A HISTORY OF AGE GRADING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS 1875-1990

LYNNE TRETHEWEY

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Department of Education
University of Adelaide

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CONTENTS

Table of Contents		ii
List of Schemata, Tables and Figures		iii
Abbreviations		ix
Abstract of thesis		xi
Declaration		xii
Acknowledgements		xiii
	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Infants, graded schooling and the transition to 'real studenthood'	31
Chapter 2	Suffer the little children? Historical debate, policy and practice with respect to age of entry to school	83
Chapter 3	"Children on entry should not vary too widely in age": Twentieth century changes in the procedure for admission to school	127
Chapter 4	Age grading and the social construction of normality and retardation in South Australian primary schools	157
Chapter 5	Towards the elimination of over-ageness: Representations, rhetoric and reform in the 1940s	189
Chapter 6	"Factors unrelated to his potentiality determine his early progress": The length of infant schooling debate, 1945-1960	219
Chapter 7	All together now... : Standardising the pattern of student progress through the junior primary grades, 1960s-1980s	254
	Conclusion	284
Appendix A	Infant school schemata	298
Appendix B	Tables	303
Appendix C	Graphs	339
Appendix D	Age-grade data-base: A methodological description	365
	Bibliography	368

SCHEMATA, TABLES AND FIGURES

Schemata

- Appendix A

Organisation of classes in the early years of school 299

Regulation 183 of 1879: *Programme of Inspector's Examination* 300

Tentative scheme for training kindergarten and sub-primary teachers, 1921 301

Tables

- in the text

[preceding/on Page]

1.1 Primary school enrolments, 1971-1990 80

2.1 Ages of scholars, 1861 and 1871 87

2.2 Ages of children attending licensed schools, 1853-1873 88

2.3 Pupils' commencing ages in government schools State-wide, 1944 113

2.4 Commencing ages at metropolitan compared with country schools, 1944 113

2.5 Commencing ages at metropolitan schools with and without an infant department, 1944 113

2.6 Children younger than statutory age in government schools on 1st July, 1943-1947 117

2.7 Births: South Australia, 1932-1947 117

2.8 Percentages of children entering South Australian government schools at different ages, in different areas, 1955 121

4.1 Age range of students from selected occupational categories in Class I to IV, Hindmarsh Public School, 1884, 1899 164

4.2 Percentage of students from selected occupational categories passing the Compulsory Standard at Hindmarsh Public School, 1884-91, 1892-99 164

4.3 Retardation in primary schools in different regions of South Australia, 1943 181

4.4 Number of boys and girls placed in Opportunity Classes at Hindmarsh Primary School, 1928-1975 183

4.5	Number and percentage of retarded pupils in South Australian primary and super-primary schools (excluding Opportunity Classes) according to age and receipt of free books, July 1943-June 1944	186
4.6	Percentage of retarded pupils in South Australian primary schools (excluding OC) according to grade and receipt of free books, July 1943-June 1944	186
4.7	Hindmarsh Opportunity Class enrolments by occupation group of parent, 1928-1975	187
5.1	Superintendent Martin's table showing the progress of a single cohort of pupils through Grades I to VII in SA government primary schools, 1936-1942	191
5.2	The 'spread' of chronological and mental ages and achievement ages in reading and arithmetic, Grade IV-VII, as calculated by the Bean Committee	194
5.3	Retardation in Grades I and II in schools with and without an infant department, 1943	199
5.4	Ages of pupils entering secondary schools in 1949 - quartile distribution	202
5.5	Age-grade table, 1943 compared with 1945 and 1947, as compiled by the Bean Committee	205
5.6	Hindmarsh Opportunity Class pupils, 1928-1975: remarks on leaving	217
6.1	Promotion figures for eleven metropolitan Class I and II schools, 1944	228
6.2	Time of year at which schooling commenced, 1939-1949	230
6.3	Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at the beginning of the year, 1940-1947	230
6.4	Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at mid-year, 1939-1946	230
6.5	Distribution according to period in Grades I and II and ages of a sample of children who entered metropolitan secondary schools in 1949	232
6.6	Length of time spent by 13,332 children in 50 infant departments, 1955-1957	242
6.7	Distribution of children across the 'half-grades', 1948-1956	243
6.8	Percentages of children in Grade III aged 7, 8 and 9+ years on 1 August 1956	243
6.9	Ages of children entering infant departments in February, 1950-1953	243

- Appendix B

A.1 Age at admission to Hindmarsh Infant Department by sex of pupil, 1882-1886, 1887-1891, 1892-1899 304

A.2 Age at admission to Hindmarsh Infant Department by occupation group of parent/guardian, 1882-1886, 1887-1891, 1892-1899 305

A.3 Statistics showing progress (of the public education system) from January 1st, 1876, to December 31st, 1907 306

A.4 Mean chronological ages of pupils in Grades 1 to 7, 1921-1934 308

A.5 Standard deviation of ages of pupils in Grades 1 to 7, 1921-1934 308

A.6 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Grades 1 to 7, 1935-1967 309

A.7 Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Grades 1 to 7, 1935-1967 311

A.8 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Infant School classes, 1948-1963 313

A.9 Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Infant School classes, 1948-1963 313

A.10 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Reception to Grade 7 in schools without a separate infant department, 1968-1990 314

A.11 Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Reception to Grade 7 in schools without a separate infant department, 1968-1990 315

A.12 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Reception-Grade 2 in Primary (R-7) schools compared with Infant (R-2) schools, 1968-1981 316

A.13 Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Reception-Grade 2 in Primary (R-7) schools compared with Infant (R-2) schools, 1968-1981 317

A.14 Number of pupils placed in Opportunity Classes, SA government primary schools, 1926-1990 318

A.15 Number of pupils aged from 7 and under to 16 and over in Opportunity Classes for selected years, 1935-1979 320

A.16 Number of pupils aged from 7 and under to 16 and over in Special Classes (formerly OC) for selected years, 1980-1990 323

A.17 Percentage of boys and girls retarded by one year in Grades 1-7, 1935-1990 324

A.18 Percentage of boys and girls retarded by more than one year in Grades 1-7, 1935-1990 327

A.19 Percentage of boys and girls aged 7 to 13 in one grade below the norm for their age, 1935-1990 330

A.20 Percentage of boys and girls aged 8 to 13 in more than one grade below the norm for their age, 1935-1990 333

A.21 Percentage of pupils accelerated (i.e., who 'skipped' a grade or grades), 1935-1990 336

Figures

- in the text [preceding Page]

2.1 Percentage of infants in selected schools, 1880 94

2.2 Director Williams' graph showing the correspondence between the birth rate, taken in periods of six years, and the number of children instructed in each year from 1896 to 1906 102

2.3 Cartoon: "And still they come!!!" 118

4.1 Number of boys and girls placed in Opportunity Classes in SA primary schools, 1935-1990 183

4.2 Percentages of pupils retarded at various ages, 1943 186

- Appendix C

A.1 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in selected primary grades, 1935-1990 340

A.2 Mean chronological ages of girls in Grade 1, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990) 341

A.3 Mean chronological ages of boys in Grade 1, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990) 342

A.4 Mean chronological ages of girls in Grade 2, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990) 343

A.5	Mean chronological ages of boys in Grade 2, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990)	344
A.6	Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	345
A.7	Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	346
A.8	Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age, 1921-1990: as a function of age (8, 10 and 12 years)	347
A.9	Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age, 1921-1990: as a function of age (7, 9 and 11 years)	348
A.10	Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for Grade 1, 1935-1990	349
A.11	Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for Grade 3, 1935-1990	350
A.12	Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for Grade 5, 1935-1990	351
A.13	Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for Grade 7, 1935-1990	352
A.14	Percentage of pupils accelerated in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	353
A.15	Percentage of pupils accelerated in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	354
A.16	Percentage of pupils accelerated, 1921-1990: as a function of age (6, 8 and 10 years)	355
A.17	Percentage of pupils accelerated, 1921-1990: as a function of age (7 and 9 years)	356
A.18	Percentage of pupils retarded by one year in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	357
A.19	Percentage of pupils retarded by one year in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	358
A.20	Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	359

A.21	Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade	360
A.22	Percentage of pupils retarded by one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age (8, 10 and 12 years)	361
A.23	Percentage of pupils retarded by one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age (7, 9, 11 and 13 years)	362
A.24	Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age (8, 10 and 12 years)	363
A.25	Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age (9, 11 and 13 years)	364

ABBREVIATIONS

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AJPSPA	Association of Junior Primary School Parents' Clubs
ANU	Australian National University (Canberra)
ANZHES	Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society
APPA	Australian Primary Principals' Association
ASPS	Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools
BFSS	British and Foreign School Society
CAE	College of Advanced Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ED	Education Department (South Australia) Registry files
EG	Education Gazette (South Australia)
ERDC	Education Research and Development Committee
IM	Infant Mistress
IMA	Infant Mistresses' Association
IMC	Infant Mistresses' Club
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
ISMC	Infant School Mothers' Club
ISMCA	Infant School Mothers' Club Association
ITA	Infant Teachers' Association
JPPA	Junior Primary Principals' Association
JPS	Junior Primary School
MLSA	Mortlock Library of South Australiana
NA	New Australian
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
nd	no date supplied
NEF	New Education Fellowship
NESB	Non English speaking background
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research

OC	Opportunity Class
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACE	Professional Association of Childhood Educators
PPA	Primary Principals' Association
PRO	Public Record Office
PS	Primary School
QC	Qualifying Certificate
R	Reception (class/grade, formerly known as Preparatory and, before that, Kindergarten)
SAGG	South Australian Government Gazette
SAIT	South Australian Institute of Teachers
SAPD	South Australian Parliamentary Debates
SAPP	South Australian Parliamentary Papers
SAPTU	South Australian Public Teachers' Union
SM	Sunday Mail
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to elucidate the origins, nature and impact of age standards in the organisation of state-provided elementary schooling in South Australia from 1875 to 1990. Informed by the wider body of social theory in addition to the 'new' social history , it postulates that, like class, gender, ethnicity and race, age needs to be conceptualised as a structuring process; and that a detailed empirical analysis of the ordering of age relations in institutional contexts is required to enhance our understanding of the way age differences have been constructed over time.

More specifically, the thesis traces the shift which occurred, from ungraded schools in the early colonial period of South Australia's history, to the classification and promotion of scholars according to attainment and then increasingly on the basis of chronological age. It also examines the introduction of specialist departments, teachers and pedagogy to better manage the youngest pupils - a move which was accompanied by the gradual exclusion of under five year olds from the definition of school-aged.

The thesis argues that bureaucratic reforms which resulted in a progressive tightening of the age-grade structure in South Australian primary schools were aimed at securing order and efficiency: concerns that gave rise to educational policy and practice which privileged class teaching over more individualised methods of instruction, assumed a high degree of uniformity in chronological mental development, and constructed notions of 'normality' and 'retardation' in addition to a very constricted view of desirable peer group. Further, the vocabulary of age was refined and children's experience of schooling became increasingly regularised. At the same time, the distinctive ethos and traditions of separately-established infant/junior primary departments/schools generated tensions and contradictions in organisational practice.

The thesis concludes that age grading and a distinction between infant classes and 'primary school proper' in the case of South Australia were not unified and coherent developments, but nonetheless have proved remarkably resistant to change. Moreover, in its various institutional forms, chronological age has been central for most of this century in shaping social life and meaning both inside and outside the school.

DECLARATION

I certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any University and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

Further, I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

....

L. Trethewey

February, 1997

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INTRODUCTION

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

"Imagine what it would do for a 12-year-old child to be in a class with eight-year-olds", said Ms Pope, the South Australian Superintendent of Early Childhood/Primary Education, in response to the 1992 NBEET Schools Council proposal that attainment-based standards and the corollary of mixed-aged classes be resurrected in Australian schools.[1] Promotion on ability already existed in the State's schools, Ms Pope continued; but in the interests of children's social development, this involved giving students advanced or remedial work within age-based classes rather than moving them between classes. Several decades previously, a primary teacher recorded in her diary on the first day of the new school year:

> The Grade VII boys and girls strut around with an importance they have never felt before. They are now in the 'top' grade. ... The new Grade III scholars move around in a new world. They are now in the 'big school'. This is a boost to their importance. They show it, too, when they talk to those still in the infant school.[2]

Age-grade homogeneity and a distinction between infant classes and 'primary school proper', as alluded to in these quotes, are characteristics of modern elementary schooling in South Australia that are largely taken for granted. Although childhood and its institutional context, the school, have been the subject of burgeoning academic interest and multi-disciplinary enquiry in recent decades, singularly few studies have focused on the increasing use of chronological age as a basis for the internal organisation of schools; or examined how forms of age differentiation within public school systems have shaped the meaning and experience of childhood over time. Furthermore, among the existing work on age and its institutional expression, as might inform such an analysis, conceptualisations of age and perspectives on the role of schooling in ordering age relations diverge widely. The ensuing history of the age-graded primary school, with its specific reference to state schooling in South Australian society between 1875 and 1990, is intended to go some way towards redressing this significant lacuna in the historiography of childhood and education (in the Antipodes, at least).

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[1] Quoted by Cheryl Critchley and Zac Donovan in 'School study's radical options', Advertiser, 8 October 1992, p. 19

[2] 'The diary of a teacher', SA Teachers' Journal, 5:1, February 1955, p. 17

CONCEPTUALISING AGE AND AGE DIFFERENTIATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

In an essay review of five histories of 'growing up' which were published in the early 1980s, Harvey Graff prefaced his discussion of the themes explored in each account with the observation:

> Several approaches currently dominate research. The first may be categorised as the psychohistorical, which ranges from the psychogenics of Lloyd de Mause and his followers in the *Journal of Psychohistory* (formerly *History of Childhood Quarterly*) to the ego psychology of John Demos and the cultural psychology of Philip J. Greven. The second approach is the socio-cultural, represented best in the works of Joseph F. Kett and John R. Gillis. The third may be termed "the transitions in the life course" approach, conceptualised by Glen H. Elder, Jr., and sponsored in fair measure by Tamara K. Hareven. One should add related studies in social and demographic history, often with a quantitative basis. The fourth main approach lies in studies in the development of social institutions and social policies aimed at the young and their presumed problems.[3]

Further, Graff contends, while the achievements of these studies are clearly recognised and the limitations of the works and approaches referred to are noted in reviews, the history of 'growing up' suffers from a common set of problems and conceptual complications:

> Three elements constitute this larger issue: 1) the place of the young themselves - either individually or in groups - within the field of study: a question of approach, sources and interpretation; 2) an integrated view of 'growing up' in terms of social, cultural, and psychological processes and dynamics: an issue of conceptualisation and theoretical assumptions; and 3) recognition of conflict in its many dimensions as central to 'growing up' and its personal, social, institutional, economic, cultural and political relations. ...
> Each of these elements appears within certain parts of the larger literature; nevertheless the principal approaches and perspectives neglect how these elements, taken together, provide a richer and more complete historical understanding.[4]

---

[3] Harvey J. Graff, 'The history of childhood and youth: beyond infancy?', History of Education Quarterly, 26:1, Spring 1986, p. 96
Graff cites the following major North American references in the footnotes to this summary: Lloyd de Mause (ed.), The History of Childhood (New York, 1974); John Demos, The Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York, 1970); Philip J. Greven, The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America (New York, 1977); Joseph F. Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present (New York, 1977); John R. Gillis, Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present (New York, 1974); Glen H. Elder, Jr., 'Adolescence in Historical Perspective' in Joseph Adelson (ed.), Handbook of Adolescent Psychology (New York, 1980), pp. 3-46; Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective (New York, 1978); Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); Michael B. Katz, Michael J Doucet and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organisation of Early Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Mary J. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865, (New York, 1981)

[4] ibid, pp. 96-7

Graff thus extends a major challenge to historians to develop a comprehensive theory of age relations - an overly ambitious project for this Introduction. Instead a more modest aim is pursued: to review the existing published evidence and explanatory frameworks with respect to age and schooling as drawn upon (with the exception of psychohistory) in somewhat eclectic fashion in the seven main chapters of the thesis.

Whether conducted on the traditional biological growth model or in accordance with the life-span orientation that emerged in the 1960s and 70s[5], psychological studies discuss age-specific individual differences and the relation of age groups to each other with reference to universal 'stages of development' into which the human life-cycle is seen to be naturally divided. These stages are labelled infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood in uncritical reflection of the fact that modern Western societies have recognised and institutionalised them as such. The reductionism, determinism and a-historicism of mainstream psychological accounts notably leaves the process of age formation neither described nor explained: the existence of childhood in its contemporary form is simply assumed and debate centres, rather, on the child's nature.[6]

Psychologies of the child can be roughly grouped into those dealing with childhood as a broad life stage and those examining developmental changes in specific areas of functioning. In the former category, Erikson's developmental model and Freudian psychoanalytic theory have been drawn upon by psychohistorians, whose studies of age groups require acknowledgement if not elaboration here (since the prestige of psychohistory has suffered a marked decline).[7] In the

[5] For an overview of these perspectives in developmental psychology, see Paul B. Baltes, Hayne W. Reese and Lewis P. Lipsett, 'Life-span developmental psychology, Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 31, 1980, pp. 65-110; David L. Featherman, 'Life-span perspectives in social science research', Life-span Development and Behaviour, vol. 5, 1983, pp. 1-57 (especially pp. 4-8)

[6] For a critique of mainstream psychologies of the child, see R. Jacoby, Social amnesia: A critique of conformist psychology from Adler to Laing, Hassocks, England, Harvester Press, 1977; K. Keniston, 'Psychological development and historical change', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, no. 2, 1971, pp. 329-45

[7] The application of Erik Erikson's developmental model to the history of childhood, adolescence and youth is exemplified in the work of John and Virginia Demos, Lloyd de Mause, David Hunt, Kenneth Keniston and G. R. Taylor. For an overview of their approach, see the essays by Demos and Hareven in T. K. Rabb and R. I. Rotberg (eds.), The family in history. Interdisciplinary essays, New York, Harper and Row, 1971; K. Keniston, 'Psychological development and historical change'. For a critique of the work in psychohistory, see J. Kociumbas, 'Childhood history as ideology', Labour History, no. 47, November 1984, pp. 2-4; M. F. Shore, 'The child and historiography', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, no. 6, 1976, pp. 495-505. The decline of psychohistory's prestige among historians is noted by J. M. Hawes and N. R. Hiner (eds.), Children in historical and comparative perspective. An international handbook and research guide, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991, Chapter 1, footnote 3

latter category, analyses of social development in childhood are usually confined to mere description of children's social traits and the relative importance of chronological age peers and 'significant others' at successive stages of cognitive development.[8] Being firmly focused at the level of interpersonal relations, these accounts limit the structuring activities of the school to 'teacher socialisation influences'. In further explicating the significance of age in forming concepts of self and social relationships, any link to wider social structures and processes is reduced to generalised 'environmental factors' (the family, the media).

Of considerable relevance to the subject of the thesis, though, are those learning theories, research findings and developments in educational psychology which have underpinned particular aspects of age-graded primary school policy and practice. For example, just as Froebelian and Montessorian principles influenced the founding of kindergarten classes and the adoption of informal, child-centred approaches to teaching the youngest pupils in South Australian primary schools, so did Piagetian theory more recently inform educational rationales for establishing an age standard for transition from junior to upper primary classes and the provision of 'developmentally-appropriate' instruction at different grade levels.[9] Similarly, in pursuit of the new official aim of the 1920s - that children make 'consistent progress' through the infant/primary grades - inspectors drew on current thinking in social psychology to remind teachers that

> the backward child has need of social experience with pupils of his own age and this need should outweigh in importance his inability to acquire the material of instruction as readily as the normal child.[10]

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[8] See, for example, J. E. Brophy, Child development and socialisation, Chicago, Science Research Associates, 1977; W. W. Hartup, 'Peer interaction and social organisation' in P. H. Mussen (ed.), Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology, vol. 2 (Third edition), New York, Wiley, 1970; H. McGurk (ed.), Issues in childhood social development, London, Methuen, 1978; S. Ellis, B. Rogoff and C. C. Cromer, 'Research reports: Age segregation in children's social interactions', Developmental Psychology, 17:4, 1981, pp. 399-407

[9] See D. J. Shield, Psychological theory and its application to Departmental policy in South Australian schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', M.Ed thesis, Flinders University of SA, 1989; M. Wauchope, The bearing of the views of some modern thinkers on infant education with special reference to South Australia, MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1936; R. N. Rogers, The bearing of recent thinking and research on teaching practice in the infant school, Dip. Child Development study, University of London, 1962

[10] Inspector Higginbottom, EG (SA), 53:613, 16 August 1937, p. 201

Relatedly, it was school psychologists' pre-occupation with 'normalising' childhood, in conjunction with the child accounting and 'scientific' school administration movements earlier this century[11], that focused attention on pupils who lagged behind their chronological age peers. It was also their measurement and recording techniques which simultaneously defined and helped to resolve 'the retardation problem' (in respect of the number of children 'over-age' for their grade) so prominent in local educational discourse of the 1930s and 40s.

Further, overseas research on the 'birthdate effect' in the 1950s and 60s[12], together with the ascendant ideology of individual difference, provided justificatory support for the South Australian Education Department's move to increase the frequency of enrolment periods during a year - an initiative which assisted in narrowing the range of children's ages in beginners' classes and operated in concert with other post-World War II reforms to consolidate gains in the quest to achieve a perfect age-grade fit. In similar fashion, the evidence of child development studies was adduced in 1970s' and 80s' arguments regarding the minimum age at which children should be admitted to school and engage in formal learning, whilst a plethora of articles published in psychology and education journals from the 1950s onwards fuelled debate over the relative merits of 'social promotion' and grade repetition/retention (notably in terms of the effects of promotion or non-promotion on pupils and in relation to maintaining academic standards).[13] Additionally, it is to psychological discourse that one necessarily looks for

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[11] For an overview of these movements in North America, see H. J. Otto and D. M. Estes, 'Accelerated and retarded progress' in C. Harris (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, Third Edition, New York, Macmillan, 1960, pp. 4-11; J. L. Tropea, 'Bureaucratic order and special children: Urban schools, 1890s-1940s', History of Education Quarterly, 27:1, Spring 1987, pp. 29-53; R. E. Callaghan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962; 'Editorials. Child Accounting', Journal of Educational Research, 3:3, March 1921, pp. 219-22

[12] See, for example, Philip Williams, 'Date of birth, backwardness and educational organisation', British Journal of Educational Psychology, 34:3, 1964, pp. 247-55; P. C. Jinks, 'An investigation into the effect of date of birth on subsequent school performance', Educational Research, 6:3, June 1964, pp. 220-25. A number of other British researchers took up the issue, which was revived in various editions of these two journals and the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* during the 1980s.

