemporary culture. They were based on ‘the real’, on action, heroic achievement and ‘man’ conquering the environment. The stories told largely of English heroes, of men and of travellers, explorers and conquerors of lands. Australians, women, indigenous peoples, the explored and the conquered rarely had a voice. However it should be noted that these non-fiction texts were the first of their kind to be introduced to the Intermediate curriculum, although these kinds of text had formed the staple of some of the reading series employed in the primary school reading curriculum. There is the possibility of an influence ‘upward’ here from primary school and more than a hint of an attempt to appeal to a particular ‘boy’ reader.

The 1943 syllabus provided Intermediate students with a much broader range of texts for study than previous syllabuses. The reading of popular and contemporary fiction was encouraged and non-fiction texts were introduced. Texts of literary substance were still important, although it is interesting to note that there was no Shakespearean text included in 1943 (or for the next six years). There appear to have been two moves in the 1943 syllabus with regard to reading. 1) Some texts were added and 2) some were replaced. Popular and contemporary fiction were added to the syllabus and some texts of literary substance (for example Shakespeare) were replaced with non-fiction texts. This notion of adding and/or replacing what was read as part of the syllabus was also to be found in the descriptions of what and how students were to write.

Writing

Table 9 describes the kinds of writing in which students would be involved and how that writing should be presented.

Table 9 Extract from 1943 Intermediate English Syllabus

The ability to follow a piece of writing through, appreciating its structure, intention, and emphasis, is tested both in the writing of simple accounts of passages studied, and in precis. It is reasonable to expect candidates to discriminate between the spare and the florid, the disinterested and the tendentious, the lively and the dull, etc., but this aspect of the work can only be examined with difficulty.

Grammatical and harmonious English like a pure and simple style is best acquired unconsciously and by the frequentation of good models. Life, rhythm, and the ability to convey exactly what is designed are of much more importance than spelling, flawless grammar, handwriting, punctuation, avoidance of ‘slang’, etc. Emphasis should be not on the production of ‘compositions’ adequate in these latter regards, but upon the matters described and discussed. If the subject is interesting, and felt as requiring concentration and exact
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treatment, the 'English' is likely to become more or less right. Examination here should be designed to test the candidates' knowledge, clarity, power to order detail, elementary taste, breadth of interests, rather than the 'goodness' of his English abstractly regarded.
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The kinds of writing prescribed by this syllabus were similar to what had gone before, although the injunction to write “simple accounts of the passages studied” provided more detail of what would be written than previous syllabuses which, up until 1939, merely prescribed an ‘essay’ or from 1940 ‘precis writing’. Further information about what would be written was outlined in the sentence that described what the examination would test – “Examination here should be designed to test the candidate’s knowledge, clarity, power to order detail, elementary taste, and breadth of interests...” This is an example of adding to, rather than replacing, what had been written in previous syllabuses. The place of grammar in the curriculum had varied across the period of this study. In the 1943 syllabus, grammar - rather than being a series of exercises in parsing and analysis - related to how students would present their writing. For example, “with clarity and power to order detail”.

In previous years, notes to teachers about writing focused on students’ abilities to write correct English, which meant correct grammar (even in those years when grammar was not specifically prescribed). The 1943 introduction revealed two ways of conceptualising the teaching of grammar. On the one hand, grammar was said to be “best acquired unconsciously and by frequentation of good models”. Similarly, “the ability to convey exactly what is designed” was said to be more important than *spelling, flawless grammar and handwriting*. This seemed to imply a less direct (what would later come to be called ‘natural’) method of teaching based on an implicit notion of ‘good’ grammar (spelling and handwriting). This prefigured the discourses of the ‘Whole Language’ approach (with its emphasis on ‘natural’, implicit approaches) predominant in South Australia some thirty years later in the 70s and 80s. The focus on the content of students’ writing, rather than the mechanics of the writing, also spoke to a ‘holistic’ approach. On the other hand, there was quite obviously a correct form of grammar because one of the aims of this syllabus was that it “should enable the writing of ... correct English prose” and, as a note at the end of the syllabus indicated, “marks will be deducted for pronounced weakness in grammar, spelling and legibility”. Although there was a move away (to some extent) from correct grammar, at the same time there was no denying its importance—indeed the changes suggest that there would be a new route to correctness via an emphasis on students’ meanings. Clearly teachers still needed to teach grammar if their students were going to successfully pass the examination. However, the introduction to the syllabus implied that the methods of teaching may be different from those in the past. As mentioned above, this syllabus introduction pointed to new ways of being a teacher whilst simultaneously maintaining major content in the Intermediate syllabus. As well, the 1943 introduction constituted a particular ideal English student via the changes and continuities it prescribes. This is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: The ideal English student as constituted by the changes and continuities in the introduction to the 1943 Intermediate syllabus

