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Pre service teachers and literacy education: an historical study

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Abstract

The National inquiry into the teaching of literacy and the National inquiry into teacher training are part of the many manufactured crises in literacy education we see both nationally and internationally today. This paper traces the history of these recent concerns about how pre service teachers come to learn about teaching literacy through an examination of literacy education for pre service primary teachers in South Australia in the 1940s and 1950s. It is a qualitative, historical study drawing on Michel Foucault's genealogical approach. Data includes oral histories from teacher educators and primary teachers and official documents such as teacher training curricula. The data is examined by means of a critical discourse analytic approach and illuminates the assumptions governing the way English was written about in the teachers college curricula. This analysis uncovers some of the antecedents of the current debates about how and what pre service teachers learn about the teaching of English/literacy.

Introduction

The current Australian Government Inquiry into Teacher Training (February, 2005) is concerned with a range of issues one of which is how well student teachers are prepared to teach literacy in schools. Since the commencement of this Inquiry there has been many articles in the media (both print and electronic) decrying the standard of literacy teaching in Australian schools and universities. These debates have centred on the teaching of phonics, the teaching of critical literacy and the poor literacy levels of teacher education students. At the University of South Australia two new programs for primary pre service teachers were introduced this year. Concern has been expressed by some staff about the amount of time available for the teaching of English/literacy that one of the programs has provided for students. Staff has also expressed concern about students' literacy levels as demonstrated in student assignments.

This paper takes some of these current concerns about what students learn about teaching English/literacy in primary schools and traces the development of the English/literacy curriculum for primary teacher education students with particular reference to the years 1940-1970. It will show how subject English was constituted in primary schools during this time and explore the match between what pre service teachers were taught about English and what they were required to teach on graduation. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the issue of pre service teachers' own literacies. (This will be the focus of a future paper.) The study is set in South Australia where primary education includes children from ages 5-13 years. However this paper will centre on the primary years 3-7 rather than the junior primary years (Reception -2) because there has been sparse research into the teaching of literacy in the primary years in South Australia. I will

argue that the preparation for teaching primary age children has always been limited despite the fact that the English/literacy curriculum is so dominant in the primary school curriculum.

The paper begins with a brief description of the social context in South Australia 1940-1970 including an overview of teacher training at this time. The research methods are then outlined. These are followed by an analysis and discussion of both the English curriculum documents for primary schools and for pre service teachers at Teachers College. Oral histories from former teachers are also used to supplement and illuminate the discussion.

The period 1940-1970: South Australia

This period in South Australia was arguably dominated by one man; the Premier of the state Sir Thomas Playford. He was premier from 1938-1965 and left politics in 1968. Much has been written about his contribution to the state (See for example, Crocker, 1983; Jaensch, 1986; O'Neil, Raftery, & Round 1996) but it would be fair to say that during his time in office he presided over many social, cultural, economic and political changes and his legacy continues to be debated. Although he was not necessarily the initiator of the changes that took place many considered him the driver of those changes (Jaensch, 1986). Some of these most significant changes related to population growth, population shift from rural to suburban and the concomitant change in the economic structure of South Australia which 'was transformed from a primarily rural to a predominantly industrial base' (Jaensch 1986, p249).

Population increase was due to two major factors; post war migration and an increase in the birth rate. At the beginning of the Playford reign 9.66% of the SA population was born outside of Australia and in 1966 (when Playford was defeated) 22.52% of the population was born overseas. 11.18% of these were from the UK/Ireland, 10.1 % were from European countries and 1.04 % were from other countries (Australian census quoted in Hugo, 1996, p35)

A number of factors contributed to the rise of the birth rate during this time. After World War II there were only small increases in women's participation rates in the workforce (despite the fact that during the war many had been employed). Some of the reasons for this relate to: women in occupations such as teaching still had to resign on marriage, pay was significantly lower than men's pay, 'girls left school much earlier on average than boys and there was strong social pressure on women not to work outside the home after marriage.' Medical advances helped to reduce infant mortality, more children were born outside marriage, safe reliable contraception was not available until the early sixties and abortion was illegal. These trends were conducive to patterns of relatively high fertility (Hugo, 1996, p32/3).

Whilst a significant increase in the population had a bearing on schools so too did the shift of population from rural to urban. This shift from rural to urban came about because of the rise of large outer suburbs and towns (places where new industries were located).