[13] In addition to these journals, too numerous to list, see C. C. Beattie, Entrance age to kindergarten and first grade: its effects on cognitive and affective development of students, US Department of Health, Welfare and Education, National Institute of Education, 1970, ERIC Doc. 133 050; Lewis Bossing and Phyl Brien, A review of the elementary school promotion/retention dilemma, 1980, ERIC Doc. 212 362; Sidney Thompson, 'Grade retention and social promotion', *ACSA School Management Digest*, Series 1, no. 2, 1980, ERIC Doc. 189 681; N. R. Baenen et al., A research summary: the effects of grade retention on elementary students, 1980, ERIC Doc. 196 556; Student retention vs. social promotion. The best of ERIC, No. 43, Eugene, Oregon University, ERIC Clearing House on Educational Management, 1979, ERIC Doc. 166 771

elucidation of historical debates about which concept of age classroom organisation should be premised on: chronological, mental or developmental (i.e., maturity).[14]

Proceeding on the assumption that age is not simply a biological fact but is also the subject of varied cultural definition, sociological analyses focus on how age is socially structured. Work in the sociology of childhood to date has been largely influenced by either the structural-functionalist tradition, following the lead of S. N. Eisenstadt, or by the age stratification perspective in historical sociology articulated by Matilda White Riley and her associates.[15] Both analytical frameworks view socially-recognised life stages as being organised into a 'system' which shapes self-identity and orders the relations between different age groups as well as the allocation of social roles.

According to studies on the first model, an age-grade system functions to maintain social solidarity and continuity. This purpose, it is argued, is achieved by socialising individuals into the 'general role dispositions' designated as proper at a given stage of life, and by emphasising age differences such that individuals occupying a common position in the age hierarchy both perceive themselves and consistently behave in relation to others at different points of the scale. In this regard, learning and socialisation in childhood is considered particularly important. So, too, are the institutional arrangements of schools in modern capitalist societies which (on the basis of anthropological evidence) are seen to contrast with most kinship societies in having developed sharply differentiated age-grades.

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[14] For instance, Rosemarie Gray, Criteria to determine entry into school: a review of the research, Springfield, Illinois State Board of Education, 1985, ERIC Document 260 826

[15] S. N. Eisenstadt, From generation to generation. Age groups and social structure, New York, Free Press, 1966 (first published in 1956); M. W. Riley, M. Johnson and A. Foner, Aging and society, Volume 3. A sociology of age stratification, New York, Russell Sage, 1972. See also M. W. Riley, 'Age strata in social systems', in R. H. Bintock, E. Shanas and Associates (eds.), Handbook of aging and the social sciences, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976, pp. 189-215
For a review of Eisenstadt's work, see M. O'Donnell, Age and Generation, London, Tavistock Publications, 1985, chapter 1. For a summary of the elements in age stratification theory, see A. Foner, 'Age stratification and the changing family', American Journal of Sociology, vol. 84, Supplement, 1978, pp. 340-44; Glen H. Elder, Jr., 'Age differentiation and the life course', Annual Review of Sociology, vol. 1, 1975, pp. 165-90

From the structural-functionalist perspective, in transmitting the necessary normative requirements, constructing an 'age consciousness' among children and structuring social relations through specialisation, segregation, categorisation and power differentiation of pupils and teachers, schooling represents the first stage of transition from the age heterogeneity of family life to the age-homogeneous social arrangements characteristic of public life. Self-evidently, therefore, schools are internally age graded, with the boundaries between each grade level being clearly demarcated and the age homogeneity of classes preserved by the device of 'social promotion'[16]. Analyses on this model additionally contend that instruction in the skills and knowledge which must be acquired as a preparation for adult status is adapted to the exigencies of children's learning potential at various stages of their biological development, whilst the institution's total organisation serves to reinforce the fundamental discontinuity between child and adult social spheres.[17]

The critical literature points up conceptual weaknesses in the study of childhood and its institutionalised contexts within this sociological tradition. Notably, the emphasis on socialisation attracts substantial disfavour,[18] as does the failure of structural-functionalist analysis to recognise the historical specificity and dynamic of the process of age formation. By contrast, in recognising that the social construction of age is non-linear and non-teleological, age stratification theory appears to hold more promise for examining the development of age-graded primary schooling and its impact on children's lives. Now popularly applied by historical sociologists to analysis of the family and the life course, this conceptual framework adds to the explanation of how age is socially structured a temporal dimension derived from

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[16] 'Social promotion' refers to the automatic progression of pupils from one class to the next on the basis of chronological age. The concept gained legitimacy in educational circles during the 1930s and was firmly entrenched in South Australian primary school practice by the 1950s.

[17] Prominent studies on this model are R. Dreeben, On What is Learned in School, Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1968, and Talcott Parsons, 'The school class as a social system', Harvard Educational Review, vol. 29, 1959, pp. 297-318

[18] See R. E. Young, 'Childhood, adolescence and socialisation' in F. J. Hunt (ed.), Socialisation in Australia, Melbourne, Australia International Press & Publication, 1978, pp. 316-18; R. W. Mackay, 'Conceptions of childhood and models of socialisation' in R. Turner (ed.), Ethnomethodology: Selected readings, Harmondsworth, England, Penguin, 1974; H. Dreitzel (ed.), Childhood and socialisation, New York, Collier- Macmillan, 1973

Karl Mannheim's classic essay 'The Problem of Generations' [19]. Furthermore, age is viewed not only as a key component of social structure but as an element of social change. According to the theory, at societal level individuals are aggregated into an age stratum, with several age strata being fitted together to form an age stratification system. From a dynamic point of view, these age strata (culturally-constructed broad age grades) constitute major transitions in the life course; from a structural perspective they are the lines or points of transition that demarcate childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. The conjoining of two concepts, 'social time' and 'historical time', then becomes crucial to an understanding of age differentiation at the individual level.

As Glen Elder elaborates, 'social time' refers to the ordering of social roles and the sequence and timing of major events through which individuals proceed by age-linked expectations, sanctions and rewards that exercise a normative influence. Hence there is an appropriate time for school entry, achieving economic independence, marriage, etcetera. The normative influence on individual ageing is seen to represent but one force among others (for example, economic factors) in shaping the actual schedule of events and social roles, whilst age norms themselves change in response to the action of other social forces (for instance, new intellectual ideas). The theory also accommodates the potential for variations in the timing and allocation of roles to occur, and thereby generate a range of patterns in each age stratum.

The concept of 'historical time' in age stratification theory refers to a position in the course of social change whereby the experience of individuals belonging to a particular age cohort (defined in terms of birth year) is shaped by the specific historical context in which they live. Accordingly, no two cohorts or generations age in the same way. Birth cohorts are seen to be most sharply differentiated on the basis of their historical experience during times of rapid social change, while structural variables (such as social class, gender, ethnicity, race) influencing exposure to and interpretation of historical conditions account for individual differences in ageing among members of a common cohort. Moreover, the theory posits that as

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[19] Karl Mannheim, 'The problem of generations' in Essays on the sociology of knowledge, pp. 276-320, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952

the process of 'cohort flow' interweaves with historical change, variations in the life patterns, social and political attitudes and demography of successive cohorts engender changes in the age-grade structure itself.[20]

The temporal and dynamic elements which distinguish this theoretical perspective from structural-functionalism within the sociology of age render it a more flexible framework for investigating the structuring of broad age grades, age hierarchies in particular settings, age norms and social timetables for transition from one age stratum to the next. Yet sociologists adopting this approach to studying childhood and its institutional contexts of the kindergarten, elementary and secondary school necessarily rely on historical research for insights into the origins of and changes in these phenomena. In this regard, the work of Ariès, Katz, Gillis, Kett, Vinovskis, Kaestle and Hogan has been seminal.[21] Among these studies, three are especially noteworthy in having paid close attention to age-grading **within** the nineteenth and twentieth-century elementary school.

First, the French intellectual historian Philippe Ariès adds to his explanation of the emergence of childhood as a middle-class construct of relatively recent origin, and the segregation of children into schools in Europe, an account of changes in primary school organisation. Having detailed the introduction of the school class, a graded curriculum and the strict regulation of children's liberty, he traces significant shifts in patterns of school attendance and experience: from indefinite age of entry, irregular progress and variable length of schooling to a system of

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[20] G. H. Elder, Jr., 'Approaches to social change and the family', American Journal of Sociology, vol. 84, Supplement, pp. 23-35. See also J. M. Waring, 'Social replenishment and social change: The problem of disordered cohort flow', American Behavioural Scientist, no. 19, November/December 1975, pp. 237-56

[21] See the chapters by Katz and Davey, Kett, Kaestle and Vinovskis in J. Demos and S. S. Boocock (eds.), Turning Points. Historical and sociological essays on the family, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978; Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood. A social history of family life, London, Jonathon Cape, 1973 (first published in French, 1960); Michael B. Katz, The people of Hamilton West: Family and class in a mid-nineteenth century city, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975; Joseph F. Kett, Rites of Passage, New York, Basic Books, 1977; John R. Gillis, Youth and History: Tradition and change in European age relations 1770-present, New York, Academic Press, 1974; David J. Hogan, 'The variable order of events in the life course', American Sociological Review, Vol. 43, 1978, pp. 573-86; M. B. Katz and D. J. Hogan, review of Philadelphia Social History Project ('The organisation of schools, work and family life in Philadelphia, 1838-1920') in John Hardin Best (ed.), Historical Inquiry in Education: A research agenda, Washington, D.C., American Educational Research Association, 1983, chapter 15; David L. Angus, Jeffrey E. Mirel and Maris A. Vinovskis, 'Historical development of age stratification in schooling', Teachers College Record, 90:2, Winter 1988, pp. 211-236

annual promotion and the disappearance of extremely precocious and tardy cases; from mixed-age to more homogeneous group instruction; the setting apart of children of younger ages; and the development of a 'preparatory' stage prior to pupils embarking upon formal learning.[22]

Second, writing in collaboration with David Angus and Jeffrey Mirel, Maris Vinovskis has investigated the delineation of youth as a period mainly for formal education and the increasingly close identification of chronological age with grade in school in order to see how age-graded norms and institutions became an integral part of the life course in modern American society.[23] In its preliminary discussion of the expansion of public schooling during the nineteenth century, this study usefully points up urban/rural differences in the nature and amount of instruction children experienced; the encouragement given by the infant school movement to attendance and the receipt of intellectual training at an early age; the subsequent establishment of a minimum age for school entry; the enforcement of greater regularity in attendance and a lengthening of the school year so that children might complete their primary education sooner; and the prolonging of childhood that was consequent upon the provision of secondary schools, raising of the upper age limit for compulsory attendance and the enactment of child labour laws. The authors then examine the introduction of graded curriculum and classroom organisation, noting that pupil classification and promotion was initially subject to the degree of scholastic attainment, and the criticisms thereof. Finally, they argue that the approximation of age-grade homogeneity by the 1950s was a function of the decreasing range in children's school commencing ages, efficiency-oriented practices and the adoption of 'social promotion'. Again, urban/rural differences in age-grade 'fit' are explored. Race and gender dimensions of the equation, though, attract substantially less comment; social class none at all.

Third, David Hogan traces the history of the graded school system in Philadelphia until 1920, focusing on the ways in which the reorganisation of schooling along two dimensions - the creation of an educational ladder from kindergarten to high school and the distribution of students into age graded classrooms - promoted the principles of merit and morality as part of

[22] Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, chapters 8, 9, 12, Summary

[23] Angus, Mirel and Vinovskis, 'Historical development of age stratification in schooling'

what he calls 'the market revolution in education'.[24] Although the thesis is not concerned to systematically apply his three main arguments[25], it takes up Hogan's point that, well before the creation of the common school system that some historians have assumed was the parent of age grading, the basis of pupil classification altered from 'proficiency' to 'age' in the form of establishing separate infant schools. Several other developments featured in Hogan's analysis which are relevant to the South Australian context are also examined in the thesis: the differences and tensions between age grading and the Lancasterian practice of classifying students according to attainment; the interim adoption of age as a proxy for proficiency by assuming age-normed notions of proficiency in the years before classes were strictly age graded; and the reasoning that both pedagogical efficiency and social (including moral) purposes would be facilitated by chronological age-based graded school organisation.

These three studies provide a foundation for the comparative historical analysis of age and its institutional forms inside schools which has been scantily built upon by Australian historians of education. As Pavla Miller acknowledges in and with respect to her book, *Long Division*, class and gender relations have received far more attention than age in local histories of schooling - both at the level of theory and empirically.[26] In association with Ian Davey, she has set about redressing the first inadequacy. Davey's Canadian work with Michael Katz in the 1970s drew on an extensive social-demographic data-base, together with evidence of changing family patterns in regard to economic production and the exercise of parental authority, to link a transformation in age relations and the way schooling became co-extensive with childhood to

[24] David Hogan, 'From contest mobility to stratified credentialling: merit and graded schooling in Philadelphia 1836-1920', History of Education Review, 16:2, 1987, pp. 21-47; Merit, Morals, Markets and Citizens: School and Society in Philadelphia, 1776-1920 (forthcoming), draft Chapter 5 - Graded Schooling

[25] Hogan's draft chapter on graded schooling argues 1) that the history is the story of the development of a meritocratic structure of disciplinary power and the integration of public education into the market revolution of the nineteenth century under the rubric of 'meritocratic republicanism'; 2) that two 'institutional rules' - merit and morals - vied to shape the organisation of the graded school system; and 3) that the relative importance of these two institutional rules altered in response to changes in the nature of the dominant meritocratic vision, the balance of supply and demand in the credentials market, and processes of class formation and the political pressures they generated on school officials in the context of a decentralised and relatively democratic structure of school governance.

[26] Pavla Miller, Long Division. State schooling in South Australian society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, p. xix

demographic change and the rise of industrial capitalism.[27] Drawing on neo-Marxist and feminist theory some years later, Miller and Davey reformulated this explanation to argue that school-aged childhood needs to be conceptualised as resulting from crises in obedience in both gender and age relations that were attendant upon changing capitalist formations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In response to these crises, they observe, first the churches explored new forms of governing childhood and later the bourgeois state intervened to sweep children from the labour market and into schools.[28]

If in the 1870s (in England and its Antipodean colonies) state intervention in the form of legislating for compulsory attendance at an 'efficient' school signified a major turning point in the ordering of age relations, then according to Miller and Davey the years around 1900 were also crucial since this is when the first major reassessment and restructuring of public elementary school systems began to take shape. The imposition and extension of full-time compulsory attendance and the provision of secondary schools during this period, they argue, comprised a key means by which a perceived 'crisis of youth' was dealt with. In consequence, the dependency model of childhood was extended into the teenage years, whilst in accordance with the emergent needs of the economy and the demands of a domestic ideology the boundary between school and the adult world of work was forged with greater precision.[29]

Clearly, any historical analysis of age grading within public school systems must locate developments in the broader context of such structuring and restructuring of childhood. It is readily apparent from a search of the current literature, though, that whereas educational historians in Australia have investigated changing age norms for the transition from school to work and the relationship of mass secondary schooling to the 'invention' of modern

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[27] M. B. Katz and I. E. Davey, 'Youth and industrialisation in a Canadian city', American Journal of Sociology, vol. 84, Supplement, pp. 81-119

[28] Pavla Miller and Ian Davey, 'Family formation, schooling and the patriarchal state' in R. J. W. Selleck and M. Theobald (eds.), Family, School and State in Australian History, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1990, pp. 1-24

[29] Pavla Miller and Ian Davey, 'Restructuring social inequality: Schooling in early 20th century South Australia', Proceedings of the Annual ANZHES Conference , Hobart, 1982 (10 pp.); Ian Davey, 'Past and present: The transformation of age relations', Educational Research in the 1980s. Collected Papers, vol. 2, Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane, 1982

adolescence,[30] the construction and experience of age within the span of elementary schooling has not been comprehensively studied. A beginning for the process lies in Dianne Snow's analysis of the state's role in constructing the parameters of studenthood through the imposition of a lower age limit on attendance at school - a move which excluded 'infants' (under-five year olds) from the definition of 'school-aged' and forced parents to seek alternative forms of care and education for their youngest offspring.[31] Notably, Snow's observations for New South Wales are confirmed by Gillian Weiss for South Australia and reflect parallel developments elsewhere in the Western world.[32] Further, Denis Grundy's discussion of the shift in South Australia from the use of attainment standards to chronological age as the dominant principle of curriculum and classroom organisation forms a valuable adjunct to the writings of Davey, Miller, Wimshurst and Cashen on student progress through the primary grades.[33]

Deborah Tyler's contribution to the debate on conceptualising childhood is also worthy of consideration. Her Foucauldian analysis argues that, in contrast to the romantic view which abounds in local accounts, the twentieth-century Australian child is better understood "as an artefact of governmentality, an outcome of the techniques of modern government [and] of the interests of government in managing child populations in line with particular objectives".[34]

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[30] Notable examples, specifically referring to the South Australian context, include Denis Grundy, 'Free schooling and the state in South Australia, 1875-1898' in I. D. Palmer (ed.), Melbourne Studies in Education, 1983, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp. 169-202; Craig Campbell, The rise of mass secondary schooling and modern adolescence: A social history of youth in southern Adelaide, 1901-1965, PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1994

[31] Dianne Snow, ' "But they're only babies": Policies and practice marginalising the very young from N.S.W. state schools, 1788-1920' in N. J. Kyle (ed.), Women as educators in 19th and 20th century Australia, School of Learning Studies, University of Wollongong, Occasional Papers no. 1, 1989, pp. 67-83

[32] Gillian Weiss, ' "A very great nuisance": The construction of school entry in South Australia, 1851-1915', History of Education Review, 22:2, 1993, pp. 1-17

[33] Denis Grundy, Compulsory schooling, age grading and the problem of standards in respect to post-secondary education, Seminar paper, School of Education, Flinders University of South Australia, 1983; P. Miller, Long Division, chapters 3 and 4; I. Davey, 'Patterns of inequality: School attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in J. Hurt (ed.), Childhood, Youth and Education in the late nineteenth century. Proceedings of the annual conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain, 1980, pp. 1-30; Kerry Wimshurst, 'Formal schooling and social structure in a working class municipality: Hindmarsh in South Australia, 1895-1910', ANZHES Journal, 7:1, Autumn 1978, pp. 1-15; I. Davey and K. Wimshurst, 'Understanding irregular school attendance: Beyond the urban-rural dichotomy' in R. K. Goodenow and W. E. Marsden (eds.), The City and Education in Four Nations, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; P. J. Cashen, Without sufficient excuse: A study of truancy in South Australian schools, 1927-1939, M.Ed thesis, University of Adelaide, 1980

[34] Deborah Tyler, 'Making the Australian child', Proceedings of the Annual ANZHES Conference, Volume 2, Adelaide, 1990, pp. 158-82

Tyler's focus on the use of statistical and recording techniques by state bureaucracies to produce childhood norms, and the place of a compulsory school system in making children into a calculable population, has particular relevance when examining the way the South Australian Education Department constructed notions of the 'normal', 'retarded' and 'accelerated' child in relation to the annual age-grade census after 1920. Utilising the same theoretical perspective, Snow's doctoral study deals briefly with the organisational construction of these categories of studenthood in New South Wales' day schools between 1905 and 1920.[35] Ros Gillespie's account of the child study movement in Australian education, together with John Lewis's chapter on special education in Victoria and Pavla Miller's on the social construction of intelligence in South Australian schooling, afford further insights into the 'scientisation' of the child which was aided by the development of accounting and measurement technologies earlier this century.[36]

Equally pertinent is David McCallum's treatise, *The Social Production of Merit*, which studies state schooling as a form of social administration and the influence of the 'new' education disciplines (sociology and, especially, psychology) on the construction and management of individual differences.[37] Whilst the book's focus is on the production of modern forms of individuality and the allocation of 'merit' within secondary schools, several of McCallum's main points are applicable to a study of over-ageness in the elementary school which the thesis incorporates. For instance, his conclusion that the appearance of unequal individuals was the result of statistical treatment and an effect of the social organisation and the administration of schooling may be generalised not only to the production of 'normal grade-aged', 'backward' and 'advanced' students in primary classes but the separate educational provision made for

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[35] Dianne Snow, The State, Youth and Schooling: The social construction of studenthood in New South Wales 1788-1948, PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 1989, chapter 8 - 'Scientific studenthood in a technocratic state', pp. 337-42

[36] R. R. Gillespie, 'The early development of the scientific movement in Australian education', ANZHES Journal, 11:2, Spring 1982, pp. 1-14; John Lewis, 'So much grit in the hub of the educational machine. Schools, society and the invention of measurable intelligence' in B. Bessant, (ed.), Mother State and her Little Ones. Children and Youth in Australia 1860s-1930s, Melbourne, Centre for Youth and Community Studies, 1987; P. Miller, Long Division, chapter 9

[37] David McCallum, The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia 1900-1950, London, Falmer Press, 1990

children "very far behind and now too far out of their age group". McCallum also draws attention to the ways in which particular categories for understanding different sections of the school population and their educational 'needs and abilities' allow pupils to be identified (and identify themselves) as the cause or origin of educational success or failure. Of final importance to the thesis in its examination of age differentiation in the primary school is McCallum's statement that the meanings and assumptions through which persons are understood (by themselves and others) must be analysed as historically specific products.

Beyond this work, the field is wide open for the kind of detailed empirical analysis I have undertaken. On the evidence for South Australia and mindful of the key points raised in connection with the foregoing literature review, what central questions and concerns inform the history of age-graded primary schooling which the thesis comprises?

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

"Age" is conceptualised in the thesis as a 'structuring process'[38] that, in the school setting, refers to the ways in which age relations have been shaped and re-shaped through schooling structures, organisation and practices. "Age grading" in the same institutional context is defined as the grouping together of children of similar chronological age for the purposes of their 'efficient' management and instruction. Consequently, the historical development of the following contemporary features of state primary schooling in South Australia seemed to require investigation: a bureaucratic limitation on children beginning school to those who have turned five (although they are not compelled by law to attend until six years of age); differentiated, and in larger schools separate, educational provision for five to eight year olds; and a graded curriculum, covering Reception[39] to Year 7, through which students generally progress on an annual basis with their chronological age peers. Questions arising here which

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[38] This notion is derived from the view of R. W. Connell and his associates that it may be better to think of both class and gender as structuring processes rather than 'systems': that is, as "ways in which social life is constantly being organised (and ruptured and disorganised) through time". R. W. Connell, D. J. Ashenden, S. Kessler and G. W. Dowsett, Making the Difference: Schools, families and social division, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 180. This statement, I would argue, has particular salience if generalised to refer also to age formation.

[39] "Reception" refers to the preparatory or kindergarten grade which now constitutes the first year of primary schooling in South Australia

the thesis seeks to answer include: When and why did young people come to be admitted to school, organised into classes and promoted from one grade to the next on the basis of chronological age? Why were the most junior pupils deemed to need a different set of educational arrangements to those provided for older children in the primary division, and at what point in the history of South Australian schooling were specialist departments, teachers and pedagogy catering to younger scholars introduced? What forms of classroom organisation pre-dated graded instruction? When and why were the schools organised into grades, and on what basis were pupils classified and promoted prior to the establishment of strict age grading?