Changes	Continuities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reads for pleasure • reads with delight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is disciplined into concentration and exactness in reading

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reads popular fiction • has a breadth of interests • writes simple, lucid prose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reads books of literary substance/good literature • possesses elementary critical judgement • displays elementary taste • writes correct English • writes with knowledge and clarity • can order detail in writing
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The *continuities* tended to constitute a student as concerned with sanctioned knowledge, and an exactness in reading and the writing of correct prose, while the *changes* tended to emphasise a student who took pleasure and delight in reading, had a breadth of interests, and displayed an ease of skill. The 1943 syllabus opened up a new kind of space for how an English student might be - albeit a somewhat contradictory space. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss how the ideal student of the 1943 syllabus was developed in succeeding syllabuses, it must suffice to say that traces of this 1943 syllabus can be seen throughout the years until 1960 and even in the Intermediate (Year 10) English syllabus of today.

Quite obviously, the 1943 syllabus and its introduction marked some significant changes to the Intermediate syllabus. These changes related in particular to the kinds of texts students were to read and to how teachers were to interpret the curriculum. Hyams et al (1988) describe how the agitation of education reform movements and the South Australian Public Teachers' Union led to "the commissioning of the Education Inquiry in 1942". This inquiry was obviously influenced by the reform movements and advocated "some liberalisation of the curriculum through changes in the state school syllabus and in the public examinations" (Hyams et al., 1988, p242). The 1943 syllabus may well be an example of the liberalisation that was recommended.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that looking just at the written, prescriptive curriculum, and hence more particularly at curriculum content, indicates the persistence of a relatively stable approach over the forty years at issue at this paper³. It was only when we looked at the *co-texts* that introduced and supplemented the descriptions of content that we found evidence of some quite major changes in how that content was to be deployed and used in the English classroom, especially but not exclusively in the 1940s.

Our analysis to this point has given us some hints that it is in the 1940s that strong moves to produce this new kind of teaching were promoted via the curriculum materials in South Australian schools – although some of these ideas were present from the early 1920s. This analysis remains to be filled out and verified by going to a much wider range of sources of information and texts including:

- the reading materials developed and supplied for students

³ Note here Ivor Goodson's work on the importance of the written curriculum (as "the visible and public testimony of selected rationales and legitimating rhetorics for schooling") and the distinction he points to between "the preactive definition of written curriculum and its interactive realization in classrooms" (Goodson, 1994: 19)

- ‘how to’ guides, and texts developed for teachers by education departments and publishers
- articles in journals
- inspectors’ reports and other official reviews of teacher practice

Similarly, we believe that an examination of teacher training curriculum and materials for this period in South Australia would provide a useful way of further investigating the kind of English ‘subject’ being produced. Such sources would provide an especially useful way of analysing the teaching technologies being developed to constitute this new kind of student.

Finally, our mapping of the curriculum also showed that there were indeed *different* versions of English being produced in post-primary settings, depending on the imagined destinations of the students. Our analysis in this paper has focussed on the high school English student-subject. Clearly this subject form needs to be placed alongside the English student in the technical, vocational and other settings provided.

Finally, there is value in the close textual analysis of curriculum materials of the kind illustrated in this paper. Work of this kind has the potential to disrupt assumed continuities and to show how curriculum is deployed in shaping, often in quite subtle ways, new kinds of student-subjects as well as the new teaching technologies required to produce these students. Clearly any examination of the ‘New English’ of the 1960s and 1970s will be usefully informed by substantive attention to the earlier history of English in Australia.

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