Metropolitan Adelaide numbers rose from 312,619 (53.8% of SA total population) in 1933 to 727,916 (66.7%) in 1966. Other urban places rose from 51,456 (8.9%) in 1933 to 173,796 (15.9%) in 1966 whilst rural population fell from 216,874 (37.3%) in 1933 to 190,163 (17.4%) in 1966 (Hugo, 1996, p42). This significant change was not at the expense of the rural sector which remained buoyant throughout this time.

So during the Playford years there was enormous population growth, economic growth in both the industrial and rural sectors and political stability in South Australia. This political stability was in part the result of a gerrymander that was not of the Premier's making but from which he benefited and chose not to change (Stock, 1996, p73). The gerrymander came about because in 1936 South Australia was divided into two electoral zones, rural and metropolitan with the majority of seats in the rural areas where at that time the majority of citizens lived. Although other issues contributed to the gerrymander the redistribution and growth of the population during Playford's time in office were important factors in its maintenance. Strong economic and population growth of course had a direct effect on schools and teacher training.

The period 1940-1970: Teacher education

From 1940-1970 was a period of great change in primary teacher education. There was the move away from the apprenticeship model of teacher training and four new teachers colleges opened to deal with the acute teacher shortage brought about by an unprecedented growth in population as described above. This growth in population produced a concomitant growth in school enrolments.

During the period 1947-1958 Primary and Secondary enrolments in the United States rose by thirty nine per cent, and in the United Kingdom by thirty five per cent. In South Australia the rise for the same period was 110 per cent. (Theile, 1975, p214).

More teachers were needed which in turn meant more teacher trainees. By now teachers were mostly trained in Teachers Colleges although the apprenticeship model of teacher training continued to exist through what was called the Junior Teacher system. The Bean Inquiry into Education Committee in May 1945 recommended the abolition of this system although it did not actually happen for another twenty years. However by 1950 the number of Junior Teachers had dropped to 41 (from 80 in 1936) and the number of teachers being trained in the college was 406. This drop in Junior Teachers and concomitant rise in teachers college trainees continued until 1960 when the acute shortage of teachers saw the numbers of Junior Teachers rise again (although so too did the numbers in teachers colleges). The Junior Teacher system was phased out entirely in 1965 (Source-Director General's Annual Report to Parliament, SAPP, 1970, p27).

In 1940 there was only one Teachers College in South Australia; the Adelaide Teachers College. By 1970 there were five. Wattle Park opened in 1957, Western in 1963, Bedford Park in 1967 and Salisbury in 1968. Adelaide teachers College ceased to train primary teachers with the opening of Wattle Park but continued to train secondary teachers. Thus the period 1940-1970 was a significant time of growth for the state as a whole and a significant time for growth in teacher training.

Research methods

This is a qualitative, historical study informed by Michel Foucault's genealogical approach. Genealogy is a 'methodological device' (Kendal and Wickham, 1999, p29) which can be used to examine the assumptions governing the way people think or talk about an issue and as a way of uncovering origins or antecedents which have become hidden over time. Such an examination means interrogating the networks of ideas (or discourses) through which, and by which the object of the study (or issue) has come to be constituted. A genealogical study begins with the 'problematization' of a current issue.' In this case the current issue is the concern being expressed by the government, the university and more broadly the media about what pre service teachers are being taught with regards to the teaching of English/literacy in primary schools.

However one needs to bear in mind that for Foucault the present and therefore the issue being problematised is not an end point because to Foucault histories and problematisations are ongoing. Indeed to Foucault 'the present is just as strange as the past' (Kendal and Wickham, 1999, p4). Foucault's use of genealogy as an approach for exploring history does not equate with modernist assumptions of history as progress over time or that issues of the present emerge from the past. Instead Foucault uses history 'as a way of *diagnosing* the present' (Kendal and Wickham, 1999, p4). He is not concerned with grand narratives of history which strive for coherence and overarching principles (what Foucault calls a 'totalising history'). Rather Foucault's work is concerned with the disruptions and discontinuities of the past which he describes as a 'general history' (Kendal and Wickham, 1999, p24). In choosing to use a genealogical approach in this paper I aim to talk back to the assumptions of the National Inquiry through the production of a 'general history,' in which taken for granted assumptions about what is taught with regards to English/literacy in pre service teacher education programs will be examined and critiqued.