In accordance with the concern in age stratification theory to understand age differentiation at the individual level, it is not assumed that pupils experienced the age-graded school in uniform ways. What, then, for example, does the historical evidence reveal about social class and gender differences in compliance with or deviation from late-nineteenth and twentieth century age norms with respect to school entry and progress through the primary course of instruction? How relevant, also, was ethnicity or race to students' placement in Opportunity (remedial) Classes when they were established? Were age relations constructed differently according to whether attendance was at a small (usually rural) school or at a large (typically urban) one divided into junior and upper primary departments? Moreover, the account is not restricted to the schooling structures and processes that helped to break down and re-shape age relations both inside and outside the classroom over the past century, but takes from social history a concern to penetrate the 'lived reality' of those engaged in the process: successive cohorts of children, their parents and teachers.

Age-related policies, their formation and their translation into practice necessarily comprise a major part of the study. In this regard, my analysis is informed by the writings of Harold Silver, the British social historian. Silver is critical of adopting paradigms whereby historians of education operate within ideological constructs of the state, systems, and versions of policy defined in relatively narrow terms; or of assuming that policy-making is a linear, top-down process synonymous with governments. Instead, he argues convincingly in favour of conceptualising policy

> as being expressed in the complexities of intellectual as well as political processes, as stimulated or confronted by popular constituencies as well as the major power players, as distorted in implementation and experience, as requiring historical as well as other social science and political explanations.[40]

Silver points out that such a view assists in establishing a sense of the main issues as identified by those involved. This I found a useful basis for structuring my account around the emergent themes in the South Australian context.

Adoption of Silver's perspective on educational policy-making also raised a further series of questions which the thesis addresses. By what means precisely did the bureaucratic state reconstitute age relations among children through the agency of the public school? What was the impact of changing age standards on children's actual experience of primary school and on social meaning? What decision-making structures and processes were utilised to effect reforms which ultimately acted to build and preserve strict age grading? What role did gender politics play in determining the outcomes of policy debate, given the Senior Psychologist's comment upon the relations between the males who dominated the power hierarchy of non-departmentalised (R-7) primary schools and the overwhelmingly female teaching force in infant schools:

> The Infant Schools and Primary Schools have a different approach to education, and this fact does colour the thinking on both sides about policy and organisation. The fact that all Infant Departments are run by women does, I regret to say, affect the attitude of some men Head Masters towards Infant Schools.[41]

Further, to what extent were age-related policies shaped and/or mediated at the level of implementation by school principals, teachers and parents? In particular, was the Education Department's ambition to apply an essentially urban model of age-graded classroom organisation across the State confounded in the eighty per cent of small rural schools that have historically characterised publicly-provided education in South Australia? Last, but not least,

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[40] H. Silver, 'Knowing and not knowing in the history of education', History of Education, 21:1, 1992, p. 101

[41] L. S. Piddington (Senior Psychologist, SA Education Department), Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 26 September 1949, PRO, GRS 809/001P, E.D. 179/49 enclosed in E.D. 1/4/5 - Revision of Circular No. 43: Promotion of children from the Infant Department to the Primary Department

what function did intellectual ideas about the nature of the child, society and education perform in the formulation of age-based policies, and where did these ideas come from?

In order to do justice to the study, the scope of the thesis is limited to one State. This decision was partially informed by comparative research which reveals the importance of localised conditions in explaining differences between the education systems of various countries and within their borders. In Australia, where education is constitutionally an individual State or Territory responsibility (since Federation) but there has always been an element of one Education Department looking across at others' policies and practice, government schooling varies in detail though not in substance. The value of a local study, then, is that the distinctive features of society, school and state in South Australia can be taken into account and form a basis for future comparative work. At the same time, the sense in which developments in this State exemplify age-grade changes in schooling that similarly occurred throughout Australia (and in other Western nations) may enhance our current understanding of how institutional forms in the past have constructed age differences. A local study is also considered more appropriate in terms of the close analysis it permits of a topic which has hitherto been marginal in Australian historiography of childhood and education.

In recognition that the social construction of age is a process which occurs over an extended period of time, and that 'the child' in the primary school has been subject to changing definition, the thesis spans more than a century. A concomitant concern is to trace the genesis of age grading in South Australian schools. Since research shows that state intervention in the form of legislating for compulsory attendance at an 'efficient' school signified a major turning point in the way age was constructed, the year this legislation was enacted in South Australia (1875) was selected as the starting point of the analysis. Given, too, that the state has had a differential involvement with public and private schooling, and noting its capacity to intervene more directly in the schools established under its own auspices, the thesis constitutes a study of age grading in the government school system. Questions about the state's part in structuring and restructuring the meaning and experience of childhood also influenced the decision to

conclude the history in 1990, since after this year the agenda for reforming age-related policies and practice within each State's public education system took on a new Federal dimension.

METHODOLOGY

Central to the thesis is an analysis of historical material elucidating the ways in which primary school organisation became implicated in the construction of age. As elaborated below, both qualitative and quantitative sources and methods have been used to study age grading in government elementary schools of the nineteenth and twentieth century. On a further preliminary note, given the extensive time period covered it is scarcely surprising that the nature of the sources varied considerably over time. Throughout the research stage a conscious effort was made to gather documentary and other evidence expressive of multiple voices: of those at the 'bottom' of primary school reform (teachers, parents and children) and those at the 'top' (bureaucrats and legislators). Moreover, official sources were checked against other sources to ascertain their intention and effect, and the extent to which they revealed tension and conflict in the policy-making sphere as well as distortion at the level of implementation.

Having adopted Silver's conceptualisation of educational policy it was necessary to include, yet go beyond, official records. Thus, in addition to reading all reports and minutes of the Central Board of Education (1851-1875) and the Council of Education (1876-77), together with the annual reports of the Minister of Education (1878-1971) and the Director-General of Education (1972-1990), evidence of the involvement and views of parents, school personnel and the general public with respect to the age-based reorganisation of primary schooling was gleaned from newspapers, contemporary publications, conference proceedings, and from the records of professional, parent and other organisations (for instance, the Workers' Educational Association). These sources afforded insights into the politics of educational change which complemented opinion, argument and determinations contained in parliamentary debates and in Minutes of Evidence as well as reports of education enquiry committees.

For the twentieth century, details of the processes entailed in resolving the issues which emerged from the whole of the historical material were mostly extracted from Education

Department correspondence files - lodged either in the Registry Section of Head Office (files for 1960-1990) or the State Records repository. Using the subject indexes, relevant files were selected. These ranged from 'Duties of Head Masters and Infant Mistresses', 'Promotions from the Junior class', 'Revised course of primary instruction', 'Position of women teachers in the Education Department', 'NEF Conference' and 'Freedom in primary schools', to 'Organisation of infant schools', 'Attendance at schools: age of admission', 'Establishment/dis-establishment of junior primary schools', 'Vertical grouping/composite classes in primary schools' and 'Letters on *Policy Development Paper No. 1*'. The Department's General Records files and those of the Early Childhood and Primary Division, in addition to the *South Australian Government Gazette*, the *Education Gazette* (SA) and other Departmental publications (*Pivot; Administrative Instructions and Guidelines for Schools*) were mined for official memoranda, regulations, circulars, rulings, policy documents and miscellaneous information on the admission, classification and promotion of pupils within the broader framework of primary school structures and grade organisation.

Their reports, intra-Departmental communiques and submissions to the various government enquiries into education constituted the main sources for examining the role of inspectors in the restructuring of primary education between 1851 and 1990. The perspectives of teachers and principals on aspects of age-based policy and practice were discerned from minutes of their meetings, and by perusing their individual and collective representations to senior officers of the Department, the Minister of Education and Parliament, but also as published in the pages of their official organs - most notably the *SA Teachers' Journal* and the *Guild Chronicle*. Regrettably, whereas the records of male head teachers' associations were able to be accessed at the ANU Archives of Business and Labour, the records of the Infant Mistresses' Club/Association from 1921 to the early 1970s had been inadvertently 'disposed of'. A promising source of evidence on infant school management and method, and of relations with primary headmasters, these records number amongst more recent archival files potentially useful to the thesis which were listed as "lost" or "missing".

A sampling of school journals, examination registers, building plans and admission registers compensated somewhat for the absence of previously extant key documents in revealing particular elements of age-grade organisation: for example, the operation of Opportunity Classes; separate provision for infants; the inclusion/exclusion of under-five year olds and over-fourteens; teaching and administrative practice with respect to the timing of school entry and in the matter of promotions. Graded curricular arrangements were identified from the *Primary School Course of Instruction* and associated regulations, notes and appendices, helpfully collected and bound into four volumes covering the years 1852-1959 by Howard Harrison.[42] A search through every issue of the *Education Gazette* from its inception in 1885 produced further evidence of what the Department regarded as 'efficient' schooling but afforded, too, some glimpses of the difficulties teachers encountered in attempting to follow the published rules, regulations and recommendations pertinent to the thesis topic. The *Gazette* was also a valuable source of information regarding interstate and overseas developments in primary education which were officially endorsed as having some bearing on the South Australian system.

For additional evidence of influences from outside the colony/state on age-graded policy and practice, the research was necessarily widened to include historical material generated and/or only located abroad. Contemporary publications and records of the Home and Colonial Infant School Society, the Committee of Council on Education, the (London) Board of Education and the British and Foreign School Society, accessed at the BFSS Archives and the Department of Education and Science Library in London, divulged vital information about age grading in the infant and elementary schools of England upon whose model South Australia's founders and subsequent education authorities drew heavily. By contrast, the papers of the South Australian School Society (under whose auspices the first school in Adelaide which classified children by age was opened) were available in the Public Record Office (SA). Holdings at the NZCER in Wellington fleshed out the links forged between South Australian and New Zealand education authorities in connection with the local move to introduce a continuous admission (fifth-

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42 Howard R. Harrison (compiler), Primary School Courses of Instruction, South Australia vols. 1-4, 1852-1959, Magill, Murray Park CAE, December 1975-January 1977

birthday entry to school) policy in the 1970s. The research was also widened beyond archival material, notably in the case of rationales for specific age-based reforms of schooling and critiques thereof, which were part of discourses in a range of psychology, sociology and education journals and books.

The documentary sources referred to thus far contained few traces of pupils' voices or evidence about the impact of Departmental initiatives on 'ordinary' people. To avoid presenting a history written from a purely 'official' perspective and with a focus on the bureaucratic and the legislative, much less one that applies 'grand theory' divorced from everyday realities, a range of sources were utilised to penetrate the 'lived experience' of age-graded primary schooling on the part of sucessive cohorts of children and their families. These include diary entries; children's letters; parental correspondence addressed to newspaper editors, local members of parliament and officers of the Department; published biographies, school histories and other accounts of 'growing up' in South Australia; Psychology Branch reports enclosed in the Hindmarsh Opportunity Class records; and oral history transcripts. It is important here to acknowledge, though, that such evidence functions to enrich the study of age-differentiated studenthood at primary school level, rendering the understanding more complete, rather than offering an alternative history or claiming a representativeness which may not be justified.

With regard to the use of oral history, for reasons of time, expense, and considering the scope of the thesis, it was deemed best to select evidence from interviews already conducted, transcribed and deposited with State Records and the Mortlock Library of South Australiana. Those comprising the Hindmarsh Oral History Project were undertaken by expert historians and form a valuable adjunct to Ian Davey's quantitative analysis of the late-nineteenth century Hindmarsh Public School registers, Max Colwell's account of growing up in Hindmarsh during the Great Depression, and archival records of the government school located in this predominantly working class suburb of Adelaide. The latter collection of documents encompass written stories from past scholars; the School Journals for 1896-1988; Opportunity Class admission registers, correspondence and lesson programs covering the years 1928-1975; and the annual age-grade census returns for 1943-1960. Since these constituted the most extensive

set of historical material available relating to an individual school, and there was a wealth of associated descriptive and analytical studies (by Davey and others) for the key decades following the enactment of compulsory attendance legislation in South Australia, Hindmarsh was chosen as a case study. Heeding critiques of case study methodology in history,[43] as with the use of oral history and written reminiscences in the thesis, no attempt is made to generalise from the Hindmarsh evidence. It serves an illustrative purpose solely; but it nonetheless confirmed general trends in age-grade organisation whilst furnishing important insights into the micro-level workings of official policy.

Supplementing the qualitative material from which the issues examined in the thesis were derived, and which is drawn upon to interpret, qualify or otherwise illuminate the statistics utilised, two major data-bases comprise a focus of analysis. These were respectively designed to quantify particular elements of the social experience of primary school-aged childhood, and age-grade changes in the South Australian government school system which occurred during the twentieth century.

The first data-base, generated by Ian Davey with the aid of ERDC and University of Adelaide funding, involved coding into machine-readable form the name, sex, date of birth, date of admission, name and occupation of parent or guardian, address, distance from school, previous school attended, class at examination, quarterly attendance and date of leaving particulars in the Hindmarsh Public School registers for each student enrolled between 1878 and 1899. After computer entry, this data was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis by cross-tabulation of the whole school population, using an SPSS package, in order to examine the relationship between class and schooling in this urban district. Patterns of school attendance and differential success rates amongst students according to age, sex and 'occupational structure' were thus able to be traced over time.

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[43] See, for example, Harold Silver, Education as History, ch. 12 - Case study and historical research, London, Methuen, 1983

Relevant tables produced in the course of the Hindmarsh Project are incorporated into the thesis to exemplify a narrowing in the range of children's school commencing ages towards the end of the nineteenth century, the range of pupils' ages in elementary grades in 1884 compared with 1899, and the proportion of students from different occupational backgrounds who passed the Compulsory Standard over the same period. The tables I generated from the Hindmarsh Infant School data for 1882-1895, also using SPSS, inform the discussion of school entry age and length of time spent in infant grades. Lastly, in connection with the 1920s' move to separate out 'over-aged' children, both in the official statistics and in primary schools, the same coding as developed for the Hindmarsh Project was applied to the data manually compiled and tabulated from that school's Opportunity Class registers. Analysed in the context of State-wide trends, sex differences in opportunity class placement and the significance of socio-economic background in accounting for retarded school progress were observed to closely match those apparent at the system level.

Since there is a reasonably substantial literature on the nature, uses and methodological problems of quantitative history in general, and with particular reference to the Hindmarsh Project, such a discussion is not conducted here.[44] With respect to the second data-base, it became obvious early in the research phase of the thesis that the statistics from the annual age-grade census in South Australia (or any other Australian state for that matter) had not been systematically analysed from a critical historical perspective.[45] Yet the very existence of these

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[44] For instance, C. F. Kaestle, 'Research methodology: Historical methods' in John P. Keeves (ed.), Educational research, methodology and measurement: An international handbook, Oxford, Permagon Press, 1988, pp. 39-40 (for a review of the issues); Michael B. Katz, Reconstructing American Education, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 137-144 (includes comment on the misuses of quantitative methods and 'objectivity'); S. S. Boocock, 'Historical and sociological research on the family and the life cycle: methodological alternatives' in J. Demos and S. S. Boocock (eds.), Turning Points: Historical and sociological essays on the family, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978 (discusses differences among historical data types and methods of data analysis, including the work of Katz and Davey); Michael B. Katz and Ian E. Davey, 'School attendance and early industrialisation in a Canadian city: a multivariate analysis', History of Education Quarterly, 18:3, Fall 1978, pp. 271-93 (demonstrates the utility of multivariate analysis by showing that this method confirmed most of the major trends noted in the authors' earlier studies based on descriptive statistics); Ian Davey, 'Patterns of inequality: School attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in John Hurt (ed.), Childhood, Youth and Education in the late nineteenth century, Proceedings of the 1980 Annual Conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain, pp. 1-30 (incorporates a discussion of the methodological similarities and differences between the Canadian Social History Project and the Hindmarsh Project, both of which employed descriptive statistical analysis). Davey's *Final Report to the Education Research and Development Committee* on the Hindmarsh Project (with appendices), December 1978, contains a detailed technical description of the methodology used. (copy in author's possession)

[45] Phil Cashen selectively drew on the age-grade tables reproduced in the Minister of Education's reports as part of his discussion on the relationship between school attendance and 'retarded' student progress. See his M.Ed

statistics signified the growing dominance of chronological age-in-grade within the local model of 'efficient' state schooling, whilst their mode of calculation and presentation constituted a key means of defining, highlighting and resolving 'the retardation problem'. Hence, with monies awarded by the University of South Australia Small Internal Research Grants Committee, more than 150 pages of detailed age-grade data for 1921-1990 as published in the Minister/Director-General of Education's Annual Report were entered on computer, from which tables and graphs were produced in order to substantiate a major proposition which had been formulated out of the qualitative evidence. That is, that as a result of revisions to the curriculum, examinations, and the regulations governing the admission, classification and promotion of pupils in South Australian primary schools, over the course of the twentieth century there was a decline in the average age of children grade by grade, together with a reduction in the age range within each grade.

The age-grade data-base, a technical description of which forms Appendix D, is also used to examine what new age-based norms were constructed by statistical means, and how adjustments were made to the accounting system in addition to age-related policies and practice as a result of what the statistics revealed. The thesis otherwise relies on statistical analyses performed by the Education Department Research Officer, the Commonwealth Statistician, the Australian Council for Educational Research, and several witnesses appearing before the Bean Committee of Inquiry into Education in South Australia, to quantify specific dimensions of age-in-grade during the 1940s and 50s - especially in relation to apparent rates of retardation at different grade levels, in different geographic regions and school types, and according to the sex and socio-economic background of pupils.

Collectively, the sources and analytical tools used in the thesis not only allow for primary school-aged childhood to be viewed from a variety of perspectives but provide insights into the institutional forms which produced age-based differences amongst children in attendance at South Australian government schools across the years from 1875 to 1990.

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thesis, Without sufficient excuse: A study of truancy in South Australian schools 1927-1939, University of Adelaide, 1980, pp. 14-20, 121-29

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

As foreshadowed in the section on 'Guiding questions and concerns', the form of the thesis is derived from a sense of the main issues which my research confirmed were identified by those involved in the reorganisation of schooling on the basis of chronological age. Each of the chapters from 1 to 7 therefore focuses on a particular aspect or aspects of the enterprise. The sense of chronology so fundamental to historical writing is preserved within a chapter; in the ordering of chapters according to the sequence in which major developments occurred or issues emerged; and, to the extent that a thematic structuring of the narrative allows, across the whole thesis. There is an inevitable overlap of content in some chapters since the developments and issues explored are intertwined, but a consistent endeavour is made to separate and then pull these together into a coherent account which demonstrates the growing pervasiveness of chronological age as a major organising principle of primary school curriculum and classes.

Chapter 1 focuses on the institutionalisation of differences between 'little' and older children in attendance at public elementary schools. David Hogan notes with respect to Philadelphia - and the same is true for South Australia - that separate educational provision for infants represented the beginning of age-based pupil classification. My research revealed, too, that infant schools were the first to practice the distribution of children into age graded classes. The age standard of seven (later eight) years imposed for entry to 'primary school proper' constituted another early means by which youthful scholars were differentiated. Hence it seemed logical to start the thesis with an account of these foundations of a "fully graded" education system; and of the way in which the 'junior scholar' (as distinct from a 'mere baby' and the 'real student') was thereby constructed. This chapter also discusses the initial manifestation of tension between age and attainment in the organisation of state schooling: at the point of transition to 'serious learning' in the 'big school'. Subsequent to tracing the evolution of a distinctive tradition of infant education in South Australia, a second dimension of 'this transition business' is explored: the difficulties that children attending large establishments experienced at this same point in their school careers in consequence of the 'organisation break' and pedagogical differences between junior and upper primary grades which developed after 1900. The linked fortunes of women teachers and separate infant schools, in addition to the gender politics

underlying the division of large schools into junior and upper primary departments, comprise the final themes of Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 examines historical debate, policy and practice with respect to the minimum age at which children qualified for studenthood. Recurrent arguments as well as shifts in the professional, public and parliamentary discourse about what constituted 'school-going age' are discussed - as is the way children became differentiated more precisely by age by virtue of the parameters delineated for junior studenthood. Concurrently, the chapter details a gradual narrowing in the range of children's school commencing ages - from early colonial times when age of admission was unregulated, until the late 1960s when enrolment at age five was almost universal. This was by no means a unilinear development. Nor at any one point of time did children make the transition to school at a uniform age. Hence, fluctuations in the overall trend and variations in patterns of entry according to social class (indexed by parent occupation), gender, place of residence (urban/rural), and school type (infant/primary) are described.

Chapter 3 concentrates on twentieth century changes in the procedure for entry to school since, together with the tightened regulation of age at enrolment, the imposition of fixed admission dates and later the implementation of a 'continuous admission' policy contributed to the narrowed age range in those grades into which beginning scholars were placed. This chapter is equally concerned, though, to examine the timing of school entry during a year in accordance with Harold Silver's historical view of policy: as it was "stimulated and confronted" by parents, teachers and principals as well as senior bureaucrats, and as "distorted in implementation and experience".

Having considered at length the age standards established for children's transition from home to school and from junior to 'real' studenthood, so bringing pupils together in similar-aged classes in the early years of their school lives, attention in Chapter 4 focuses upon how student progress through the primary course of instruction also came to be regulated on the basis of chronological age. Here, the colonial origins of graded classroom organisation and the age-base of compulsory schooling are investigated as a prerequisite for examining the construction of the

'normal', 'retarded' and 'accelerated' child in relation to the 'educational ages' affixed to the syllabus for those grades into which elementary education was divided. The chapter notes that turn-of-the-century developments in child psychology, accounting and measurement gave form and impetus to the South Australian Education Department's quest to secure a close fit between age and grade - a key index of efficiency in government school systems at this time. As such, children 'too old' for their class were construed as 'problems', especially by 1921 when the revision of policies governing the admission, classification and promotion of pupils in conjunction with remodelling of the primary curriculum and grades had ostensibly produced all the conditions necessary for annual progression from one class to the next.

Following a discussion of bureaucratic perceptions and initiatives in regard to rates of retardation prior to the onset of World War II, Chapter 4 concludes with an analysis of which children became designated as 'over-aged' and what this meant in terms of their experience of schooling. Chapter 5 then pursues the issue of retarded school progress into the 1940s, when official attention turned to the points of primary schooling at which instances of 'over-ageness' were most marked, and educational debate about the causes of the problem shifted to the nature of graded curriculum and classroom organisation as governed by examination requirements. An analysis of the various age-grade and psychometric surveys conducted between 1938 and 1956, the criticism of the 'mass-production system' which was now seen to be responsible for much of the retardation thus revealed, and subsequent Departmental initiatives which combined to de-construct over-ageness in this period, constitute a major focus of this chapter. Although a temporary reverse in the elimination of retardation was experienced during the 1950s, it is shown that by the late 1960s the principle and practice of chronological age-based pupil progress well and truly prevailed over attainment-based grade organisation.

Chapters 6 and 7 return to the junior primary stage of education, where, it is argued, much of the fine-tuning of the age-grade structure in South Australian government schools occurred as a result of reform efforts connected with the issue of how long children should spend in infant classes. These two chapters examine the changing terms of debate but also its enduring themes in the years 1945 to 1990 with respect to the oft-raised question: what constitutes a 'normal'

period of infant/junior primary schooling? The internecine relations between female infant and male primary-trained personnel, centred on the differences of grade organisation and administrative practice in R-2 and R-7 schools, are re-visited in Chapter 6. So, too, is the influence of parents and teachers on Departmental policy - in this case regarding promotions in infant departments. Chapter 7, which continues the history of attempts to standardise the pattern of student progress through the junior primary grades up to the end of the period studied by the thesis, examines the politics of post-1960 reform of the early years of schooling even more closely. Against the background of educational discourse and reshaping of the primary school detailed in previous chapters, this chapter discusses how the South Australian Education Department resolved the length of infant schooling question to thereby consolidate earlier gains in its quest for a perfect age-grade fit.

In sum, the thesis demonstrates that, concomitant upon the growing dominance of chronological age as an organisational principle in South Australian primary schooling, there was a significant narrowing in the range of children's school commencing ages and the ages at each grade level as well as a decline in average grade-ages over the period studied. Whilst the 1950s witnessed a temporary reversal of the general trend, a perfect age-grade fit was closely approximated by the late 1970s. The extent and nature of this change from nineteenth and early-twentieth century classroom configurations is quantified through analysis of the age-in-grade data extracted from individual school registers and as published for the whole State from 1921 onwards. Such a progressive tightening of the age-grade structure in South Australian primary schools, together with fluctuations in the general pattern, it is argued, can be attributed to the complex interplay of educational and administrative reform initiatives, demographic and social factors, economic and political imperatives, and ideological perspectives brought to bear on the issues by various interest groups. By the same token, the process of reform from which 'grading by body' emerged triumphant was fraught with 'difficulties'.

Beyond the perpetual tension between age and attainment standards, fundamental conflicts and contradictions in the bureaucratic effort to achieve a close fit between age and grade were engendered by the rise of ideologies of equity and individual difference, yet were also a result

of organisational differences between infant (Reception-Grade 2) and 'ordinary' (R-7) primary schools. Much of the thesis is devoted to ascertaining how these 'difficulties' were resolved, in the course of which attention is paid to the underlying set of gender politics. Additionally, the study focuses on refinements in the vocabulary of age which accompanied the institutionalisation of age standards within the span of primary schooling: notions of 'younger' (infant grade-aged) and 'older' children, 'too young' (to be included in the definition of school-aged or unready for formal instruction) and 'too old' (in relation to the designated grade-age or still to be in primary school). Finally, it is shown that, in the long term, historical differences in children's experience of elementary education gave way to a common pattern of fifth-birthday entry to school, followed by annual peer-grouped progress through the primary grades and on to secondary courses.

CHAPTER 1

INFANTS, GRADED SCHOOLING AND THE TRANSITION TO 'REAL STUDENTHOOD'

INTRODUCTION

Since the pioneering work of Ariès, Gillis and Kett[1] on the socio-historical processes which gave rise to the demarcation of childhood as a separate stage of the life course, mainly devoted to formal education, a growing body of research literature has provided valuable insights into the role of age-graded school organisation in the construction of finer distinctions between 'children'. The North American studies of Katz, Hogan, Kaestle and Vinovskis (with various collaborators) have been particularly instrumental in enhancing our knowledge about the age-based division of public school systems, the definition of age norms for school entry and leaving, the increasingly age-based internal arrangements of schools, and how these structuring activities transformed the experience of childhood throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.[2] In the South Australian context, Davey, Miller, Weiss and Campbell have made equally important contributions to a critical historical understanding of contemporary age relations in connection with the development of mass elementary and secondary schooling, and as complicated by class and gender divisions.[3]

[1] Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood. A social history of family life, London, Jonathon Cape, 1973 (first published in French, 1960); John R. Gillis, Youth and History: tradition and change in European age relations 1770-present, New York, Academic Press, 1974; Joseph F. Kett, Rites of Passage, New York, Basic Books, 1977

[2] J. Demos & S. S. Boocock (eds.), Turning Points. Sociological and Historical Essays on the Family, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, Section II - History: Transitions to and from the family; Carl Kaestle & Maris Vinovskis, 'From Fireside to Factory: school entry and school leaving in nineteenth-century Massachusetts' in Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), Transitions. The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective, New York, Academic Press, 1978, pp. 135-85; David J. Hogan, 'From contest mobility to stratified credentialling: merit and graded schooling in Philadelphia 1836-1920', History of Education Review, 16:2, 1987, pp. 21-42; David L. Angus, Jeffrey E. Mirel & Maris A. Vinovskis, 'Historical development of age stratification in schooling', Teachers College Record, 90:2, Winter 1988, pp. 211-36

[3] Ian E. Davey, 'Past and Present: the transformation of age relations', Educational Research in the 1980s. Collected Papers, Volume 2, AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 1982, pp. 445-51; I. Davey, 'Growing up in South Australia' in Eric Richards (ed.), The Flinders History of South Australia. Social History, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, ch. 14; Pavla Miller, Long Division. State schooling in South Australian society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, ch. 2-7; Gillian Weiss ' "A Very Great Nuisance": Young children and the construction of school entry in South Australia 1851-1915', History of Education Review, 22:2, 1993, pp. 1-17; Craig Campbell, The rise of mass secondary schooling and modern adolescence. A social history of youth in southern Adelaide 1901-1965, PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1994

There nonetheless remain gaps in this historiography - notably with respect to the institutionalisation of differences between 'little' and older children in attendance at public elementary schools. The long tradition of separate and distinctive schooling provision for 'infants', so integral to constructing and reinforcing these differences, is the subject of numerous histories of mainly English authorship.[4] Rarely, though, do they constitute more than factual accounts or extend the analysis beyond the influence of prominent educational theorists and early childhood practitioners. Because of a general failure to conceptualise infant schooling in terms of the broader history of graded schooling, the division of elementary schooling into 'junior' and 'upper' primary stages, the sub-division of separately-established infant departments into 'the babies' and other classes for 'older infants', and the imposition of an age standard for transferring from lower grades to 'the big school' with its concomitant of embarking upon 'real learning' have not been closely investigated. The significance of this neglect is all the more apparent when cognisance is taken of David Hogan's observation that

> in the three decades or so between the early 1830s and the mid 1860s, educators in Philadelphia abandoned the old system of ungraded and unclassed schools in favour of a radically new form of school organisation. This reorganisation of schooling occurred along two dimensions: a vertical one involving the creation of an educational ladder from primary to high school, and a horizontal one involving the distribution of students into age graded classrooms.[5]

Hogan goes on to argue that the opening of five infant schools in Philadelphia by 1835 represented the beginning of pupil classification on the basis of age: "years before the creation of the common school that some historians assumed was the parent of age grading".[6] The same

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[4] Examples include D. Salmon & W. Hindshaw, Infant Schools:their history and theory, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1904; T. Raymont, A History of the Education of Young Children, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1937; Robert R. Rusk, A History of Infant Education (2nd edition), London, University of London Press, 1951; Nanette Whitbread, The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972; Denison Deasey, Education Under Six, London, Croom Helm, 1978; Dean May & Maris Vinovskis, 'A Ray of Millennial Light: Early education and social reform in the infant school movement in Massachusetts, 1826-1840' in Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), Family and Kin in American Urban Communities 1790-1930, New York, Franklin & Watts, 1976; Cliff Turney (ed.), Sources in the History of Australian Education 1788-1970. A Book of Readings, Section II - Infant education, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1975

[5] David Hogan, 'From contest mobility to stratified credentialling: merit and graded schooling in Philadelphia 1836-1920', History of Education Review, 16:2, 1987, pp. 23-4

[6] David Hogan, Merit, Morals, Markets and Citizens: school and society in Philadelphia 1776-1920 (forthcoming), draft chapter 5 - Graded Schooling, p. 8. Hogan notes (footnote 43) that Joseph Kett, for example, argues that whilst complaints about the "promiscuous assemblage" of infants and older pupils began prior to the 1840s, nonetheless "classification of the schools by age and attainment is best viewed as a product of the common school movement". (Joseph Kett, Rites of Passage, p. 124)

case can be argued for South Australia, where colonisation plans of the 1830s included three grades of school, for 'infants', 'children' and 'youth' respectively; and the establishment of other infant schools independently or in connection with those for older pupils likewise pre-dated the 1875 legislation which instituted a 'thoroughly national' system of education. Herein, then, lies good reason for the thesis to commence with an historical analysis of schools devoted to the instruction of young children, their distinct ethos and different form of class organisation to that in 'ordinary' (non-divided) primary schools, and the way graded curricular developments together with regulations governing age of attendance at an infant department and promotion to Class I constructed 'the junior scholar'.

The chapter notes that the physical separation of children below the age of seven (later eight) from those above this age, and their teaching under a system "peculiarly adapted to their nature and powers", was viewed by education authorities as rendering the whole of schooling more rational and efficient. Yet such advantage could only be secured in populous centres: that is, in schools of sufficient size to permit their age-based division. Individuals' first years at school experiences, it will be argued, thus diverged widely according to whether they attended a large school with an infant department, or not. Moreover, the continued existence, status and operation of infant departments, staffed and supervised by specially trained women within an elementary school system dominated by males, were constantly challenged. The chapter therefore also examines the fluctuating fortunes of these departments of large public schools in the context of enrolment trends, the state of the economy, the underlying politics of gender, and the tensions between their evolving pedagogical and organisational traditions and those of the upper primary division. It lastly discusses the problems associated with children's transition from junior to senior grades in departmentalised elementary schools. For the differences of approach and organisation, the internecine relations between infant mistresses and primary school headmasters, in addition to the difficulty of reconciling age and attainment standards (a pervasive theme in the history of graded schooling), were nowhere more apparent than at this point in children's school careers.

"IT IS DESIRABLE THAT CHILDREN SIX YEARS OF AGE AND UNDER SHOULD BE TAUGHT BY THEMSELVES, WHEREVER IT IS PRACTICABLE"

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN AGE GRADED SCHOOL SYSTEM 1836-1874

With the aim of providing instruction "in all the common rudiments of learning ... but also the means of acquiring a knowledge of the true dignity of man, and of his relative, social, moral and religious obligations", the South Australian School Society (founded by George Fife Angas in London, June 1835) proposed as part of the colonisation blueprint for South Australia that a graduated system of education "embracing the poorer classes" be established.[7] Significantly, the designers of this scheme (British investors in the new colony who made up the South Australian Company) assumed clear age distinctions in proposing: "1st. To commence with Infant Schools on the English Plan, for children until they reach the age of eight years". The Society's *Prospectus* added that "infant children" between the ages of two years and six were to be accommodated separately. Second, schools for children aged up to twelve years were to be conducted "upon the plan so successfully practiced by the British and Foreign School Society" (founded in 1808 with the object of promoting the Lancasterian undenominational system of elementary education for the poor). Their curriculum should comprise the three Rs, bible reading without note or comment, needlework for girls, and "a small unoppressive portion of bodily labour" for boys. The scheme thirdly incorporated "Schools on Dr Fellinberg's (sic) plan for instructing the youth in agricultural and other trades, combined with the higher branches of education, until they reach 16 years of age".[8]

In 1836, the year South Australia was proclaimed, subscriptions were sought from the British public for erecting school-houses to accommodate two hundred infants and a like number of 6-12 year olds in the principal settlement (Adelaide), and to pay the salaries of Masters and Matrons. Following the appointment of John Banks Sheperdson as Head Teacher and Director of the schools, a boys' and girls' department with 129 enrolments commenced operations in

[7] South Australian School Society Prospectus, 1836, reproduced in EG (SA), 78:906, 16 April 1962, p. 86

[8] South Australian School Society, A Plan for the Establishment of Schools in the New Colony of South Australia, Plymouth, n.d., PRO, Angas Papers: SA Commission, no. 445
For accounts of the English infant school system and of the Lancasterian monitorial school system referred to in the Plan, together with the work of the British and Foreign School Society in colonial South Australia, see the series: 'A Retrospect' in Educational Record, 17:24, October 1906, pp. 134-45; 17:30, October 1908, pp. 634-5; 18:35, June 1910, pp. 82-94; 19:39, October 1911, pp. 305-14; 19:40, February 1912, BFSS Archives

May 1838. Later that year, Maria Gawler, wife of the colony's second Governor, indicated that Hannah Holbrooke was to be Mistress of the intended infants' school.[9] Always an ambitious undertaking, given the infancy of the colony and reliance on the voluntary principle for the School's financial support, enrolments had already declined dramatically when Sheperdson resigned after the Society could not meet the debt it incurred in 1839 for building "a spacious edifice" opposite Trinity Church. Sheperdson's successsor, William Oldham, struggled on for four years until fiscal crisis in the colony and a population drift to country sections forced his resignation too, whereupon the school was briefly conducted by W. D. Squibb as a purely private venture.

Thus began, and soon ended, the Society's endeavour to found an age graded education system. However, theirs was not South Australia's first school to be established and operated in accordance with the graded organisational and pedagogical innovations perfected by the English charity school reformer, Joseph Lancaster, at the Borough Road teacher training institution of the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS). From December 1836 to May 1837, Walter Bromley (ex-British Army officer and missionary in Canada) instructed 24 children using the Lancasterian *Manual* and lesson cards supplied by the BFSS at the site of the South Australian Company's initial settlement on Kangaroo Island. And since nearly half the pupils were infants, "they were taught on that system".[10]

Amongst the often equally short-lived small private and state-aided schools which subsequently proliferated on the mainland, few, if any, during the next decade or so made special provision for children younger than six. Notwithstanding the lack of emigrant teachers trained in the English infant school system, advocates of that system pointed to the virtual exclusion of young chidren from the modest goverment scheme 'for the encouragement of public education'

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[9] First London Report of the South Australian School Society, 1838, PRO, Angas Papers: SA Commission, no. 1958; Letters and testimonials regarding the appointment of J. B. Sheperdson, July-November 1836, BFSS Archives; Letter from Maria Gawler to her mother, Mrs Cox, of Friar Gate, Derby, 10 December 1838, PRO, PRG 50/19/5

[10] Captain Bromley to Mr Dunn (BFSS Secretary), 4 June 1837, Quarterly Extracts from the correspondence of the British and Foreign School Society, no. 44, 31 December 1837, BFSS Archives; Letter from Capt. Bromley to G. F. Angas, cited by M. P. Hardy, 'Some very early schools' in L. Brown, A Book of South Australia: Women in the first hundred years, Adelaide, 1936, p. 106

delineated in Ordinance No. 11 of 1847. As a leading colonial educator argued with respect to the responsible clause, which provided remuneration for a teacher who instructed twenty or more children between the ages of six and sixteen:

> a child of five is more troublesome than one of nine years, and a youth of seventeen certainly ought to be considered as much a scholar as one of sixteen years; yet in both cases, by the present system, they are unclaimable. Should it be deemed still advisable to define these matters, let it be enacted that ... the ages of pupils [be] without any restriction. ... By this latter alteration, infant schools could be provided for, ... they being a peculiar and distinct class of schools.[11]

In his evidence to the 1851 Select Committee, whose brief was to ascertain what further role the state might play in education, the Colonial Secretary likewise contended that infant schools on the BFSS model were "well adapted to the Colony" and "of sufficient importance to be embodied in an Act of [the Legislative] Council".[12]

Immediate action upon the Select Committee's recommendations saw legislation under which a Central Board of Education was appointed to administer licensed schools providing "good secular instruction based on the Christian religion" to "all scholars, unexclusively, who shall be of age and capacity to receive it".[13] This last clause opened the door to young children's attendance to the extent that, in 1860, eighty per cent of scholars in licensed schools were under ten years of age, and of these, thirty per cent were six years or younger.[14] But other than a Normal or Training School, the 1851 Education Act did not specify the kinds of schools that ought to be established. Nor was the Board empowered to do so. It could only encourage the

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[11] Report of the Select Committee (Legislative Council) 'appointed to consider the propriety of bringing in a general educational measure', SAPP, 1851, Appendix M - W. A. Cawthorne, pp. xiii, xv
For a listing of schools established in the period 1836-1856, see T. H. Smeaton, 'Our first school - Mrs Hillier's', The Register, 5 August 1926; A. T. Saunders, 'Early Adelaide schools', Register, 7 and 14 August 1926; "Nonagenarian", 'Early Adelaide schools', Register, 10 August 1926 in PRO, GRG 19/147, Newspaper Cuttings on education, vol. 1, pp. 16-17

[12] Report of the Select Committee (Legislative Council) 'appointed to consider the propriety of bringing in a general educational measure', Minutes of Evidence - B. Waymouth, qq. 101-3

[13] Victoriae Reginae No. 20. An Act to Promote Education in South Australia, by aid towards the erection of Schools and the payment of stipends to Teachers (assented to January 2, 1852)

[14] Report of the Central Board of Education, SAGG, 26 April 1860, p. 365

introduction of infant classes by articulating its notion of what constituted 'the good school' in its reports and regulations, in addition to granting or withdrawing licenses and providing financial incentives according to whether teachers conformed to its views of how schools should be organised and conducted. Not until the late 1850s, though, did the term "infant school" appear in official discourse. By this time, several schools had emerged in which a wife's class functioned as preparatory to that of her husband's, or where the youngest children were separated from older ones and placed in a specifically titled infants' class.[15]

In the ten years from 1858 to 1868, Board reports listed a dozen odd schools "of an elementary nature with mostly very young children", or "conducted upon infant school principles", or "exclusively of an Infant School character". The first to rate mention for its prospective "great utility" was the infant class formed at Jane Lilywhite's school in North Adelaide. Until it closed in 1863, Catherine Jupp's infant school in Hindmarsh Square, "held in conjunction with that of Mr Martin and forming an excellent preparation to it", competed favourably with three other schools within the 'square mile' of Adelaide at which "the education [was] limited to the elementary branches, owing to the generally tender age of the pupils". Norwood was served by a school "ably conducted on the Infant School system, by a teacher [Susanna Gamble] who in the mother-country was practically acquainted with that valuable method of teaching very young children". By contrast, in Kent Town, Gawler and several country areas, women laboured to instruct up to fifty infants apiece without the advantages of specialised training, classroom accommodation and teaching apparatus.[16]

While under the "highly trained" Jane Toll, the infant department of a fair-sized school in the working class district of Port Adelaide earned the description: "one of the complete of its kind in the Province". But on changing hands in 1861, it had reportedly "sunk into the condition of a moderately attended elementary school" - illustrating just how important was the individual

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[15] See, for instance, Report of the Central Board of Education, SAGG, 19 August 1858, pp. 606, 610

[16] Report of the Inspector of Schools, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 30, 1862, pp. 8-9. See also the discussion of Mercy Mead's infant school (1863-70) at Dashwood's Gully, near Kangarilla, in Gillian Weiss, 'A Very Great Nuisance', pp. 4-5

teacher to the attractiveness and viability of establishments catering for under seven year olds.[17] At nearby Queenstown, Mrs Leslie obtained a license in 1864 to instruct infants, with the proviso that her school consist of not less than forty children and that, in partly drawing on her husband's school, the joint number of scholars comprise not fewer than one hundred.[18] Concurrently, the "well qualified and experienced" Emma King was granted a license to teach at Port Adelaide, where the Board noted from her preliminary application that:

> Preparations are being made for fitting up a new room as an Infant School room with a gallery and other appliances. The school is intended to be preparatory to that of Mr T. J. King, her husband, at which "an inconvenient number" of young children are now attending.[19]

By 1870, enrolments at Emma's infant school had grown from seventy to almost ninety, necessitating the employment of a female assistant. Indeed, the fit between her establishment and the Board's desired model at this time was such that Emma was one of only two exceptions made when the Board withdrew licenses from women conducting schools "of an elementary character, connected with other schools for which male teachers were licensed", so as to reduce costs.[20]

Throughout the 1860s, the nascent educational bureaucracy, comprising Board members and the Inspector of Schools, William Wyatt, reiterated the virtues of infant schools in the context of general attendance patterns and its concern to forge an efficient system of education out of the loose collection of licensed schools under its jurisdiction. As the next chapter details, children aged six years and under represented a significant and growing proportion of enrolments during the decade 1855-1865, settling at approximately one-quarter of the total licensed school population in the years leading up to the 1875 'compulsory education' Act. By the same token, frequent reference was made to the fact that:

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[17] Reports of the Inspector of Schools, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 34, 1860, p. 8; no. 30, 1862, pp. 8-9

[18] Central Board of Education Minutes 1852-1875, PRO, GRG 50/1, vol. 3, nos. 8203, 8210, 8211

[19] ibid, no. 8029, 4 May, 1863

[20] Report of the Central Board of Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 22, 1871, p. 1

> Some children's education does not extend over more than twelve months of their life, and two years is rather above the average. ... [E]ven those who are nominally on the list attend so irregularly, that there are many cases where eight or ten weeks is the utmost amount of time in the twelve months that the child attends school.[21]

Infant schools were considered to be "pre-eminently useful" to the degree that their "attractive process" of imparting rudimentary knowledge might counteract such "injurious" tendencies. Furthermore, where the number of young children attending individual schools was "inconveniently large", their arrangement in separate classes would allow teachers to devote more attention to 'real scholars': those aged seven years and over in common parlance.[22] For, in the view of schoolmasters, "mere infants" in mixed classes were "a very great nuisance". As W. S. Moore (master of the Pulteney Street school in Adelaide) indicated in his evidence to the 1868 Select Committee on the Working of the Education Act:

> What we want here ... to work the system more efficiently, is some school to lay the foundation. We can receive young children into the large schools, but it interferes very much with the teaching. ... I think it would be a great advantage if we had a good infant school, to which a large number of children might go and prepare to be drafted into upper schools.[23]

Other witnesses appearing before the Select Committee in 1868 elaborated upon the structural features of a more efficient school system than it had so far been possible to develop, given the constraints imposed on the Board's activities by the 1851 Education Act and a parsimonious parliament. The Secretary of the Education Board, licensed teachers, the Reverend H. S. Earl (lately arrived in South Australia from Illinois), Inspector Wyatt, and the recently appointed second Inspector of Schools, Edward Dewhirst, concurred that instead of two or three small schools "where all the lot are kept in one class", in densely populated neighbourhoods "one school, with several classes into which children can be separated according to their ages, would be of far more service".[24] It was readily conceded that the ideal of two grades of elementary

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[21] Report of the Select Committee (House of Assembly) on the Working of the Education Act, Minutes of Evidence - Dr Wyatt, qq. 31-2, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 56, 1868

[22] Reports of the Central Board of Education, SAGG, 26 April 1860, p. 365; SAPP, vol. 2, no. 18, 1861, p.4; SAPP, vol. 2, no. 34, 1862, p. 3

[23] Report of the Select Committee (House of Assembly) on the Working of the Education Act, Minutes of Evidence - Mr W. S. Moore, q. 769, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 56, 1868

[24] ibid - F. Basedow, q. 1537; Dr Wyatt, q. 98; E. Dewhirst, q. 460; James Hosking, qq. 1181-2, 1261; Rev. H. S. Earl, q. 1321

school - one "almost an infant school" for children under seven, and another "senior school" divided into boys' and girls' departments for children above this age - was inapplicable in country districts where only 20 or 30 pupils were on the roll. But in the city and corporate towns, infants should, moreover, be accommodated in a separate building: "for if there was a rush of large children and small children, the little ones would have a bad time of it".[25] It was nonetheless preferable for an infant department to be located close to the senior departments of a large elementary school, earlier Board reports advised, since "it would scarcely be practicable to separate the younger children of a family from the older, upon whom they have to depend so much while going to and from school". Additionally, such proximity would facilitate the entire education of children being "commenced and completed under one principal superintendent, and an unvarying method of teaching".[26]

By general consensus, too, females were "more capable" of instructing 'children of tender age' than males, whilst in its report for 1868 the Board of Education asserted that the infant school teacher required a special qualification for the work,

> as a different system from that suitable for older children is needed. Objects, pictures, singing, amusing stories, and collective teaching, are the means by which the young mind must be drawn out, and the first lessons in discipline and learning be pleasantly, though effectively, imparted.[27]

Thus, beyond seeking the establishment of at least two infant schools in Adelaide and one in each corporate town, the Board commended to the Select Committee the idea of a centrally located model school, doubling as a teacher training institution, in which "you have three divisions - boys, girls and infants; and the teacher is exercised in each department".[28] But in

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[25] ibid - Inspector Dewhirst, q. 462

[26] Reports of the Central Board of Education, SAGG, 26 April 1860, p. 365; SAPP, vol. 2, no. 18, 1864, p. 4

[27] Report of the Central Board of Education, SAGG, 3 June 1869, pp. 754-5. For references to "a well trained lady" being the better teacher of infants, see 1868 Select Committee Minutes of Evidence - James Hosking, q. 1265; S. L. Burton, q. 1601. Also 1851 Select Committee Minutes of Evidence - B. Waymouth, q. 37

[28] Select Committee, Minutes of Evidence - Secretary, Board of Education, q. 513; Appendix A - Suggestions to the Committee by Jas. Bath, pp. 107-8, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 56, 1868

1871 education officials were still rueing the lack of such provision, despite signs of the economic boom which was to permit a substantial expansion of schooling a few years later.