The data are the curriculum outlines as described in the handbooks for the Teachers Colleges of the time (1940-1970), the South Australian Education Department English Syllabuses used during this period, reports by the Principals of the Teacher Colleges to the Education Department and to the South Australian Parliament and interviews with some former students at the teachers colleges. The data is text and like all texts, dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) in that every text contains traces of past texts thereby making it possible to track the different discourses and ideas that have shaped subject English/literacy in teacher preparation in South Australian primary schools.

The data (texts) are analysed through critical discourse analysis, CDA (Fairclough, 1992). CDA is a multidisciplinary approach drawing on language and social theories using both close linguistic analysis at the word and phrase level of the text and analysis of the text genre. CDA follows Foucault's notion of discourse as social practice in that discourse is seen as both 'socially constitutive as well as socially shaped' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p258). That is because discourse 'constructs subject positions' for people and 'social relationships between people' as well as constructing 'systems of beliefs' (Fairclough, 1992, p64). In this paper I am showing how the discourses in official

documents such as the Teachers College handbooks firstly construct the subject, primary school English, for pre service teacher education students.

Learning to teach English

The focus here is on what pre service teachers who were preparing to teach in primary schools learnt about the teaching of English. It would appear that during this time they could study English at university and from 1954 English at teachers college. However this was an option and not all students studied English. Learning about what and how to teach English in a primary school was different. I will firstly discuss what is meant by English in primary school and then analyse what was taught through an examination of Teachers College handbooks and interview data from some former students. Analysis of curriculum documents shows that they are not univocal but can reflect the debates of the time.

Definition of terms

English as a subject of study at tertiary level has largely been concerned with the study of texts including literature, poetry and drama. Syllabuses from the teachers colleges and the University of Adelaide across the time 1940-1970 list the texts to be studied. For example the English course offered at Wattle Park Teachers College in 1963 was described as:

- A one year course for first or second year students. Two lectures and one tutorial per week. The course gives a broad survey of English and Australian literature in three main fields:
- (a) Prose fiction, especially the development of the novel.
 - (b) Drama, from the Greeks to Dylan Thomas
 - (c) Poetry, from Chaucer to the present day

This is followed by a list of texts in each category. Four texts are listed for Prose fiction, five for Drama and three for Poetry.

At primary school, the English Courses of Instruction also list texts for study but describe English in various ways. For example in the 1938 Course of Instruction (still in use in 1940) English is described as reading, poetry, oral language, drama, spelling and writing. In the 1962 Course of Instruction (still in use in 1970) English is described as reading, poetry, language, (including oral language, written language, formalities of language and grammar), spelling and dictation. The word literacy is not found in any of the Courses of Instruction during this time. This paper focuses on English as it was taught in primary schools and what pre service primary teachers learnt about it.

The constitution of subject English at primary school 1940-1970

This section is of necessity brief and focuses broadly on the aims and the curriculum outlines 1953 and 1962. In understanding how subject English was constructed during this period it is useful to look at the way the aims changed during this time, the adjectives and adverbs used to describe the various aspects of English, the verbs used to indicate some of the practices. It is also useful to look at the positioning of the aims. What comes

first? What is mentioned first within each aim? Responses to these questions clearly show the primacy of speech and oral reading. However when analysing the outline of the curriculum as it is set out for each grade (Grade V in Table 1 is an example) then reading is given primacy. In the 1962 course eight pages are devoted to reading including two and half pages to listing the texts suitable for each grade. On the other hand oral language including *speech and voice training* in the 1962 course is given two pages.

During this period there were two major revisions of the Course of Instruction for English; in 1944 and 1962. There were minor revisions in some years and no changes in other years. For example the 1973 Course of Instruction for English was exactly the same as the 1962 right down to the signature of the Director of Education who in 1973 was not the same as the person in 1962! An example of minor changes can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: Changes in the English Course of Instruction for Grade V, 1947, 1953
(Changes are underlined)

Grade V 1947	Grade V 1953
<p>(1) <i>Reading</i></p> <p>a. Free choice reading-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) This should involve frequent use of the library and resort to reference books</p> <p>b. Practice in reading aloud with attention to speed, accuracy, fluency, comprehension, expression, and speech training</p> <p>c. Reading aloud of extracts by the teacher for pattern and literary appreciation</p> <p>d. Use of suitable class readers and the <i>Children's Hour</i></p>	<p>(1) <i>Reading</i></p> <p>a. Free choice reading-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) This should involve frequent use of the library and resort to reference books</p> <p>b. Practice in reading aloud with attention to speed, accuracy, fluency, comprehension, expression, and speech training</p> <p>c. Reading aloud of extracts by the teacher for pattern and literary appreciation</p> <p>d. <u>"Here and There" (<i>The Boomerang Books</i> –Book III)</u></p> <p>e. <i>The Children's Hour</i></p>
<p>(2) <i>Spelling</i></p> <p>a. Words in common use as listed for this grade in the departmental book</p> <p>b. Extension of vocabulary both in the number of words and the richness of their meaning</p>	<p>(3) <u>Spelling. Correct pronunciation is important.</u></p> <p><u>a.</u> Words in common use as listed for this grade in <u><i>Junior Word Book</i></u></p> <p>b. Extension of vocabulary by directed exercises</p> <p>c. <u>Recording incidental vocabulary growth</u></p> <p>d. <u>Special exercises in the use of common words which are frequently misspelt</u></p> <p>e. <u>Continued training in self</u></p>

	<p><u>correction</u></p> <p>f. <u>Emphasis on correct spelling in all lessons in which language is written.</u> <u>The dictionary should be used</u></p>
<p>(4) <i>Language</i></p> <p>a. Oral-Further development of the work set out for the previous grade</p> <p>b. Written-</p> <p>(a)As for Grade IV with additional punctuation to include the comma, apostrophe, and simple quotation marks.</p> <p>(b) Dictation should be given, including unseen dictation of suitable standard. Passages chosen will vary in length from a single sentence to a paragraph or more, and may deal with subject matter already taught or with topical and environmental subjects, and need not be taken from a reader</p>	<p>(4)<i>Language</i></p> <p>a. Oral-Further development of the work set out for the previous grade</p> <p>b. Written-</p> <p>(a)As for Grade IV with additional punctuation to include the comma, apostrophe, and simple quotation marks.</p> <p>(b)Dictation should be given, including unseen dictation of suitable standard. Passages chosen will vary in length from a single sentence to a paragraph or more, and may deal with subject matter already taught or with topical and environmental subjects, and need not be taken from a reader</p>
<p>(5) <i>Poetry</i>- Further development of the work set out in previous grade</p>	<p>(6) <i>Poetry</i>- Further development of the work set out in previous grade</p>

There is nothing mentioned about how English will be taught in either of these years although in the Statement of Guiding Principles and Aims, it says: “The intention is to continue to print in the Education Gazette, Part III of the curriculum which will consist of modifications, amplifications, additions, suggestions, answers to teachers’ questions, and articles on method”(EDSA 1947, p3).However in the period between 1947-1953 there was only one article of relevance to the teaching of English published in the Education Gazette. See table 2 below

Table 2 Articles from the Education Gazette on the teaching of English in primary schools

July 15, 1949	<i>On the teaching of reading</i> by AEW (p148-150)	Discussion of latest methods and the influence
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		of psychology on reading. F. Schonell is key reference
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Further instructions to teachers are found in notes following the syllabus outline in the 1953 Course. These include, 5 achievements ‘that a child should be able to show when he leaves primary school.’ These are quoted from a pamphlet from the Australian Council for Educational Research named *Reform in the Primary School*. They are:

1. ‘He has mastered the mechanics of speech so that he speaks easily, effectively, and correctly.
2. He can read orally or silently any book at sixth class level with reasonable speed, accuracy, comprehension and enjoyment.
3. He can use easily and effectively the informal speech current in Australia in his daily conversations.
4. He can use with equal success the higher level of speech necessary on more formal occasions, e.g. when making reports to his class.
5. He can write a business or a friendly letter observing those standards of composition, spelling and handwriting which are possible of attainment by the normal twelve year old.

It is our wish that teachers should interpret the English course in light of these general aims’ (Education Dept. S.A.1953, p26).It is interesting to note here that the South Australian Education Department adopted these aims without regard to the schooling system in South Australia where primary schooling ends at seventh grade not sixth grade. It is also interesting to note that four of the five aims relate to speech. Speaking *correctly, easily and effectively* in different contexts including the *informal* and the *formal* is important. Oral reading is given primacy ahead of silent reading, *speed and accuracy* is given primacy over *comprehension and enjoyment*.

These aims are followed by a series of questions including; how many class readers should be studied? Should dictation be given? When? What about formal grammar? When can I fit in the English lesson? One to three paragraph responses are recorded for each of these questions. A page on speech training then follows. It emphasises the centrality of speech in the English course. The curriculum is constructing a literate student as one who speaks well rather than one who writes well.