With the number of 'distinct schools devoted to the instruction of young children' reduced to five, none of them in the city, the Board argued its case once more and at greater length than hitherto:

> These [infant] schools form so important an element in a public school system that it is an additional reason for the establishment of a model school, in which there would be, as a matter of course, a department for the instruction of infants only. ... It is desirable that children six years of age and under should be taught by themselves, wherever it is practicable, because the method of instruction required to be adopted for them is so widely different to that suited for older children; while the qualification of the infant school teacher is of a distinctive character and is obtained by special training. It is well known how much depends on first impressions; and the habits of attention and observation, and it might even be said of reasoning, which are learnt in the infant school, give the children an advantage in acquiring knowledge in subsequent years which can scarcely be over-estimated. As the attendance at school of children in these Colonies is greatly interfered with by the claims of labour, it is essential that during their earlier years, their instruction should be as complete as possible, and this cannot be effected nearly as well in the school in which children of all ages attend as it can be in one devoted to the instruction of infants only.[29]

Encapsulated in this statement is the rationale which twentieth century early childhood educators within the state system were to cite whenever the distinctive ethos and organisation, indeed the existence, of infant departments was threatened by changed historical conditions. Returning, though, to the date of the foregoing iteration, Parliament finally authorised the spending of pre-allocated funds on erecting the type of large, age graded central school which the Board had been advocating for over a decade but was powerless to initiate itself. Work on the Model Schools in Grote Street, Adelaide, commenced in 1872. Two 70 x 24 foot schoolrooms for boys and girls, a 60 x 24 foot infants' room with a gallery capable of seating 100 children, and an arcade in front of the building for infants' recreation and shelter, were completed the following year. Anticipating the schools' opening in 1874, the Board selected from amongst 34 applicants one to head each of the divisions whose primary object was "to furnish a standard of method and organisation for the public schools generally". In particular, it was hoped that by showing parents the benefits of "early training and discipline suited to the capacities of young

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[29] Report of the Education Board, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 73, 1872, p. 2

children", the Model Infant School might secure their support for the establishment of more such schools, which in the Board's view formed "the very foundations of a real national system of instruction".[30]

Meanwhile, in parliamentary debate of the 1873 'compulsory, secular and free' Education Bill, Mr Angas made a strong plea for the inclusion of infant schools in the government's proposed system of universal elementary education. Support was forthcoming from Mr Pearce, but the issue became entwined with deliberations on what should constitute the minimum school-going age and lapsed from further consideration. In any event, the Bill was narrowly defeated. When a re-drafted version was introduced into the House of Assembly in 1875 there was similarly limited discussion before Mr Cavenagh's 'national scheme' - beginning with infant schools and then "common schools for larger children" - was adopted, along with Mr Bray's amendment providing for children under five years of age to attend wherever an infant school was established.[31] With the relevant clauses and the remainder of the Bill having comfortable passage through the Legislative Council, the way was paved for a rapid extension of the English infant school system in densely populated districts of the colony over the next few years.

CONSTRUCTING THE JUNIOR SCHOLAR: INFANTS AND SCHOOLING PROVISION 1875-1900

The 1875 Education Act left the details of the school system to be determined by regulations. Until 1878 these were formulated by the Council of Education - an executive body, headed by a full-time president, whose powers to produce and enforce efficient schooling were considerably greater than those of the Board it replaced. Giving formal substance to previously unrealised ideals, the Council's first set of regulations indicated that in addition to the formation of public schools wherever twenty or more pupils could be assembled, and provisional schools where twelve or more would enrol:

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[30] Report of the Education Board, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 24, 1874, p. 8

[31] SAPD, 1873, cols. 665, 673-4, 890-1, 110; 1875, cols. 515, 809, 832

> 53. Infant Schools may be established as departments of Public Schools or independently when the Council is satisfied that there are at least forty children under five years of age who will attend such school.
> 54. Children of more than seven years of age will not be allowed to remain in an infant school.[32]

Further, in outlining the course of instruction for public schools not organised into infant and upper departments, Regulation 71 included the syllabus for a newly designed preparatory grade called the Junior Division, to which an average 'educational age' of six years was affixed. Young children, thereby, were both symbolically and physically separated from older ones within the span of elementary schooling. Put differently, here was the genesis of a new construct of childhood: the junior scholar.

How, more precisely, was this the case? First, while under Regulation 53 the minimum age defining an 'infant' for the purposes of separate schooling provision was indeterminate, under Regulation 54 the upper limit was clearly specified and followed the example of England, where, in 1854, the Committee of Council on Education declared that

> no school be treated as an Infant School in which there are children on the books of more than seven years old, or in which the instruction shall not be reported by His Majesty's Inspector to be specially and exclusively adapted to children under that age.[33]

Coincidentally, the 1875 legislation in South Australia set seven years as the lower limit of compulsory school attendance in accordance with the long-held view amongst the upper classes in European society that this was the 'proper' age for commencing formal instruction. Under Regulation 71, too, 'junior' pupils were those below the examination standard of Class I and the average educational age of eight years designated for that grade. Additionally, as Weiss points out, the very naming of the standards in the 1876 Regulations, with "Junior" preceding Classes I-IV, reflects the strength of the belief that 'real studenthood' began at seven.[34]

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[32] Regulations made by the Council of Education under provisions of Act No. 11 of 1875, SAGG No. 2 (Gazette Extraordinary), 7 January 1876, p. 40

[33] Minute no. 6 - Female teachers for Infant Schools, 29 April 1854, Committee of Council on Education Minutes for 1853-4, pp. 472-3, London, DES Library

[34] Gillian Weiss, 'A Very Great Nuisance', p. 11. For a discussion of the construction of the older scholar, see Dianne Snow, The State, Youth and Schooling: the construction of studenthood in New South Wales 1788-1948, PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 1989

A glance at the very rudimentary knowledge comprising the standard of the Junior Division and the curriculum later published for infant schools [both reproduced in Appendix A] confirms that under seven year olds were not regarded as real scholars. It was in Class I that serious learning commenced, the 1876 Inspector's Examination Programme makes clear, and it was to prepare for the work of this grade that a special syllabus was devised for children not yet at 'the age of reason'. Administrative practice with respect to pupil classification on entry to school also reinforced the distinction between 'juniors' and those who, by virtue of their greater age, were assumed to be capable of doing the work prescribed for the first grade of 'primary school proper'. Whereas a child starting school at the compulsory age of seven was placed straight into Class I, a child enrolling before this age went into a preparatory class. The imposition of an age standard of seven years for transferring from the infant department to boys' and girls' departments in large public schools likewise served to distinguish 'the little ones' from 'older children' within the state system.

Lastly, young children were visibly differentiated from those over seven wherever they were separated into infant schools. During the two years before the 1878 Amending Act dissolved the Council of Education, and its President (J. A. Hartley) became chief executive officer of an education department under ministerial control, three additional model infant schools were opened. In 1880, infant departments numbered ten; by 1884 there were sixteen. Yet beyond teaching "many things which do not form part of the ordinary course of other schools where there are numbers of small children", the distinctiveness of these departments initially lay more in their internal organisation than in their approach to instructing under seven year olds.

In England it was usual practice by 1870 to not only separate children aged 2-7 years from older ones (other than in one-teacher village schools), but to form a 'babies class' for the youngest and one or two classes for 'older infants'. In his 1876 report on the City Model Schools, Inspector Clark foreshadowed a like division of the several hundred children instructed in the infant department, from which promotions to upper departments were made

half-yearly.[35] From these beginnings, the new regulations issued in 1879 instituted a system of sub-grades wherein the work of each standard (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Class) occupied six months. Accompanying Departmental instructions advised that the fourth class (highest standard) was equivalent to the Junior Division in non-infant schools, and that pupils were to be advanced "at least two grades" per year. Additionally, Regulation 54 of 1876 was amended to read: "Children of more than seven years of age will not be allowed to remain in an infant department after the half-yearly removal to the boys' and girls' department, except with special permission of the Inspector".[36]

This arrangement of the curriculum and classes on a semi-annual basis in infant schools was to remain at odds with the annual basis of grade organisation in other elementary schools for almost a century - generating problems of an administrative nature which male head teachers seized upon in attempts to assert their own authority and notions of efficiency over infant mistresses'. But the issues involved here are of a later date and hence receive attention further into the thesis. Of more immediate significance is the way infant school practice and subsequent bureaucratic initiatives sharpened the definition of the junior scholar whilst perpetuating differences in how this stage of childhood was experienced according to the type of school youngsters attended.

Although the published course of instruction no longer specified an average educational age for each grade, other mechanisms operated after 1879 to forge distinctions between 'mere babies', 'juniors' and 'real scholars' at the lower end of elementary schooling. One such means was the age-based classification of pupils in infant schools, to which Inspector Dewhirst alluded in his

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[35] Report of the Council of Education for the 13 months ending 31 December 1876, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 34, 1877, p. 21. For the rules relating to the internal management of the Model Infant School and promotion to the Boys' and Girls' Schools, see Regulations of City Model Schools, SAGG, 9 April 1874, p. 589. For details of the sub-division of young children into 'babies' and 'older infants' in English schools, see Nanette Whitbread, The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School, pp. 41-2; Jan Stewart, The Making of the Primary School, Milton Keynes, Pa., Open University Press, 1986, p. 9; Margaret E. Jones, 'A brief account of the Home and Colonial Training Institution and of the Pestalozzian system as taught and practiced in its schools', Education Pamphlets, vol. xxxi, London, Groombridge & Sons, n.d., p. 3

[36] Regulations made by the Minister Controlling Education, nos. 59 and 183, SAGG, 29 May 1979, p. 1548; Inspector Stanton's report for 1879, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1880, p. 9. See Appendix A for a diagram of the grade organisation in differently-sized schools (infant and non-infant)

report for 1881. The child "sent to school for the first time and who does not know his alphabet", he said, could be "put into the 1st class (infant department) with other children only 3 or 4 years old".[37] This first class, with its complement of children aged "only 3 or 4 years" (but including some as young as eighteen months and two years, school registers of the period indicate) was already commonly referred to as "the Babies". Those in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Class of infant departments were therefore not 'babies', but it remained for the 1885 Regulations to clarify which among them were junior scholars. The dividing line was drawn by Regulation 157 which stated: "Children over five years of age will be subject to examination according to the programme for the junior division in public schools".

At the same time, the directive (Regulation 177) that no child **under seven** be promoted from the Junior Division to Class I functioned, in concert with the earlier ruling (new Regulation 49) that children **over seven** were not to stay in an infant school, to affirm seven years as the dividing line between 'juniors' and 'real scholars'.[38] Also, following the amending legislation of 1878, attendance figures categorised pupils in new age groupings: "under five" and "5-7 years". Then, in 1892, the category "under five" was deleted in recognition of the fact that the Education Department actively prohibited enrolment at such an "early age". This move concluded a decade-long process (detailed in Chapter 2) of 'very young' children's exclusion from the efficient state school by less direct means, and acted to further tighten the parameters of junior studenthood. Moreover, by the early 1890s, the curriculum of junior classes had been revised to fit the now two-year span of pupils' ages in them.

In light of the age standard imposed for transferring to Class I, inspectors had repeatedly called for children's regular attendance at an infant school from the age of four or five, so they might be adequately prepared "for the position they afterwards have to take in the boys and girls school". Inspector Whitham additionally suggested in 1884 that

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[37] Assistant Inspector's Report - 6 infant departments, SAPP, vol. 3 no. 44, 1882, p. 19

[38] Regulations made by the Minister Controlling Education, SAGG, 15 January 1885, pp. 114, 121. See also the elaboration of these rules in 'Official Notices. Infant Schools', EG (SA), 1:1 & 2, January & March 1885, p. 3

> the time has come when the standard for the infant departments should be widened, if not raised, in such a way as would enable such children as are promoted to the upper classes to go there fully equipped for the room of the first standard.[39]

His suggestion soon became reality, it seems. For, in explaining the lower percentages obtained in the 1885 Junior Division results examination (at public, provisional and infant schools), Senior Inspector Dewhirst pointed to "the greater breadth and minuteness of instruction that has to be given in twelve months under the new regulations than was required under the old".[40] Given that the same broadening and raising of curricular standards occurred in the upper division of elementary schooling, it was a logical next step from here to lengthen the period of time children spent at the junior level. This was accomplished in 1890 by splitting the course for the Junior Division into two parts, thus providing "more than one year's instruction" for the many children noted as coming to school at five but not qualifying for real studenthood until they had reached the full age of seven years. Head teachers were reminded that the program of work for the Junior Division in public and provisional schools also applied to children over five years of age in infant schools, whilst a subsequent notice advised that the upper standard of this grade "consists of children whose age is not less than 6 years 6 months, unless it can be shown that they were not on the roll of any Departmental school at the date of the previous examination of the school now attended".[41]

By the mid-1890s, then, junior scholars were characteristically aged between five and seven years, were taught "by themselves" in larger schools, and were examinable on a syllabus "suited to the capacities of little ones". A dearth of evidence regarding what actually went on inside late-nineteenth century classrooms, however, makes it difficult to ascertain the extent to which 5-7 year olds were further distinguished by the use of infant as opposed to formal methods to instruct them. In this respect it is pertinent to recall that the majority of colonial youth attended small schools wherein two or more standards were taught by a single teacher,

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[39] Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1882, p. 19; 1885, p. 13

[40] Inspector-General's report, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1884, p. 3

[41] 'Official Notices. Education Regulations, nos. 132, 155', EG (SA), 6:50, July 1890, pp. 65, 71; 'Annual Examination of Schools 1894', EG (SA), 10:88, February 1894, pp. 24, 27

and juniors were differentiated from older students largely on the basis of seating arrangements. As one child wrote in reference to the Riverland provisional school of Murtho:

> I am in the third class. There are four desks in the school now, and fourth and fifth sit in the back one; that means Katherine and Emily.
> We sit in the next row and I sit at the end. Dick sits next, then Charlie. ...Then comes Joe Fountain. ... After Joe comes Arthur; that is all in that row. The second and first sit in the next desk. Dora and Maude are in second. Phillis, Mamy and Sissy are in first. Margerie, Lilly and Bunty are in the juniors and they have the front desk to themselves.[42]

Since specialist infant training was only afforded to female students at the teachers' college in 1880, and negligible advice on infant or kindergarten theory and practice was published in the *Education Gazette*, it is reasonable to assume that juniors in non-infant schools were instructed in the same way as their older siblings: according to the mechanical view of mind implicit in Herbartian psychology, which David Shield's study indicates predominated in the South Australian Education Department of colonial times.[43]

Even in infant schools, Weiss observes of the decade or so after 1875, the philosophy and methodology of teaching was secondary to the physical separation of young children from those perceived to be real scholars, whilst any pedagogical changes seem to have come from individual teachers rather than the administrative side of the growing bureaucracy.[44] It is true that the Assistant Inspector's report for 1881 asserted that infant school teachers had shown they were "well qualified" for the "interesting work" and recognised "the great advantage given to them by the modern appliances placed at their disposal by the Department" (gallery seating, alphabet cards, reading sheets, pictures and so forth). Yet in that same and the next year, Lewis Madley, Principal of the Training College and former Headmaster of the Grote Street Model Schools, expressed regret that nothing had been done to reinstate the Froebelian training gratuitously provided by Mary Gray (Infant Mistress at Flinders Street Model School) - particularly when the results of her previous work with pupil teachers and students at Grote

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[42] Letter no. 16, 21 May 1897, in Richard Vynne Woods, The Birks Murtho Letters 1894-1900: Hardship and happiness for two families on the River Murray, Kangarilla, the author, 1994, p. 29

[43] David John Shield, Psychological theory and its application to Departmental policy in South Australian schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, MEd thesis, Flinders University, 1989

[44] Gillian Weiss, 'A Very Great Nuisance', pp. 6, 8

Street had convinced him that adoption of Froebel's kindergarten system would be "a great improvement on our present mode of conducting infant schools".[45] Madley presumably had in mind the influence of examinations on the current teaching, which together with class sizes of up to 80 or 90 youngsters and officials' view that individual instruction was inefficient, ruled such innovation out of court.

Towards the end of the century, though, there were signs of the child-centred approach that was to set infant education apart from the pedagogy in upper grades. For example, following their visit to Adelaide and country districts during September-October 1888, two interstate educationalists reported:

> In South Australia, in the infant classes, the object aimed at is somewhat different to that pursued in our [Victorian] schools or those of New South Wales. ...[T]he rapid acquisition of the power to add and subtract large numbers whose meaning is beyond the conception of young children, ability to recognise and spell from frequent repetition all the words usually employed in easy narratives, to write exercises legibly on slates - all this is subordinate to the training of the faculties and awakening the intelligence. Reading is taught on the phonic system [instead of the alphabet method or 'teaching by the eye and not the ear', which the inspectorate previously endorsed].[46]

In 1892, three years after the Department recommended the use of Joseph Hassell's book of kindergarten exercises, *Play in Work and Work in Play*, it was noted that the youngest children in large schools were also receiving "fair training of their manual powers". Simultaneously, a few infant classrooms were refurbished with kindergarten chairs and what a New Zealand visitor described as

> level desks, wide, ruled in squares and amply spaced out, ... a small gallery, for oral lessons only, placed at right angles to it and in a recess where the pupils were out of sight of those engaged at their desk lessons ... to suit infant work, which

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[45] Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1882, pp. 19, 21; 1883, p. 23

[46] Report of Messrs. Main and Topp on Colonial Education Systems - Efficiency of instruction of infants, EG (SA), 5:40, June 1889, p. 54
For other comments on the efficacy and practice of teaching on the phonics system in infant schools, see Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - Mr T. Noyé (Head Teacher, Willunga Public School), qq. 4222-30, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882; 'Notes on School Work: Teaching - Reading (with principal reference to the Junior Division)', EG (SA), 5:41, July 1889, p. 64; Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1897, p. 13; 1898, pp. 13, 16; 1900, pp. 15, 17

> now includes manual occupations, ... conversation lessons, ... and illustrative methods of teaching in place of object lessons.[47]

Providing some theoretical underpinning for such glimmers of recognition that young children had special physical and developmental needs, an occasional article appeared in the *Education Gazette*. 'Practical Psychology' (written by the Director of Public Kindergartens, Philadelphia), for instance, was serialised in the November and December 1893 issues; 'On Child Study' was reprinted from *The Public School Journal* (published in Bloomington, Illinois) in the November 1897 issue.

It is again necessary to remember, however, that the adoption of more progressive methods and 'modern' classroom design in early childhood education was confined to infant departments, which were not the norm in nineteenth-century South Australia. Moreover, few of these special places for Babies and Juniors survived changes in Departmental policy with respect to the appointment of Infant Mistresses; nor the steady decline in enrolments which accompanied the systematisation of schooling, the priority given to 'compulsory scholars' aged 7-13 years, and economic depression in the 1880s and 90s. By 1893, only three infant schools were still in existence; in 1897 just two (Flinders Street and North Adelaide) remained.

That the demise of separate schools for infants is equally explicable in terms of an underlying set of gender politics is apparent from evidence tendered to the 1881 Select Committee on Education and its successor: the 1882-3 Commission on the Working of the Education Acts. Under the colonial state and education bureaucracy, which Pavla Miller argues were solidly patriarchal in constitution and ideology, the power of women in charge of girls' and infant departments was formally circumscribed by regulations and informally by accepted practice, leading one social commentator to observe in 1891 that "Headmistresses and Infant Mistresses

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[47] Mr D. White (Rector of the Normal School, Dunedin), 'Primary Education in Australia' (published in two parts), EG (SA), 13:129, July 1897, p. 100; 13:131, September 1897, p. 123.
On the introduction of kindergarten/manual work and dismantling of the long, steep galleries which took up most of the space in purpose-built infant schoolrooms, thereby preventing such 'occupations' being carried out, see EG (SA), 5:42, September 1889, p. 81; 8:73, November 1892, p. 116; 8:74, December 1892, p. 141

are virtually assistants".[48] Indeed by the early 1890s most were reduced to this status. But that is to pre-empt consideration of why the Education Department moved to dismantle the hierarchy of female teachers which developed after 1875.