‘It should not be necessary to emphasize at length the value of being able to speak fluently and correctly. Most adults find that the power to speak well is of more importance to them than to be able to write well. Faulty speech is a serious handicap in life, correct speech a valuable asset.’ (Education Dept. S.A.1953, p27).

Major changes can be seen in a comparison of the 1958 Course of instruction with the 1962 course. The 1958 Course of Instruction (like those that went before) included all subjects taught in primary schools (and was in fact little different from the 1953 course). Seven pages were devoted to English for the primary grades. In 1962 all subjects warranted a separate book. The English Course of Instruction consisted of 93 pages with 40 of those pages related to teaching subject English in the primary school (the rest relates to teaching Infants). The aims originally set out in the 1953 English course have

now been adapted to suit the South Australian context...’it is reasonable that a pupil be able to show the following achievements in English by the time he has completed his *primary course* ‘(my emphasis). There are now six aims as opposed to five in previous years. There is no acknowledgement of the ACER pamphlet *Reform in the Primary School*. Table 3 shows the differences in aims between the 1953 and the 1962 documents. The differences are underlined.

Table 3 Aims for English, 1953, 1962

1953	1962
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He has mastered the mechanics of speech so that he speaks easily, effectively, and correctly. 2. He can read orally or silently any book at sixth class level with reasonable speed, accuracy, comprehension and enjoyment. 3. He can use easily and effectively the informal speech current in Australia in his daily conversations. 4. He can use with equal success the higher level of speech necessary on more formal occasions, e.g. when making reports to his class. 5. He can write a business or a friendly letter observing those standards of composition, spelling and handwriting which are possible of attainment by the normal twelve year old 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He has mastered the mechanics of speech so that he speaks easily, effectively, and correctly. 2. He can read orally or silently any book at <u>Grade VII</u> level with reasonable speed, accuracy, comprehension. 3. He can use easily and effectively, <u>in his daily conversations</u> the informal speech current in Australia 4. He can use with equal success the higher level of speech necessary on more formal occasions, e.g. when making reports to his class. 5. <u>He can express his ideas clearly in writing, especially in the writing of letters, with good standards of composition, punctuation, spelling and handwriting.</u> 6. <u>He has learnt to enjoy poetry and stories.</u>

Despite some differences here the emphasis is still on speech and speaking correctly in different contexts. The extra point relates to enjoyment of reading poetry and stories. This was previously part of point 2 in 1953 but perhaps in 1962 indicates a slightly different focus for reading lessons with perhaps less emphasis on skill and drill. Writing has also changed. The ability to express ideas has now become important rather than simply the ability to compose a letter with attention to correct spelling and handwriting. The English course is divided into four main sections of Reading, Poetry, Language and Spelling. In each section the texts to be used are listed (as in previous courses of instruction) but there is also a time allotment prescribed. There is also information on presenting lessons and group work is recommended as a way of teaching the varying abilities in the classroom. Pre service teachers would use the courses of instruction during their periods of teaching practice but what did they learn at teachers college about teaching English?

The English Curriculum for pre service primary teachers 1940-1970

To understand the place of the English curriculum for primary teachers it is important to contextualise it within the whole of the pre service curriculum for primary teachers. For years the teachers college curriculum had been dominated by what Hyams (1976) calls the liberal studies vocational studies dichotomy. The first progress report of the Bean Education Inquiry Committee in 1945 recognised this dichotomy and pointed to at least one of the problems such a curriculum produced.

89...All teacher-students, whatever their courses, should undertake a substantial measure of general studies in their first year of training, and some measure of general studies should be continued in the later years of all courses when, naturally, there will be a more marked diversification of studies.

90. Unfortunately the teacher's course of preparation falls into two blocks of study: the academic, which is supposed to give him his general education, and the professional, which is supposed to give him only a narrow specialized training. Teacher-students, it is commonly thought, are educated at the University by the taking of the academic subjects but are merely trained at Teachers' College by the taking of professional subjects. The present dualistic scheme has certain bad results.... Teachers feel, and we think rightly, that this arrangement fails to give due recognition to the value and importance of their professional studies (Education Inquiry Committee, First Progress Report, 1945, Chapter II quoted verbatim in the S.A. Teachers' Journal, June 1945, Vol. XXXI, No. 5pp 23-29).