The power relations initially operative in schools divided into departments were outlined by J. T. Smyth, the Headmaster of Norwood Model School:

> - I am only responsible primarily for my own department [the boys'], but the other teachers come to the head master ... in case of any serious difficulty arising. The position of the head master, with regard to the other two heads of departments, is more of an inspectorial character.
> As a matter of fact, are the head mistresses subordinate to you? - Not necessarily.
> They could refuse to follow your instructions? - Yes; anything I say to them [on matters of discipline and internal management] is in the nature of advice.[49]

But in the broader context of 'proper' gender relations and the efficient running of these schools, concern focused on the potential for "confusion" to occur, arising from the "conflicting interests" of headmasters and headmistresses, which in one known instance had escalated into a violent quarrel. Clearly, male authority could be and was challenged, so that if South Australia were to follow the practice in Victoria of placing a headmaster in charge of the whole school, Smyth opined, the work would be "more comfortable". It would be better, too, "for the sake of economy and uniformity" (to quote the Headmaster of Hindmarsh Public School), if the Department continued its recently introduced policy of replacing "expensive" (£200 per annum) Infant Mistresses with cheaper Assistants as the former resigned, retired or received promotion to girls' schools (where the mistresses' annual salary was £250, compared with headmasters' £450). Not only would the Department benefit from such an initiative, it was revealed. Extra salary would accrue to the Head Master by virtue of the increase in pupils under his charge. Having "supreme control", his staff could be "better utilised" (for example, transferring teachers between departments in cases of illness would be easier). The Head Master would also have the say over pupil promotions from the infant department to Class I,

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48 W. Catton Grasby (writer and former public school teacher), Our Public Schools, Adelaide, Hussey & Gillingham, 1891, p. 45; Pavla Miller, Long Division, ch. 1-3; Regulations of City Model Schools - Teachers, SAGG, 9 April 1974, p. 589; Regulations made by the Minister Controlling Education, Section V, B.1 - Head Teachers and Provisional Teachers, SAGG, 15 January 1885, p. 115

49 Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 3918-20, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 26

Inspector-General Hartley pointed out, thus avoiding the "difficulty" of negotiating these with Infant Mistresses as required by the current Regulations. Indeed, Hartley was prepared to go further and instruct a head teacher not to organise the school into departments in order to render its administration more efficient and the education system as a whole more cost effective. This is precisely what transpired: only where enrolments were sufficiently high to justify the expense would infants be accommodated separately and the Department appoint an Infant Mistress.[50]

Head mistresses were naturally incensed at the abolition of leadership positions in infant and girls' schools. Supported by prominent social reformer Catherine Helen Spence, those from the Central, North Adelaide, East Adelaide and Norwood Model schools wrote to the Education Commission opposing the changes: "not from [self-]interested motives", they argued, "but for the general good of the schools".[51] Their representations were to no avail, since a gradual decrease in the numbers attending infant departments (due to the factors discussed in Chapter 2) led to more and more closures. Yet the sector did not languish for long. Developments early in the new century refocused attention on schooling provision for young children. Separate infant departments were revived, then came to dominate the lower end of primary schooling before again falling prey to enrolment and economic decline. Notably 'difficult' gender relations remained at the base of issues arising from the differences forged between infant and 'ordinary' primary schools, while in consequence of these differences children's experiences in the lower grades and on moving into the senior stage of schooling diverged more significantly than in colonial days.

Before transferring our gaze from the late-nineteenth century, though, it is pertinent to consider the tension between age and attainment standards which was most obviously manifest in the several decades after the Education Department designated seven years as the upper limit of

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[50] For elaborated discussion of these points, see Progress Report of the Select Committee on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Mr W. J. Young, qq. 2203, 2488-9, SAPP, vol. 4, no. 122, 1881; Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. T. Smyth, qq. 3923, 4108-12; J. A. Hartley, qq. 6585-9, 6601-7

[51] Letter from Head Mistresses, Position and promotion of female teachers, Appendix to Minutes of Evidence on Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882. See also Minutes of Evidence - C. H. Spence, q. 6145

junior studenthood (but re-emerged in connection with 'the retardation problem', as later chapters of the thesis discuss).

TENSION BETWEEN AGE AND ATTAINMENT ON ENTRY TO 'THE BIG SCHOOL'

The 'problem' of reconciling pupil attainment levels with the age standard defined for leaving infant classes to commence the 'serious' work of the primary division was peculiar to large public schools organised in departments and arose in the context of the system of payment-by-results. (Under this system which was closely modelled on the English Revised Code of 1862, a teacher's salary, employment and promotion opportunities were made partly dependent on the school percentages gained in a yearly inspectorial examination of each child). As headmasters of the schools in question detailed before the 1881-3 Education Commission, there was a disjunction between the ruling (first issued as Regulation 67 of 1876) that scholars be classified and promoted according to their attainments, and the directive that, unless inspectorial permission was gained to do otherwise, children aged 7+ years on entry to school or on reaching this age in an infant department were to be placed in the class of the first standard in the elementary school proper. At the level of practice, a "real difficulty" was posed by "compulsory entrants starting school at all times of the year who may not know much more than the alphabet", and by those "not competent to pass the junior standard in reading and arithmetic" yet who were promoted out of infant departments six months before the date of the next results examination because of their age. There was neither provision for looking after them as a distinct class, since Regulation 183 of 1879 disallowed the formation of a Junior Division in schools with an infant department, nor official approval to give different lessons to children in the same grade.[52] Put into Class I for which they were "not fit", these children were obliged, moreover, to

> undergo the same ordeal in the subjects of that first standard as the other pupils who properly passed the junior standard at the last examination for results, and who would therefore have received the full twelve months course of instruction.[53]

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[52] Progress Report of the Select Committee (House of Assembly) on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Mr J. Griffiths (teacher, Franklin Street School), q. 2937, SAPP, vol. 4, no. 122, 1881, p. 148; Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. T. Smyth (Head Master, Norwood Model School), q. 4010 and Explanatory remarks, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, pp. 27, 228; Final Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Addendum to Evidence - W. J. Young (Head Master, Hindmarsh Public School) re. q. 6576, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 27a, 1883-4, p. 105; Inspector Hosking's note on the docket containing W. J. Young's letter to the Inspector-General of Schools re. classification of pupils aged 7 years and upwards unable to pass the Junior Standard, 21 January 1884, PRO, GRG 18/3/375

[53] J. T. Smyth, Explanatory remarks, op cit.

The outcome, headmasters attested, was "in most instances total failure", which "pulled down our percentages wonderfully" and left the teacher "quite out of heart at the results of his efforts to bring the class referred to up to the requirements of the First Standard within the time allotted".[54]

In his own case, J. T. Smyth of Norwood Model School elaborated, "to do anything like justice to the percentages" meant sharing this student cohort with a pupil teacher and working them "until nearly 6 o'clock, after the school hours were over, at the expense of the health of the children and great wear to ourselves".[55] If such action was wrong in Inspector-General Hartley's view, how much more so was J. R. Peate's in not seeking prior approval to retain children over seven years of age in the infant department after the half-yearly removal to the boys' and girls' departments when he was headmaster of the Mt. Gambier School in 1879. Never mind the reason Peate gave: "that these children had lately come from the bush where they had been to no school, and we had nowhere else to put them to learn their letters". Here was a flagrant breach of Departmental regulations, Hartley argued; and the headmaster deserved the low percentages which resulted from some thirty youngsters being summarily sent for examination in Class I - as did "every teacher in the same position [who] was treated in precisely the same manner".[56]

In their defence, headmasters pointed out two of the "most obvious blemishes" they had to deal with. First, the results system stifled any consideration of children's individuality - treating them, rather, as if they were "made of the same material and brought with them the same

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54 Progress Report of the Select Committee on Education, Minutes of Evidence - W. J. Young, q. 2642, SAPP, vol. 4, no. 122, 1881, p. 116; R. C. Mitton (Head Master, Grote Street School) to the Inspector-General of Schools, 4 January 1884, PRO, GRG 18/3/57

55 Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. T. Smyth, qq. 4012-3, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 31

56 ibid - Mr. J. Peate (Head Master, Nailsworth Public School), q. 5570 (re. Hartley's visit with Inspector Stanton to Mt. Gambier for the purpose of conducting the annual results examination); J. A. Hartley, qq. 6257, 6413-9, 6426, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, pp. 121, 148, 176-7

faculties and qualities of mind"; and making teachers regard them as "so many things to get a high percentage from".[57] Second, they considered it "most anomalous" that

> something like 50% of the children who are put in the first class in model schools [and other large public schools organised in departments] would be put in a class lower (junior) in [non-departmentalised] public schools. As we have an infant department we are not allowed a junior class; nor can children over seven be put into the infant school. Suppose a child of seven years or a little younger not knowing the alphabet comes to my school. He has to be put into the first class, and three months from that time the inspector may come and the child has to be examined in the first class. If he went to a [non-divided] public school he would be put into the junior class, and would not be required [to be examined in the Junior Division] till he has been there six months. So that in a public school the pupil would have eighteen months before being examined in the first class, and with me [the Head Master of Kapunda Model School] he would have only three months.[58]

At base, explained W. J. Young of Hindmarsh Public School, no headmaster objected to putting children aged 7+ years into Class I provided sufficient time was allowed to prepare them for examination in the first standard. Being further of the opinion that "if children do not know their letters they should be put into a class to learn them, and so on, rising from class to class", headmasters unanimously passed the following resolution at a conference on September 10, 1881:

> That in model and public schools (where the children are taught as an infant school) all pupils who have not passed the fourth class in infant school, or who enter the school when over seven years of age, may be classified as a junior class at the option of the headmaster.[59]

An ally was found within officialdom, for Senior Inspector Dewhirst likewise asserted that "you must have a junior class in large schools, and allow children a little time to get on with their reading. You cannot classify children always by their ages".[60] But Hartley would countenance no reversion to the situation that existed before Regulation 183 of 1879 (devised

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[57] Progress Report of the Select Committee on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Mr J. Griffiths (President, Teachers' Association), qq. 3280-1, SAPP, vol. 4, no. 122, 1881, p. 158

[58] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - Mr W. L. Neale, q. 4346, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 110. See also, W. J. Young, q. 2288-90, p. 102; J. T. Smyth, q. 4143, p. 39

[59] Resolution no. 11 of the Headmasters' Conference, Central Model School, 10 September 1881. Copy as sent to the Select Committee on Education, the colony's leading newspapers and members of parliament, reproduced in Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - Mr W. L. Neale, q. 4346, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 107

[60] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - Inspector E. Dewhirst, q. 4818, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 86

by himself) came into force, whereby, as Young described: "I was allowed a junior division in the school and I was permitted to classify the boys according to their attainments, the result being that I got a high percentage".[61]

In the first place, Hartley replied to the Education Commission's query as to whether events had proved it "inexpedient" to make a regulation providing an age standard for transfer to Class I, it was not *ipso facto* the case that individuals without the requisite learning went into this grade. On application, permission could be obtained from the district inspector to classify or retain a child in an infant class. Second, he considered it unfair to the children that they should be kept a year and a half in the school and still be working away at the junior standard simply to assist the teacher to secure a high percentage. Third, the regulation stating that schools with an infant department could not also have a junior division had been drawn up both to prevent "masters of the big schools stealing a march on the teachers of the small schools" in the matter of examination passes, and in the interests of organisational consistency. "We have to hold the balance true" between schools arranged in departments and those which were not, he said, keeping in mind that the standard of the Fourth Class in infant schools was equivalent to the Junior Division in other schools. Last, Hartley referred to his right as administrative head of the Education Department to formulate the rules and to insist on masters' compliance with them.[62]

The Inspector-General being clearly immovable from this stance, other means to resolve the difficulty were canvassed: re-defining "infants" as "children over eight" (in effect raising the age standard for entry to 'real studenthood'), and making school attendance compulsory at a younger age. It was to be several decades, though, before either was instituted. In the interim, teachers' and parents' correspondence with the Department continued to highlight the dissonance between age and attainment at the point of transition from junior to senior classes in the elementary schools. For example, at the Teachers' Association meeting of 5 May 1894, it was agreed that representation should be made to the Inspector-General on the matter of promotions to Class I, including "those often made on account of age that are not justified by

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[61] ibid - W. J. Young, q. 2642, p. 116

[62] ibid - J. A. Hartley, qq. 6412-20, 6443, pp. 176-8

knowledge".[63] Two applications for permission to retain a child in an infant grade further illustrate the issue:

> Dear Sir,
> This note at your request to say that I would much rather Herbert remain in the infant class instead of going higher, as he has only been to school a short time, and has only gone through the first primer and oblige.

And:

> I beg to ask that Frederick Patterson, aged 8 years 9 months, who was examined in the Junior Division, be allowed to remain in the same class for another year as he is not yet able to read, being a child of exceptionally dull mental capacity.
> [To which Inspector Clark added the comment:]
> I remember the boy quite well and I think although I marked him [for promotion] on account of age that he should have another year in the same class.[64]

Such 'old' and 'dull' promoted children, it was argued,

> are drags upon the progress of the class, both by example, by causing repetition to an extent otherwise unnecessary, and by causing a drain on the energy of the teacher that without them would be more profitably employed.[65]

Finally, in 1912, some respite was afforded by the provisions outlined in the new Course of Instruction. Reading and arithmetic requirements in the Junior Division were reduced "in accordance with the opinions expressed by teachers", making it easier for children to attain the standard of that grade. More significantly, the age for transfer out of a Junior class (either the lower or upper division thereof) was now eight years "except under very unusual circumstances", and head teachers were permitted to form a lower division of Class I "in order that insufficiently prepared children may not be promoted to the First Class".[66] The official rationale for instituting an age standard for transition to 'primary school proper', and how the attendant 'attainment problem' would be alleviated by the establishment of an "intermediate

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63 Minutes of the ordinary meeting held in the Minister's reception room, 5 May 1894, Minute Book of the SA Teachers' Association 1890-1903

64 Mrs G. S. Smith, Prospect, to John Donnell, Head Teacher, North Adelaide Model School, 16 June 1899, PRO, GRG 18/2/1094; Arthur Murphy, Barossa Goldfields, 25 July 1899, GRG 18/2/1298

65 Minutes of the Teachers' Association ordinary meeting, 5 May 1894, op cit. See also Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Inspector C. Charlton, qq. 4912-5; Appendix E - A statement of the sentiments and opinions of teachers in the service of the South Australian Education Department, 15 January 1912, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1912, pp. xiii, 112, 224

66 Course of Instruction and Suggestions to Teachers, EG Supplement, 20 February 1912, pp. 4, 8; A. Williams (Director of Education), 'Modifications set out in the February number of Education Gazette. Altered requirements', Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Appendix F, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1912, p. 228

First Class", was articulated before the 1911-13 Royal Commission on Education. There was a tendency, perhaps a natural one, amongst teachers to require a child to be quite perfect in the work of one class before allowing him to proceed to another, said the Director of Education (Alfred Williams). However, it would not be "fair or wise to keep old children with the little ones too long". For that reason, Inspector Charlton continued,

> and because the child of 8 years, though he may not have had as much schooling, has a maturer brain and can probably grip the work more readily than a younger child, we have laid down the rule that they should be promoted if they are over 8. ... During the last [Inspectors'] conference we made a new class to meet those cases [of eight year olds who had not passed the Junior examination or who enrolled after turning seven "knowing practically nothing"], so I do not think the trouble is likely to be as great as it was. ... There they will have a curriculum which will be a compromise between the Upper Junior and the First. Then, at the end of the year, if they have developed well, they may go straight into the Second Class, ... but the general rule will be that they will go from the Lower First into the Upper First. That is to say, they will spend two years in the First Class instead of two years in the Junior Class.[67]

Under this arrangement, Director Williams added, there would be no necessity for teachers to strain to make 'slower learners' maintain the pace of the 'brighter and quicker' children, whilst those who made good progress would not be condemned to the loss of a whole school year - "a very serious matter".

V. J. Pavia, President of the Teachers' Union, considered this initiative "an experiment which should be successful". Yet he hoped that since children in Lower First would be trained up to little more than half the standard of Class I, only those who showed particular ability would receive promotion to Class II: "otherwise the strain over these children will simply be transferred from the present First Class teacher to the Second Class".[68] Pavia thus endorsed the accompanying thrust of reformers towards a reduction in the school commencing age so that beginners might spend the same one or two years in the Junior Division prior to their mandatory transfer to Class I at eight. This preferred option was also submitted in evidence to the 1911-13 Education Commission before parliament legislated in 1915 for a change in

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[67] Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Inspector C. Charlton, q. 4915; V. J. Pavia, q. 4633; Appendix F - Director of Education's reply to the statement in Appendix E (supplied by the Executive of the SA Public Teachers' Union), SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1912, pp. 88, 112, 226

[68] ibid - V. J. Pavia, q. 4619, p. 87

compulsory attendance requirements - lowering the statutory age for school entry from seven to six years. Concurrently, head teachers encouraged parents to send their children at five or a little earlier, in accordance with the minimum permissible age defined by Departmental policy and practice. With most pupils' age on enrolment subsequently falling within these parameters, Williams' prognostication of 1912 proved accurate: the "chief difficulty" with regard to promotions from junior grades and reaching the standard of Class I "would to a very large extent disappear if there were a uniform age for admission to school".[69]

As later chapters of the thesis reveal, such means of resolving the tension between age and attainment at the junction of infant and primary schooling did not force the wider issue from view. What the foregoing analysis suggests, though, is that chronological age was gaining ascendancy as the major principle of graded organisation. For abolition of the age standard differentiating 'junior' from 'real' scholars and marking the divide between infant and primary stages of instruction was not among the possibilities contemplated at any level of the education hierarchy. Indeed, in ensuing decades, the work of stage theorists like Gesell and Piaget was to provide 'scientific' justification for its retention, and to shape the notion that "the leaving of the infant school usually takes place at a time when a physiological and psychological change is taking place in the child".[70] Thus we come to 'this transition business' (to adopt the phrase employed in 1940s educational discourse): the difficulties which children attending large schools with a separate infant department were seen to experience on promotion from Grade II to Grade III, in consequence of the 'organisation break' and pedagogical differences between junior and upper primary classes that developed after 1900.

BUILDING AN INFANT SCHOOL ETHOS AND EMPIRE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The establishment of a specialised training course for teaching infants, the reinstatement of infant departments and headmistress-ships, together with innovations in infant school method and curriculum in the first half of the twentieth century, have been fairly well documented for

[69] ibid, Appendix F - A. Williams, Reply, March 1912, p. 226

[70] Bean Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence - Dr C. Fenner, PRO, GRG 18/171, Book 1, pp. 3, 31

South Australia.[71] Rather than repeat histories already written, this section focuses on the evolution of a distinctive ethos and grade organisation in infant departments which proved to be a major source of conflict between (female) infant and (male) primary school specialists but also exacerbated problems that children experienced on moving from junior to real studenthood. What, then, were the circumstances which gave rise to these 'problems'?

At the turn of the century, school officials in South Australia expressed concern to catch "the wave of advancement in scholastic matters which appears to be passing around the world at the present time": that "new educational spirit born of the study of the child, as well as the method of the subject", which was seen to require fewer untrained teachers, more manageable class sizes, and a general remodelling of the curriculum entailing "an expansion towards the introduction of elementary scientific instruction by such easy stages as will harmonise with the various divisions of school life".[72] Prompted by reforms afoot in the eastern States, the local effort to rebuild schooling on a more efficient, scientific basis had particular implications for what should be done about infant education. The Assistant Inspector-General of Schools in 1905 identified the major wants in this regard:

> While about one-ninth of our school children are infants ... [and] it is in the infant classes the foundations of all real education are laid, we have not in South Australia ... a single specially trained infant teacher, or a single up-to-date infant school.[73]

Or, as Senior Inspector Burgan elaborated:

> In connection with the training of very young children who are only beginning to learn, we should have the foundation broad and deep - laid by those whose

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[71] See Valerie Laidlaw, The development of the Infant School in the South Australian school system 1875-1925, M.Ed dissertation, University of Adelaide, 1985; Mavis L. Wauchope, The bearing of the view of some modern thinkers on infant education with special reference to South Australia, MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1936; Barbara Denman, 'A search for identity', Pivot, 3:1, 1976, pp. 3-9; Helen Jones, 'Foundations of early childhood education in South Australia', Pivot, 6:3, 1979, pp. 5-9; Rosie Naughton, Miss Longmore's place in the history of infant education in South Australia, typescript of address to the Infant School Mothers' Club Association, 5 August 1969, JPPA archives

[72] Inspectors' reports, SAPP, vol. 2 no. 44, 1902, pp. 18-19; Assistant Inspector-General's Report, EG (SA), 19:202, August 1903, p. 119; Inspector Smyth's report, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1904, p. 18; Senior Inspector Burgan's report, SAPP, vol. 2 no. 44, 1906, p. 14.
For extended discussion of these developments, see R. J. W. Selleck, The New Education: the English background 1870-1914, Melbourne, Pitman & Sons, 1968; Roselyn R. Gillespie, 'The early development of the scientific movement in Australian education - child study', ANZHES Journal, 11:2, Spring 1982, pp. 1-14

[73] EG (SA), 21:223, May 1905, p. 76

> experience in teaching and knowledge of children fit them peculiarly for drawing out harmoniously all that is best in their physical, mental and moral nature. Too much of this work has been done in the past by monitors and pupil teachers.[74]

With respect to renovating the curriculum of the lower grades, Inspector Smyth asserted that

> the time seems to have come when it is necessary to adopt the kindergarten system, by which the very youngest in our schools can be treated. In the kindergarten, the lessons are given and the mind educated by means of play and practical principles. There is therefore little strain on the infants; but as the body expands, the mental endowments begin to unfold, while habits of attention, order and obedience are inculcated. Kindergarten classes are unsuitable for children over the seventh year, for at this age the varied faculties and qualities of mind, previously dormant, gradually appear. The work of the Junior Class is better adapted for carrying on the educational training at this period of life.[75]

At the 1905 Annual Conference of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union (SAPTU), the President, Alfred Williams, likewise called for "a proper infant school syllabus" to be arranged, wherein "kindergarten methods would find a large place, and much less formal work be attempted before the ages of five and six".[76] Quoting at length in support a statement made by Tasmania's Chief Health Officer, Williams further commented that little, if any, real work in this direction could be done until women "fitted by natural qualifications" for the "difficulties" of infant teaching underwent a special course of training. In the interim, inspectors suggested, teachers of lower grades might study the book *A Guide to a Modern Infant Room* (compiled by Dr Smyth, Principal of the Melbourne Training College), whose principles, if closely followed, would

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[74] Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1906, p. 14

[75] ibid, p. 15. See also the comment regarding the state of infant departments, made by Rev. Bertram Hawker (who was instrumental in the founding of South Australia's first free kindergarten) on opening the public meeting at which G. H. Knibbs (Director of Technical Education, NSW) and Frank Tate (Director of Education, Victoria) spoke on the New Education, 'Education Reform. State education and national reform, The Register, 21 September 1905, p. 6. For further reportage of Knibb's and Tate's proposals re. infant schooling, and of the kindergarten system as demonstrated by Frances Newton (a Chicago graduate and Principal of the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers' College) - all of which Hawker arranged "for popular examination and criticism", see Register, 18 September 1905, p. 4; 20 September 1905, p. 9. Inspector-General Stanton's response to Knibb's, Tate's and Hawker's critique of the South Australian school system can be found in PRO, GRG 18/2/1965/1905

[76] SA Public School Teachers' Union 10th Annual Conference - President's Address, EG (SA), 21:226, August 1905, p. 129. At the same conference, Emily Edeson (Headmistress of Methodist Ladies' College and a Kindergarten enthusiast) gave an address on 'the kindergarten spirit' and Froebelian theory and practice. Notably also, Dr John Smyth (Principal, Melbourne Training College) stated before the 1904 SAPTU Conference: "Some day we shall learn from experience and from child study that till a child is six years of age its school should be the Kindergarten or one taught on Kindergarten lines". See his address, 'Some movements in the modern educational world', EG (SA), 21:214, August 1904, p. 120

> revolutionise much of the teaching, ... produce educational results of the highest value, ... make the work of the teaching also a great pleasure, and lighten the load of both teacher and children.[77]

Out of all this advocacy emerged concrete action when Williams became administrative head of the Education Department in 1906. The new Director's first move was to send two promising young infant teachers, Elsie Claxton and Lydia Longmore, to study infant school methods at the Victorian training college. On returning, these two women disseminated their acquired knowledge through after-hours, week-end and summer Schools of Instruction. This means of familiarising practising teachers (mainly city-based) with kindergarten principles, Froebel's gifts and occupations, child psychology, nature study, drawing and infant school management[78] was extended by the establishment of a one-year Infant Certificate course in 1908, and of 'demonstration' infant schools to which Mistresses of Method were appointed from 1912 onwards. Second, inspectors recorded the "infinite delight" of "truly earnest and zealous" infant teachers who seized upon the new curriculum issued in 1907, with its emphasis on educating 'the whole child', subject correlation instead of compartmentalisation, making "observation and investigation by the child the basis of instruction", and provision for "greater play of the teacher's individuality" in selecting the content for some subjects.[79] Third, although Maria Montessori's ideas on early childhood education were beginning to overtake Froebelian method by the onset of World War I, the notion of kindergarten classes for the youngest infants (aged four and five years) at state schools had taken firm root. As the 1911-13 Royal Commission on Education concluded from the evidence presented to it, children who spent one or two years doing kindergarten work "develop a love of school life that is of great advantage to them subsequently". Moreover, they were much better prepared for the 'real' work of upper

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[77] Senior Inspector Burgan's report for 1906, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, p. 21

[78] For details, see Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, no. 44, 1907, p. 14; 1909, pp. 14, 18; 1910, pp. 9, 23; 1911, pp. 8, 32, 44, 46; 1912, p. 32. Also, 'Infant Teachers' Certificate', EG (SA), 24:258, 8 April 1908, p. 84; 'Education Notes - Students of Kindergarten' (re. first examination of city and suburban teachers who attended weekly lectures on kindergarten methods), The Advertiser, 14 December 1907, p. 13; 'Education Notes', Register, 9 November 1907; 'Our Education System' (re. new Observation and Practicing School in Currie Street), Advertiser, 9 January 1908; 'State Education - Biographical' (re. Lydia Longmore's role as teacher educator), Register, 9 January 1908; articles re. new training course for kindergarten and junior work in state schools, Register, 17 November 1910, 14 and 29 April 1911

[79] Course of Instruction and Suggestions to Teachers, EG (SA), 23:244, 20 February 1907, pp. 43-4; Director of Education's report for 1906, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1907, p. 14; Inspector McBride's report - Infant Schools, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1911, p. 46

primary grades and made better progress through the curriculum than those who did not receive such instruction. Therefore, kindergarten classes should be formed wherever a sufficient number of 'young infants' were enrolled.[80]

A specific infant philosophy, methodology and grade organisation was thereby consolidated during Williams' term of office, albeit that reform of the early years of schooling was acknowledged as not having spread fully to country areas. Meanwhile, there was also renewed concern "to keep children of tender years away from children of more mature years" - especially now that the state was poised to expand into secondary education. There were "grave reasons" (left to the imagination) why infants should not associate with children over eight years of age, declared Inspector Charlton before the Royal Commission on Education in 1912. In the same forum, the Head of the Public Health Department averred: "children should play with others of their own age, and they do, as a rule". In particular, the Headmaster of Norwood Model School added, high school students should not consort with younger ones. Being older and stronger they adopted rougher methods of play, he explained. Besides, adolescence was a distinct period of life, with its own requirements in terms of schooling provision.[81] In the view of education officials, "the ages of the children" and "the nature of the teaching and management" were particularistic at the junior primary level too. Thus it was desirable that large schools be divided into four departments - infant, primary boys' and girls', and high school - each with separate buildings and playgrounds for pupils "equal in age and growth, both mentally and physically".[82] As informed by contemporary child study, medical opinion, and theories of technical rationality in school administration, here was the rationale for founding new infant

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[80] Final Report of the Royal Commission on Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 75, 1913, pp. xi, lviii. See also Minutes of Evidence - L. de Lissa (Principal, Kindergarten Teachers' College), pp. 125-30; 'Teacher and pupil'' (re. kindergarten in state schools), Advertiser, 29 February 1908. For evidence of the growing influence of Montessori in South Australia, see Elsie Claxton, Report on the Montessori System of Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1914, p. 53; Lydia Longmore and Janet I. Davidson, Report on the Montessori Method, 7 August 1915, SA Parliamentary Library; Kirby Papers 1908-1925, nos. 8-13, PRO, 614U; Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, no. 44, 1914, pp. 16, 23; 1915, pp. 28, 30; 1916, p. 21; 1917, p. 25

[81] Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence - C. Charlton, q. 4914; W. Ramsey Smith, q. 5824; V. J. Pavia, qq. 4289, 4350, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1912

[82] Director of Education's report for 1917, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1918, p. 21. For additional references to the (resurrected) idea of accommodating infants separately, together with descriptions of the 'modern' facilities and apparatus in newly re/built infant schools, see PRO, GRG 19/147 - Newspaper cuttings on education, vol. 2, pp. 36, 71, 129, 152

departments at Norwood, Currie Street, Port Pirie, Unley, LeFevre Peninsula and several other populous centres in the years 1908-11; for appointing infant-trained Chief Assistants to take charge of them; and for promoting Lydia Longmore in 1917 to the newly-created position of Infant School Inspector.

Following the retirement of Williams' successor, Milton Maughan, and his replacement by W. T. McCoy (formerly Tasmanian Director of Education) in August 1919, the movement to resurrect infant schools received a decisive boost. In the context of a 20% increase in primary school enrolments since the 1915 Education Act lowered the age for compulsory attendance from seven to six years, and the provision made under the same legislation for a period of post-primary instruction (by raising the leaving age from 13 to 14 and inaugurating a system of technical and academic high schools), McCoy embarked upon a review of teacher training, the curriculum, and pupil classification and examination soon after assuming office. Having closely collaborated with Inspector Longmore on infant education, among the first changes the Director recommended was an expansion in the number of separately-established infant departments and restoration of the title "Infant Mistress". Effected under a new regulation gazetted in November 1919, this was justified in the following terms:

> When attendance exceeds 500 children, the school becomes unwieldy and the Head Master is unable to give attention to all the grades - the lowest classes usually receive least attention and retardation often results. To overcome this problem and to secure higher efficiency [in Grades I and II], separate Infant Departments were established in such schools and placed in charge of women who have acquired special qualifications for dealing with young children. Their duties comprise most of those of a Head Master and deal specially with all matters concerned with the organisation, discipline and methods of instruction employed in their department.[83]

Reporting on other key developments in 1920, the Principal of the Training College referred to the establishment of two Infant Practising Schools - valuable adjuncts to the new *Scheme for Training Kindergarten and Sub-Primary Teachers* which reflected a blend of Froebelian and Montessorian principles and methods. [See the copy in Appendix A.] In turn, Inspector Longmore remarked upon the "satisfactory arrangement" of the curriculum and classes in infant

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[83] Director of Education's report for 1920, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1921, p. 22. The new regulation of November 1919 stated: "In a school of the 1st or 2nd Class a separate Infant Department may be organised under an Infant Mistress", whilst a year later Section B, no. 5 was amended to include Class III schools, PRO, GRG 18/134 - Regulations under the Education Act 1879-1946, vol. 2. See also Director of Education to Minister of Education, Infant Mistresses and Infant Schools, 18 December 1919; Circular re. duties of Infant Mistresses and Head Masters, 16 December 1919, PRO, GRG 18/2/3036

departments, whose semi-annual grade organisation was retained in the revised *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools*:

> The Course ... is that prescribed for Grades I and II [in 'ordinary' primary schools], and will occupy two years, the children being from 6 to 8 years of age. The Infant Mistress should so divide the work of these two grades as to allow of the formation of four classes, to be named Lower I, Upper I, Lower II and Upper II. As a rule the child should spend six months in each class.
> Where circumstance permit, children under 6 years of age may be formed into special Kindergarten and Montessori classes. In the January or July preceding their sixth birthday, they should be promoted from either of these two grades to Lower I. In Infant Departments, four terminal examinations are to be held during the year, those held in June and December being for the purposes of determining promotion.[84]

On this more solid base an infant school empire and ethos was rapidly constructed. Separately-established infant departments grew in numerical strength from thirteen in 1919 to thirty-five in 1939 (thirty in the metropolitan area and five in large country centres). With a significant rise in the birth rate over the next decade, and with large-scale immigration during the post-war decade swelling the flood of Grade I and II enrolments, by 1958 infant departments numbered seventy-nine and accommodated 60.4% of the pupils below Grade III within the state system. Correspondingly, the infant inspectorate tripled in size, and in 1959 Marjorie Mead was appointed to the newly-created position of Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools (Infant Schools) - becoming the first woman to rise above the rank of Inspector in the South Australian Education Department. Expansion of the 'sub-primary' sector also led to the opening of more Infant Practising Schools (re-named "Demonstration Schools" in 1961), whilst students were admitted in burgeoning numbers to infant courses in a second teachers' college opened in 1957, a third in 1963, and two others subsequently.[85] During the 1970s and 80s, a 'mini-bureaucracy' of early childhood specialists developed inside the Education Department, whose activities were directed at sustaining infant schooling as a distinct entity.

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[84] Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, Appendix II - Infant Departments, Adelaide, Government Printer, September 1920.
Note: In 1924 the number of terminal examinations was reduced to three; in 1938 to two. There was otherwise no alteration of the 1920 provisions until 1963, when the system of half-grades in infant schools was abolished.

[85] Reports of the Minister of Education, SAPP, no. 44, 1922, p. 23; 1959, pp. 9-10, 1960, p. 4; each additional year for the number of infant schools and enrolment statistics. For a review of infant school developments up to the late 1950s, see Lydia Longmore, 'A Retrospect', SA Teachers' Journal, 7:7, August 1957, p. 13; Marjorie Mead, 'The work of the Infant Teacher', EG (SA), 74:860, 15 March 1958, pp. 128-30

Accompanying this material growth, an *esprit de corps* and a cohesion of philosophy was cultivated amongst the women who supervised, assisted and staffed the infant schools. Major factors here included the specialised training student teachers received and their inspiration thereafter by Lydia Longmore's oft-repeated motto: "That we, who educate little children, may be able to give them the needed 'ray of light' to guide their footsteps in the path of knowledge and life".[86] The club formed for ex-trainees in 1924, "with the object of having pleasant reunions and of fostering the spirit of comradeship, which to us engaged in the work of education is strength", functioned alongside the Infant Mistresses' Club (formed in 1921 to discuss questions of school management and infant method) to reinforce unity of purpose and practice in the revivified infant departments. Solidarity was enhanced by 'the Gathering of the Clan' - the partly social, partly educational meetings of metropolitan infant school staffs, who maintained contact with country colleagues through an organised correspondence network.[87] Then, too, infant women forged alliances with others in primary and high schools - fellow members of the Women Teachers' Association, the Women Teachers' Progressive League and the Women Teachers' Guild, which actively campaigned on educational and industrial issues affecting their membership during the first half of the century. Further, Lydia Longmore, Elsie Claxton and their successors at senior levels of the education hierarchy not only guided and inspired the work in infant departments but used their positions to 'politick' on behalf of the sector.

Infant School Mothers' Clubs, the first of which was formed at Norwood in 1920, constituted yet another support group. At individual school level they raised funds for equipment and developed "friendly and sympathetic relations" with teachers, thereby bringing "untold benefits" to the children. However, with Longmore's motto incorporated into the hymn sung at every meeting, and its symbol a bluebird of happiness in a circle of unity, their collective Association (dating from 1926) also joined the political front to defend 'the empire' when occasion arose.[88] Since 1970, the sense of identity and ethos so carefully nurtured in the

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[86] Inspector Longmore's report, EG (SA), 37:419, 15 June 1921, p. 125

[87] Inspector Longmore's report, EG (SA), 40:455, 14 June 1924, p. 164; 40:458, 15 September 1924, p. 215

[88] 'An outline and history of the Association', Association of Junior Primary School Parents' Clubs of SA Handbook, pp. 1-3; The Infant School Mothers' Club Association (ISMCA) - research by Barbara Denman,

expansionist decades has been perpetuated by the Retired Infant Mistresses' Club, the Junior Primary Principals' and Teachers' Associations, and the Professional Association of Childhood Educators, while the Association of Junior Primary School Parents' Clubs proved a valuable ally in maintaining the fortifications that had to be erected around the infant school edifice as enrolments and the economy began a downward spiral.

For these organisations, much was at stake when, in the context of the Great Depression, the Education Enquiry Committee set up to investigate cost-saving measures contemplated abolishing the position of Infant Mistress; when several decades later another education enquiry chaired by E. L. Bean advised against giving independent status to infant departments and their principals; and when the 1969-70 Karmel Committee favoured the phasing out of separate infant schools in the light of recent developments in education.[89] First, there was the "very definite authority" given to infant mistresses by McCoy's circular of December 1919, which outlined their responsibilities vis-à-vis those of primary headmasters yet provided no basis for resolving the "friction, disharmony and loss of administrative efficiency" that ensued. Only with greater autonomy than their predecessors enjoyed were headmistresses of post-1919 infant departments able to produce the "excellent work" so admired by education officials, parents and the 1943-49 Bean Enquiry Committee, it was pointed out. Indeed, proponents argued, in order to acknowledge, reward and strengthen this link, but also to eliminate unnecessary duplication of administrative effort, infant departments should be established as entirely discrete institutions

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September 1975, AJPSCSA Scrapbook. In terms of its political activities, Denman notes that the ISMCA was dominated by its professional members (at each school the Infant Mistress was always Club President), with some decisions being unilaterally taken by various presidents and even by the Infant Mistresses' Club (IMC). For examples of the educational, industrial and wider political role performed by the IMSCA and women teachers' organisations in the years 1920-1950, see 'Women Teachers' Progressive League', (re. meeting with McCoy to discuss his plans to re-organise the education system, including with respect to infant schooling), SA Teachers' Journal, 5:7, February 1920, p. 118; 'Establishment of Infant Departments', SA Teachers' Journal, 11:9, September 1926, p. 233; L. Mounster (IMSCA Vice-President), Report on deputation to the Director of Education (re. possible abolition of the position of Infant Mistress for reasons of economy), 17 August 1931, cited in B. Denman, 'A search for identity', p. 4; PRO, GRG 18/2/844/1945 and 18/2/1744/1949 - files on representations made by the Infant Mistresses' Association and the Women Teachers' Guild for infant departments to be given the status of "Schools", and for the appointment of Senior Assistants to increase promotion opportunities for women teachers within the Primary Branch

[89] For details, see Second Progress Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education, recommendation 3 - Head Mistresses and Infant Mistresses; Minority Report submitted by W. J. Adey (Director of Education), SAPP, vol. 2, no. 69, 1931, pp. 8, 19; Final Report of the (Bean) Education Inquiry Committee, paras. 281-7, SAPP, vol. 1, no. 15, 1949, pp. 17-18; Education in South Australia. Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-70, paras. 8.8-8.15 and recommendations on separate infant schools, Adelaide, Government Printer, 1971, pp. 174-77

and the prestige of women at their helm correspondingly increased.[90] Extensive lobbying on this issue, however, secured no more than a name change to that of "Infant School" and some adjustment of primary and infant head teachers' respective powers in 1956.

Independent status for infant schools denied, at least their continued physical separation helped to preserve their distinctive pedagogy. From 1921 onwards, armed with a syllabus and special training which stressed a child-centred approach, women selected to head and teach in infant departments proceeded to transform them "from prison houses to houses of joy" (to employ the Director of Education's description in 1931). Inspector Longmore's reports of the 1930s made frequent reference to the "progressive spirit" underlying the work in these schools, the "sound principles" which characterised the methods used, the prominence given to child study, and the "greater freedom for the individual" towards which infant teachers aimed.[91] Departmental officers appearing before the Bean Committee in 1943 depicted infant schools as being "beautifully built, well lighted and ventilated, full of apparatus" and devoid of pressure on the children since

> formal teaching is introduced gradually after children have learned a great deal by spontaneous exploration of their surroundings, and the expression of their thoughts and feeling through special games, drawing, simple handwork and dramatisation. ... The infants are not trying to do too much. They can move at a reasonable pace, and the work is within their compass, thus permitting rich teaching. ... Testing is incidental and natural. All the foregoing makes it inevitable that the Infant divisions at present should be marked by more freedom and effectiveness than the later stage. Frequent conferences of Infant Mistresses, with free exchange of ideas and participation in common projects, have been very helpful and have kept alive the spirit engendered by the Montessori transformation, which opened the doors and windows of the infant schools to a new rapture.[92]

On becoming 'real scholars' in the 'big school', though, children encountered "a lot of difference in the teaching", the causes of which were summarised by Mavis Wauchope (Senior Lecturer in Infant Method, Adelaide Teachers' College):

1. The failure of teachers and parents to realise that a child's play is his real work.

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[90] For 1950s debate and decisions on this long standing issue, see PRO, GRG 18/2/4051/1952; 'Impasse solved - decision on desired status of infant schools', SA Teachers' Journal, 6:11, December 1956, p. 7

[91] See, for instance, Director of Education's report for 1939, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1940, pp. 10, 18

[92] Bean Education Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence, 1943 - Dr C. Fenner (Director of Education); Inspector W. V. Leach, PRO, GRG 18/171, Book 1, pp. 3, 31, 96

> 2. In many cases the Grade III teacher has been trained to deal with older children, and finds difficulty in adjusting his standards to a reasonable level.
> 3. Dingy, crowded and unsuitable classrooms.
> 4. The emphasis on examinations and class positions.
> 5. The very much overloaded curriculum.
> 6. The decline in parent-teacher co-operative work.
> 7. The "water-tight" compartment method of training students ... [so that Grade III teachers fail to] see how to link on with the work already done, and realise that the fundamental principles [of education] carried through from stage to stage.[93]

Moreover, she added to the Director's observation that in Grades III-VII there was "a certain amount of hideboundness in adherence to formal methods", primary schools were handicapped by their tradition of mass instruction and rigid discipline, whilst the teachers had "too much of their view on the work and not enough on the child as an individual".[94] Ever present in infant specialists' minds, Wauchope might well have added, was the prospect of their schools' comparatively new tradition being overwhelmed by the downward influence of primary schools' older one - just as was the case in Grades I and II of non-infant schools. But in the Bean Committee's opinion, the reverse should happen. The materials, methods and spirit of the infant departments could be more liberally introduced in the junior classes of undivided primary schools, while the "unhappy break" between Grade II and Grade III in departmentalised schools could be avoided if the principle of individual progression through the 'skill subjects' adopted by infant teachers was extended into the upper primary division.[95]

Lavish in its praise for the pedagogical innovations implemented in infant departments over the past few decades, the Bean Committee also approved the six-monthly arrangement of the curriculum and grades vis-à-vis the annual basis of primary school organisation, having taken into consideration

> a fact of cardinal importance: the younger the children the more significant are equal differences in age. A difference of half a year at the age of 6 is educationally more significant than a year at the age of 12. We have in mind not only items of knowledge, but maturity. ...[T]he difference in power, and in intellectual, social

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93 'Education Enquiry Committee', SA Teachers' Journal, 24:8, 22 September 1943, p.28; Education Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence - M. L. Wauchope, PRO, GRG 18/171, Book 2, pp. 274-5

94 Education Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence - Dr C. Fenner, Book 1, p. 33; M. L. Wauchope, Book 2, p. 273

95 Final Report of the (Bean) Education Inquiry Committee, SAPP, vol. 1, no. 15, 1949, pp. 7, 18

> and especially physical maturity, between children of 5 and children of $5^1/_2$ is considerably greater than it is over a period of a year at the age of 12.[96]

Further, the Committee viewed the formation of beginners into kindergarten classes, wherein they obtained "necessary experience of objects and processes as a preparation for the learning of symbols", to be infinitely wiser than the practice in non-infant schools of placing entrants in Grade I where they were immediately confronted with the three Rs taught by traditional methods.

Thus did matters stand at mid-century. Infant schools had become the norm with respect to young children's enrolment patterns, even if 'ordinary' seven-grade primary schools far outnumbered them. A body of educational expertise had been built up and promotion opportunities for female teachers within the Primary Branch increased in proportion to the establishment of separate infant departments. Women associated with these schools were imbued with a strong sense of personal commitment and sectoral loyalty. They also developed powerful support networks which were to stand them in good stead during the troubled times ahead. Lastly, although the quest for independent status was unsuccessful, a pinnacle was reached in terms of philosophical, methodological and organisational contrast between infant and other schools incorporating junior grades. As such, tension and conflict mounted in relation to 'this transition business' - the subject with which the remainder of the chapter deals.

BRIDGING THE INFANT-PRIMARY DIVIDE

By the early 1940s, crossing the infant-primary divide was the focus of much discussion amongst South Australian educationists. In the April 1942 issue of *The Guild Chronicle* (official organ of the Women Teachers' Guild), Gertrude Menear, an infant mistress, wrote with a view to provoking spirited debate on the "deep, tragic gap" between the infant and primary school systems:

> A child comes back to school in the new year thrilled with his promotion to the "big" school, but so often that joy is soon lost in worry.