The other issue for this dichotomous curriculum was that the liberal or general education of students was largely left to the university and was problematic in many ways not the least being the high failure rate of teachers' college students in university subjects. However because the liberal studies component of the course was undertaken at the university it was regarded as high status by students and as a result the vocational or professional studies component of their studies at the college was regarded as less valuable by students (Hyams, 1976, p224-226). Adolf Schulz, the principal of the college from 1909 –1948 advocated an undergraduate or first degree in education as way around what seemed to be an intractable problem. The South Australian Public Teachers' Union supported him although a first degree in education did not come to pass until 1967 when a Bachelor of Education was established at Flinders University. The Adelaide Teachers College under the principal ship of Harry Penny introduced its own liberal studies program in 1954 and this gradually expanded particularly throughout the period of the fifties and sixties when four new colleges were established. However the debate continued even when the liberal studies were conducted at the teachers' colleges. It focused on the amount of time that should be devoted to general studies compared to professional studies and on the nature of professional studies itself. The professional studies in South Australia prior to the mid sixties consisted of three quite distinct elements: Education, Educational Psychology, Principals and Practices of Teaching. There was considerable criticism of this approach.

There were at least three kinds of criticisms against the tripartite approach. First, the three parts were in no way integrated. Second, there was a forced dichotomy between theory and practice. Third, many of the courses were not directly relevant to the kind of world in which the student had to teach (Cross, 1970, p1).

The new three- year Diplomas of teaching introduced into the five South Australian teachers' colleges in the late sixties consisted of nine units, three of which were devoted to professional studies (Education I, II and III) and six of which were general studies. A two-thirds one third split in favour of general or liberal studies. However at that time the main debates seemed to be around the elements of the professional studies component. Probably not surprising given what the curriculum designers were trying to accommodate into one third of the diploma course. All five colleges decided to introduce interdisciplinary education courses for the professional studies component of the diploma. As Cross (1970) reported at the National Seminar on the Study of Education in Teachers' Colleges held in Adelaide in May 1970, all five colleges experienced difficulties adopting an interdisciplinary approach. These difficulties related to 'combining disciplines with different conceptual structures'...'staffing such courses'...and 'the immediate effect of the courses on students.' (Cross, 1970, p2/3). The two key debates about 1) the balance between general and professional studies and 2) the components of professional studies. These debates continued throughout the seventies and eighties resulting in a variety of course combinations.

Where then did pre service teachers learn to teach English? Clearly it was as part of the professional studies component of the curriculum. An examination of the Adelaide Teachers College Handbooks 1940-1955 mentions the subjects to be studied at the University of Adelaide (the general or cultural studies) but very little or nothing about the professional subjects to be taken at the college. From 1940-1946 nothing is mentioned in the handbook. From 1947 -1955 the following paragraph is repeated.

Information regarding the subjects for the various college courses will be outlined by the individual group lecturers in the preliminary lectures. Make sure you know what you will require for your own particular college course. If in doubt about any of these subjects do not hesitate to make enquiries from your group lecturer (Adelaide Teachers College Handbook, 1947, p46).

My interviews with students from this period bear out the dichotomy of the liberal studies vocational studies curriculum and the minimal time spent on learning about the primary curriculum including English and how to teach it. This teacher attended Adelaide Teachers College in the mid fifties.

Q: So all the time you were training to be a primary teacher you were also studying at Adelaide University?

A: Yes, that was the format at that time. You did half your studies at Adelaide University and half at the teachers college, which was on joint grounds with Adelaide University and it reflected a fairly powerful ideological perception at the time that a liberal or general education was absolutely essential for teaching. And mixing with other professionals, doctors and so on was absolutely essential for good teaching.

Q: ...what can you remember of the actual teachers college and what you studied there?

A: The two big ones were Education, which was a kind of a general education and it tended to be the history of education, delivered by Dr Penny to a large crowd and then the rest of the teachers college staff acted as the tutors. And basically his philosophy was to encourage a professional

attitude and the idea that teaching, I say this to students still, is a great noble profession and never be put down, you are in a great, noble profession. So it was a broad education. The other one was Ed psych... Hughes and Hughes we studied. They were the two that had high status. And then the third lump was methodology. Now the interesting thing is that methodology was always dead boring because it was really not proper methodology. It was the weak link. And I think they had the philosophy that having got a good background, having got the right attitude, most teachers would have to learn on the job anyway.

...We learned most of our methodology in a practical way in the Demonstration Schools and that is why methodology taught in college was so general and so weak.

Q. What about English?

A: Right, I've been thinking about this. No, and I don't think we were actually taught any. We were taught general methodology but I can't remember being taught English methodology except on the spot in Dem schools. I know that the C students [early childhood group] were taught a lot. As a result of that your methodology tended to be the methodology you had learnt at school, modified a little bit by the latest theories. But no, I can't remember having any English. Remember I said I thought the methodology courses were strange. We spent most of our methodology courses studying reports.

Q: Really?

A: English reports mainly. What direction teaching should take and so on but very little practical stuff in methodology. When we went teaching in the Dem schools of course the methodology was very much emphasised so you picked up a lot of methodology from your Dem schools and from when you went practice teaching from the Dem teacher. Again it was very much left to the Dem teachers to teach methodology.

An examination of the time spent on the professional subjects also bears this out. For example from 1957 – 1961 the Wattle Park Teachers College Handbook lists English as being taught in Principles of Primary Education Parts 1 & 2. English is included with Mathematics, History and Geography (in later years called Social Studies). At two lectures per week for the subject as a whole, English is one third of the course and possibly one third of the contact time was spent on it. Across two years this could amount to 30 hours contact time (less than the typical contact time of **one** 4.5 course at the University of South Australia currently). Between 1966-1970 the contact time devoted to English rose slightly to 38 hours although it was now only taught in one year of the program. Western Teachers College 1963-1969 devoted similar contact time to the teaching of English at the primary level.

The curriculum for the teaching of English at primary school was not described at all in the teachers college handbooks 1940-1957 and only briefly from 1957-1970. For example the 1962 Wattle Park Teachers College describes English as part of the subject College Principles of primary education as:

“A broader consideration of modern educational thought and practice than is given in College Principles of Primary Education, Part 1 with particular reference to English, Mathematics and Social Studies:

- (a) The nature and value of English teaching in the primary school: the scope and content of the course; the purpose and methods of teaching reading, poetry, language (oral and written), spelling and grammar.”

There are **no** textbooks listed for the English aspect of the subject although three texts appear in a list of 'reference books' as:

Education Department of South Australia: *Course of instruction for primary schools*, 1958

Schonell, F.J. *Psychology and teaching of reading*, Oliver and Boyd (no date)

Grassam, E.H. *Getting ready for reading*, Ginn (no date).

The English curriculum at the Wattle Park Teachers College is described similarly with some changes in the references listed although Schonell and the Education Department Courses of Instruction are always mentioned. At the Western Teachers College 1963-1968 (a new course was developed in 1970 English was not taught in the first year of the new course) has virtually the same aims as listed above for Wattle Park TC although it lists Schonell as a text book rather than a reference along with Reeves, J. *Teaching Poetry*, Heinemann, 1958 and Cutforth, J.A. *English in the primary school*, Blackwell (no date). Reeves and Cutforth are also listed as reference books for Wattle Park TC in 1964-1967. Interestingly Western TC does not list the Education Department Course of Instruction for study.

Current concerns about what pre service teachers are taught about teaching English/literacy are focused on the amount of course time available for this given the crowded curriculum of pre service awards and in the Australian Government Inquiry on the methods of teaching in particular the teaching of reading. It is interesting to note that in the current awards at the University of South Australia there is now more time devoted to professional studies than in the past but that there has been a change in the nature of those professional studies and in one award less time devoted to study of the primary school curriculum subjects. The teaching of reading is included in subjects on the teaching of English. In past iterations of the award reading has been treated as a separate subject. During the time 1940-1970 the teaching of reading was emphasised in the primary courses for pre service teachers in that it was considered important in the authorized curricula for primary schools but was given little contact time in the primary program. Pre service teachers would have learnt something about the teaching of English during teaching practice but this would have varied depending on the school and teacher in which students were placed.

What then did primary teacher education students learn about teaching English given the amount of contact time in the sixties and the even more limited time in the forties and fifties? A brief examination of some of the texts listed as references and/or textbooks does indicate the prominent discourses about the teaching of reading (e.g. reading readiness which comes from developmental psychology) during this period and also some of the debates of the time particularly around the methods of teaching reading (whole word, phonics,). Some close analysis of the language and discourses in these texts would further illuminate what was important in the teaching of reading. Another issue for further study relates to the match of what was learnt at teachers college with what constituted subject English in the primary school as found in the courses of instruction?

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