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[96] ibid, p. 14

> There is a bewildering school assembly, different locations for each class "fall-in", a different system of directions, and a fascinating band which he isn't permitted to stand and examine.
> There is a curriculum (and often a teacher) that takes no account of the psychological fact that little children forget a tremendous amount in five weeks, and that it may take 6-12 weeeks for the child to regain completely that lost ground. ...
> There is the change from script writing to cursive. ... There is also the change from pencil to pen.
> Word building, which has previously predominated, now takes a very minor place owing to the large number of ridiculously hard "Look and Say" words to be taught from the early pages of the Adelaide Reader III.
> [This] Reader is so intent upon instilling morals at the beginning of the year that it neglects to grade its stories. This would be less of a difficulty, perhaps, if most teachers were not compelled to use it as a spelling book.
> [The] Arithmetic Book with its set week-by-week portion must be followed religiously because of weekly examinations. The result is that while the child is still at the "finger-counting" stage, he is exposed to large numbers of which he has no understanding or experience.
> Informal exercises and rhythmic games are displaced by the more formal drill, which demands steadiness and the curbing of curiosity.
> The leisurely following of the child's own interests in the Infant School, and even more so in the home, here changes to a demand for prompt obedience to an external authority and ... quiet concentration.[97]

In reference to the same 'business', witnesses appearing before the Education Inquiry Committee in 1943 spoke of "two types of school", a "break in the spirit of teaching and joyousness", the "great adjustments in so short a time" required of the child, "discontinuity in the work", and Grade III teachers saying: "we have to unteach what the children have learned". The principles upon which infant specialists based their planning (gradual building up, logical sequence, interest, the child's means of discovering by himself, never presenting too many difficulties at once) should be true of all teaching, it was claimed. Yet they did not characterise the approach in upper primary classes; nor that adopted by non-infant-trained teachers of Grades I and II in undivided elementary schools. Moreover, on starting Grade III, children were usually treated as if they were all at the same stage of development and had spent a common period in Grade II, when in reality there was considerable variation.[98]

According to the Superintendent of Primary Schools (W. T. Martin), however, there were good reasons for the curtailment of infant spirit and method when pupils transferred to the 'big

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[97] G. L. Menear, 'This Transition Business. The child promoted to the primary school', The Guild Chronicle, 5:2, 17 April 1942, p. 10. Also 5:3, 19 June 1942, p. 9; 5:5, 30 October 1942, pp. 10-12

[98] Bean Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence [hereafter referred to as Bean Inquiry Minutes] - Dr C. Fenner, q. 135, Book 1, p. 31; Florence Blake, qq. 221-3, 1252-5, Book 2, pp. 251, 255-6; Mavis L. Wauchope, qq. 1343, 1353-8, Book 2, pp. 268, 273-4, PRO, GRG 18/171

school'. Often their classrooms and equipment were not such as would permit Grade III teachers to produce the atmosphere of infant departments, he stated. In any case,

> Life is a more serious business for the child as he grows to the age of 8 years, which is the normal age for entering Grade III. ... So education acquires a sterner quality as the child advances from infant grades to primary classes, and teaching methods must of necessity change accordingly. There is more to be done and therefore the child cannot be allowed quite as much freedom. He must hurry up when occasion arises and the teacher must employ such methods as will make him hurry. This is all part of the character building which must go hand in hand with intellectual training.[99]

The Principal of Adelaide Teachers' College and Inspector Leach argued along similar lines:

> Although the process of education is continuous from beginning to end there are of course stages in the total process, and the detailed aims and methods entirely in place for the one are not necessarily applicable to the other. It is easier to ... make concessions in our infant grades because on the one hand the pressure of the teaching load is less and on the other hand the requirements and obligations of later life don't yet loom as prominently. ... It would be wrong for primary schools to imitate infant school methods. There are general and underlying principles common to all levels, but the children's characteristics also change and develop and each step requires appropriate conditions and guidance.[100]

But even these defenders of the primary system conceded that the 'break' was too sharp, too abrupt, especially in "fully graded schools", and joined infant personnel in suggesting means by which the transition from Grade II to Grade III might be made smoother for the boys and girls. In fact there was no shortage of ideas, nor of enthusiasm for recent initiatives such as more careful selection of Grade III teachers, infant and primary staff interchange visits, greater communication between infant and primary trainees at the Teachers' College, and the formation of a Transition Committee to recommend alterations in the curriculum and classroom practice so that the first year in the 'big school' entailed less adjustment and strain on the children's part.[101] Notably, though, no challenge was issued to the independent existence of infant departments, which Inspector Blake acknowledged had permitted "developments for which no

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[99] Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. T. Martin, qq. 301-2, Book 1, pp. 72-3

[100] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. Schultz, q. 395, Book 1, p. 110; W. V. Leach, q. 97, Book 1, p. 97

[101] For details of these suggestions and initiatives, see G. L. Menear, 'How infant schools might help to bridge the gap', The Guild Chronicle, 5:2, 17 April 1942, p. 11; 'This Transition Business. The Infant Mistresses'' Association reply', 5:4, 14 August 1942, pp. 10-11; Minutes of the Women Teachers' Guild Advisory Meeting, 9 September 1942 - 7. Transition Committee, Guild Chronicle, 5:5, 30 October, 1942, p. 4; 'Deputations (2) Curriculum' and 'This Transition Business. An infant teacher answers Miss Menear', Guild Chronicle, 5:6, 9 December 1942, pp. 4-6. Also: Bean Inquiry Minutes - M. L. Wauchope, qq. 1358, 1360, Book 2, pp. 274-7; F. Blake, qq. 1264-9, Book 2, p. 257; W. V. Leach, q. 380, Book 1, p. 97

corresponding change had been made in primary schools", to thus intensify the divide. Indeed, the Final Bean Report, tabled in August 1949, expressed more concern about the differences between the education provided in the infant grades of departmentalised and non-departmentalised elementary schools than about the "unhappy break" at the point of transfer to Grade III and related anomalies in current practice.[102]

In the next decade, the pressure of student numbers together with an acute teacher shortage and insufficient funds for renovating primary schooling along modern infant school lines left 'this transition business' to be resolved by cost-neutral measures. These included the introduction of a Cumulative Record Card with space for the Grade II teacher to make a statement regarding a child's attainments on promotion and to amplify their estimate of his/her personal qualities; exploration of further ways by which mutual understanding and closer co-ooperation might be developed between infant and primary teachers; and the retention of pupils for 2½ or 3 years in infant departments so as to fit them for the "quite different and much greater demands of Grade III". Otherwise, the hope that "the success and pleasure of the infant school would be carried up to the higher grades of the primary school" by the application of "somewhat similar methods" remained unfulfilled.[103]

Insufficient progress having been made towards eliminating the difficulties children encountered on moving into Grade III, in 1962 the SA Institute of Teachers (SAIT) called for another comprehensive enquiry into South Australian education and suggested that its brief include giving consideration to the questions: "Is the present division into infant and primary schools desirable and is it at the right point?" and "Is the changeover from infant schools to primary schools too abrupt?".[104] With a change of government, the appointment of such a

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102 Bean Inquiry Minutes - F. Blake, qq. 1261, 1263, Book 1, p. 257; Final Report of the Education Inquiry Committee, SAPP, vol. 1, no. 15, 1949, pp. 15, 18

103 PRO, GRG 18/2/4250/1949 - Cumulative Records in Primary Schools; 'Cumulative record cards. Testing and recording in the primary school', EG (SA), 66:767, 15 June 1950, p. 128; A. J. Milne (Challa Gardens Infant School), 'Transition to Grade III', Guild Chronicle, 5:6, 9 December 1942, p. 8; Gertrude L. Menear, 'This Transition Business', Guild Chronicle, 6:3, 26 June 1943, p. 8; Bean Inquiry Minutes - Dr C. Fenner, q. 417, Book 1, p. 33

104 Education Department of SA Registry files, ED 16/4/32/1962-63 - SAIT: Suggested comprehensive enquiry into education in South Australia

committee was deferred until January 1969. During the intervening years, historical differences between junior and upper primary schooling were blurred as a result of training programs for infant and primary teaching drawing closer together. Child development over the whole age span to secondary level was now studied by both group of trainees, supplemented by a focus on the particular age-range each was preparing to instruct. Each group also had some experience in the classrooms of the other's field of developing expertise. Then, too, the Enquiry Committee chaired by Professor Peter Karmel reported in 1971, the approaches to education pioneered by kindergartens and infant schools were beginning to spread to primary grades:

> teacher-dominated learning and its passive reception by silent children in serried rows have been abandoned as ineffective by teachers whose professional competence and energy have enabled them to apply newer learning theories.[105]

Infant specialists welcomed these concrete manifestations of their view that learning was a continuous process, but baulked at the Karmel Committee's recommendation that separate infant schools be phased out in order to remove the structural impediment to wider adoption of this principle and that of individual difference, which in turn would solve 'the transition problem'. Elaborating on its reasons for advocating the gradual integration of infant schools into the primary schools with which they were associated, the Committee stated:

> Continuous educational experience is more easily provided in an institution under single direction. The arrangements for liaison between infant and primary teachers do not appear, as they were outlined to us, to be very effective. ... Separate infant schools encourage the expectation that children entering primary classes proper will have attained a minimum standard, so discouraging adaptation to individual difference, and probably resulting in pressure on some children too early in their school lives... [Teaching] cannot be compartmentalised into infant methods and primary methods.[106]

Proceeding next to consider the arguments advanced for retaining separate infant schools, the Committee concluded that those related to specialist competence carried the most weight. Yet such advantage could be preserved by the employment of junior primary consultants serving a cluster of schools and by still making provision for specialisation at junior primary level during

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105 Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, Education in South Australia, Adelaide, Government Printer, 1971, p. 176

106 ibid

teacher training. The benefits claimed in connection with having discrete buildings and playgrounds for young children were equally attainable under a single head for both sections, the Committee opined. Furthermore, although the position of infant mistress was important, neither it nor that of infant teacher should be the preserve of women on the grounds of affording them employment and promotion opportunities in an otherwise male-dominated sector. As for the danger of a reversion to methods and forms of testing unsuitable for five to eight year olds were all grades to become the responsibility of a primary headmaster unfamiliar with early childhood pedagogy, the leadership training for them recommended elsewhere in its Report should safeguard the informal, child-centred approach which had characterised the best infant schools for many years.[107]

In response to the Karmel recommendations, infant school mothers' clubs across the State petitioned the Minister of Education for the *status quo* to prevail. The Retired Infant Mistresses' Association similarly wrote in defence of the existing infant-primary divide, whilst all but the two primary representatives on a SAIT (SA Institute of Teachers) committee reporting on the matter agreed that separately established and administered infant schools should be retained or created whenever justified by enrolments or on the basis of special need (in areas with a high incidence of social, economic and language difficulties).[108] The Director-General of Education hastened to allay the fears expressed by these groups:

> The prospects of any major step towards the integration of infant and primary schools, as recommended by Karmel, are remote at present. The success of such a change would be heavily dependent upon the achievement of a number of other interlocking aims of the Report such as the widespread reduction of school maximum sizes to the 600 pupils recommended ... and the introduction of a scheme of intake into infant grades which would positively encourage individualisation of instruction. In any case we are mindful of the splendid work being done in infant schools and any change would be considered only if it could be shown that significant additional benefits would be given to our children because of it.
> However, positive steps are being taken to improve consultation and co-operation between the administrative, consultative and teaching sections connected with primary and infant schools.[109]

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[107] ibid, pp. 175-7. See also: 'Submissions to Karmel Committee' (on pre-primary schooling, made by an infant teachers' sub-committee of SAIT), SA Teachers' Journal, 2:25, 8 April 1970, pp. 8-9

[108] SA Education Department Registry files, ED 32/4/56 - Phasing out of infant schools: Karmel Committee recommendations; 'Future of Infant Schools', SA Teachers' Journal, 4:19, 22 November 1972, pp. 14-16

[109] 'News and Notes: From the Director-General, "One Year after Karmel"', EG (SA), 88:1015, 1 March 1972, p. 56; Memorandum to Mistresses of Infant Method and Infant Mistresses (copy to Heads of Primary Schools), August 1971, ED 32/14/56

Reassured in June 1973 that the Department had no intention of implementing the Karmel recommendation at an early date, interested parties simply kept a watching brief on the situation. By the end of decade, though, population shifts which altered the age profile of various Adelaide suburbs, an overall decline in enrolments in consequence of changing fertility rates and interstate migration patterns, together with several years of economic recession, influenced the merger of some junior primary schools (as infant schools were re-named in 1975) with allied primary schools. Alert to corresponding losses in promotion opportunities for junior primary teachers, the dissipation of infant expertise, and reduced autonomy for Reception-Grade 2 principals to determine arrangements consistent with the learning needs of young children, the Junior Primary Principals' Association (JPPA) and school councils, staff and parent bodies wrote letters of concern to the Department throughout 1979. Backed by the Assistant Director of Curriculum-ECE, they reiterated the case presented to the Karmel Enquiry for retaining separate institutions catering for 5-7+ year olds, and urged that the question be decided on the basis of educational and industrial principles rather than economic considerations or strict reference to school size.[110]

In view of the renewed apprehension about the future of junior primary schools, the Department gave yet another assurance that the quality of these institutions was not in question and that there was no general policy for their dis-establishment. The matter had arisen out of the normal annual review of enrolments at individual schools, the Director-General of Education, John Steinle, indicated - not from concern to alter existing provision. On the contrary, as the official blueprint for South Australian schooling in the 1980s made clear:

> There is no single type of school which suits all purposes. The Education Department will continue to provide different models, such as R-2, R-7, R-12 and 8-12.[111]

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110 For details, see ED 32/14/129 and 131A - Establishment/disestablishment of junior primary schools, including clippings: 'Small schools set to merge', News, 2 November 1979; '3 junior primary schools to close', Advertiser, 5 November 1980; 'Junior primary parents are selfish - Principal, "Don't give up" says Bannon, Education Department says "wait and see" on school closure', Messenger Press Standard, 7 October 1981. Also: Junior Primary Schools - ideas circulated by the JPPA sub-committee formed in 1978 to prepare a submission to the Director-General of Education on the future directions of R-2 schools; Mrs Marilyn Olsen, Address to regional meeting of the Association of Junior Primary Parent Clubs at Ascot Park on 18 July 1979 (10pp. typescript), JPPA archives

111 Education Department of South Australia, Into the 80s. Our schools and their purposes, 1981, p. 17

Furthermore, open discussions had already taken place between himself, junior primary principals and the Personnel Directorate; and the JPPA had been invited to formulate recommendations on the issue in consultation with the Primary Principals' Association (PPA). Until their submission had been considered and a set of criteria and procedures for establishing/amalgamating schools was agreed among relevant parties, no further closures would occur. True to its promise, the Department did not act upon the 1981 Budget Review Committee's recommendation that savings be effected by "the dis-establishment, by wastage, of small junior primary schools", commencing with four such closures at the end of the year.[112] But only a temporary stay of execution was afforded to schools with decreasing pupil numbers in the broader context of education funding cuts and the Director-General's consciousness of "a need to ensure that resources available to the Department are used wisely and well". In late 1981, Steinle issued instructions that a number of R-2 schools be considered for disestablishment: "with the outcome, as might be anticipated when the tendency is to enrolment decline, to be a net reduction of junior primary schools".[113]

This rationale for moving towards a new round of junior-upper primary school mergers was entirely consistent with the concern of the 1980-81 Enquiry Commitee, chaired by Dr John Keeves, to secure greater cost-effectiveness in education. In not proposing to dismantle the system of separate junior primary schools altogether, Departmental policy also coincided with the Keeves recommendation (clearly influenced by early childhood submissions and witnesses) that "where appropriate" in the administration of primary schools, distinctions between R-2 and Grade 3-7 sections be maintained. As the Final Keeves Report explicated:

> it is essential for schooling to be viewed in terms of a series of stages ... related to the general stages of both concept development and physical and emotional development that are now well documented from research [and which] correspond,

[112] Director of Personnel to Director-General of Education, Procedures for the dis-establishment of schools with falling enrolments - Junior Primary schools, prepared for discussion by Policy Committee, 19 March 1979, ED 32/14/129. See also: Submission from JPPA on future directions of junior primary schools, 18 July 1979; JPPA position paper - Establishment and dis-establishment of junior primary schools in South Australia, June 1982, JPPA archives

[113] J. R. Steinle, Director-General of Education, to the Chairman, Keeves Committee, August 1981, ED 32/14/131A

> in broad terms, with the traditional phases of schooling that experience has led us to believe are useful in structuring a school system.[114]

It followed from a "necessity to think in terms of these stages of development and stages of schooling", the Report added, that "substantially different methods must be used in the instruction of children in junior primary classrooms from those used with older primary children", whilst if there was a lack of continuity in the work as students moved into upper primary grades, the problem should be tackled directly by means of R-7 curriculum planning - not indirectly through the integration of infant schools within primary schools as the Karmel Committee had recommended.[115]

Encouraged by the Keeves Committee's emphasis on the need for greater co-ordination across schooling levels rather than radical changes in structures during the next decade, the Assistant-Director of Curriculum-ECE identified various ways in which the issue of continuity had already been addressed:

> The replacement name [for infant schools], junior primary schools, indicates a change in relationship with the school, emphasising the place of the junior primary school within the total structure of the primary school.
> The School Council on which the principals, teachers and parents of both schools are represented has the responsibility for the total school management. Some schools have developed co-operative administrative styles to enable each principal to contribute to the total school. ...
> [C]ontinuity at school level [is also being effected] by joint in-service programs, staff interchange, curriculum development meetings across year levels, and combined parent association activities. ...
> Whilst the Early Childhood Curriculum Committee makes its specialised contribution to curriculum development, in its liaison with R-7 and R-12 curriculum committees, the work of these integrated committees, is contributing to continuity in curriculum.
> The Junior Primary Principal Education Officers [appointed to exercise leadership at a regional level in the wake of the Karmel recommendations to this effect], whilst having the oversight of junior primary schools, also contribute to staff development in primary and area schools. Advisory teachers with junior primary experience were introduced after Karmel to work specially in primary schools. ...
> In all these ways, the intentions of the Karmel Committee in enabling the leadership of infant mistresses to be available across schools and continuity of education to be strengthened are being promoted.[116]

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[114] Education and Change in South Australia. Final Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, January 1982, p. 78; R6.5 (a), p. 84

[115] ibid, pp. 77-8, 83-4

[116] Assistant-Director of Curriculum-ECE to Director-General of Education, Question from the Keeves Committee re. the integration of infant schools into primary schools: the Karmel Report recommendation, 12 August 1981, ED 32/14/131A. See also Responses to Education and Change in South Australia from the SA

Incidentally, the organisation within 'alternative units' established at Rose Park and Prospect schools also reflected the 1980s' enthusiasm for vertical integration - even if younger children were still regarded as 'the infants' and the numbers involved were few in the overall scheme of things.

Although not specifically intended to do so, the subsequent disestablishment of junior primary schools with low enrolments, accompanied by consolidation of R-2 and Grade 3-7 pupils and staff on a single site, further served to overcome the problem of transition from junior to real studenthood in its re-defined form: discontinuity in education. The sense in which removal of the physical and administrative divide between some junior and upper primary schools in the 1980s functioned to provide a more continuous educational experience for children is perhaps best illustrated by citing the arguments mounted in opposition to the converse exercise at this time, viz, organising very large R-7 schools into two separate entities. As the School Council Chairperson wrote in response to the proposed re-establishment of a junior primary school at Elizabeth East in 1984, majority opinion favoured no split between the 'big school' and the 'little school' because the 'one school concept' promoted unity amongst both staff and students in addition to "making transition from Year 2 to Year 3 easier". Similarly, a parent protested that if the Government proceeded to restructure Salisbury Downs Primary School (being one of nine R-7 schools with a projected enrolment of approximately 600 children in October 1984):

> There would not be a smooth transition between Year 2 to Year 3 as now exists. This would tend to isolate children ... within the school, creating barriers between children of different age groups. The community within the school area would become fragmented as a result ... and the school would lose some support from parents.
> I can only hope common sense prevails, and the school remains as one united entity.[117]

By contrast, 'this transition business' was not prominent on the agenda of those confronted by the imminent closure, amalgamation or co-location of certain junior primary schools, which in

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Institute of Inspectors of Schools, presented to SAIIS members on 30 March 1982 and forwarded to the Deputy Director-General designate, 8 April 1982, ED 25/1/628; Draft of Education Department submission to the Keeves Committee for discussion at the Cord 4 Conference (including consideration of alternative age-level structures in the school system), ED 25/1/594

117 Chairperson, Elizabeth East Primary School Council, Recommendation re. re-establishment of a junior primary school, 10 May 1984, ED 32/14/129C; F. Marjury, Salisbury, to the Minister of Education, 4 May 1984, ED 32/14/129G

Table 1.1 Primary school enrolments, 1971-1990

R-7 enrolment figures as at 1 August

Year	Enrolment
1971	155 070
1973	150 994
1975	150 428
1976	149 988
1977	150 587
1978	148 483
1979	145 301

R-7 enrolment figures in:

	February	July
1980	139 270.0	142 290.0
1981	134 062.3	137 895.9
1982	128 680.5	132 599.5
1983	122 738.3	127 377.5
1984	117 835.3	121 636.3
1985	113 627 8	117 606.0
1986	111 739.3	115 907.7
1987	109 103.2	112 892.9
1988	108 751.6	112 896.1
1989	109 958.7	117 756.4
1990	112 068.0	119 537.0

Note: From 1981 student data is expressed in full-time equivalent terms.
From 1983 February figures and from 1984 July figures include special school data.

Source: Annual Reports of the Director-General of Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1980-81, Figure 13, p. 21; SAPP, vol. 5, no. 44, Table 3.2, p. 30

combination with unified teacher education programs and rationalisation in the central administration generated fears that infant school ethos, practice and traditional career avenues for women teachers would be undermined. In the early to mid-1980s, affected school councils, parents and junior primary staff sought to defer if not prevent the demise of individual R-2 schools, while the Teachers' Institute, the JPPA and PPA worked to establish a standard approach to what was "a lengthy, complex and most sensitive issue at school-community level", and to influence the conditions of re-organisation. However, with no reversal of the responsible economic and demographic trends [see Table 1.1 preceding this page for enrolment figures], at the end of the decade there was grudging appreciation on the part of formerly vociferous opponents that "restructure" was "a necessary evil".[118]

The process of school closures and establishment over the period 1978-90 effected an overall reduction of nine in the number of separate junior primary schools (from a total of 84 to 75), but opened up primary administrative positions to women - albeit not in proportion to those lost at early childhood level and "much to the ire of some [R-7 male] Principals".[119] The continued opportunity to specialise in infant education during teacher training, and the ongoing existence of an Early Childhood Curriculum Committee and Directorate within the central bureaucracy, reflected the strength of support for the notion that R-2 was a distinctive stage of schooling requiring developmentally-appropriate curricula and methods for five to eight year olds. Yet increasingly this stage of childhood and education was conceptualised as part of a continuum and as not entailing separate provision unless enrolments at a particular school were too high to be managed efficiently under a single adminstration. In short, the wall dividing junior and upper primary schooling which had rendered the transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3 problematic for children attending infant departments/schools developed significant cracks in the 1970s and 80s. As a result, fewer children experienced difficulties in becoming 'real scholars'.

CONCLUSION

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[118] JPPA President's Report, 18 May 1989, JPPA archives. For draft policy statements, guidelines, and correspondence between concerned parties and the Education Department, see ED 32/14/129A-G; JPPA correspondence files 1983-85, 1988-90

[119] SAIT Vice-President to JPPA President, SAIT Executive views on issues affecting junior primary schools - 4. Promotion positions, 23 July 1985, JPPA archives. Statistics obtained from Annual Reports of the Director-General of Education, SAPP, no. 44, 1980-1990/91

Chronological age as a fundamental organising principle of graded schooling in South Australia was first and most obviously manifest in the establishment of separate infant schools and the designation of seven (later eight) years as the upper limit of junior studenthood. In detailing these developments, several themes emerged. Specialist provision for young children and the linked fortunes of women teachers were subject to fluctuation according to a combination of factors: demographic, economic and educational. The history was additionally pervaded by the politics of gender, and by tension between the age standard imposed for transfer to 'primary school proper' and attainment-based pupil classification and promotion. The design and operation of elementary schooling divided into infant and primary stages, most notably where this entailed physical separation, constructed a new category of school-aged childhood, viz, the 'junior' as distinct from 'real' scholar; and the 'little school-big school' concept which remains part of everyday language and experience today. The philosophical, methodological and organisational differences between infant and primary schools, which had their roots in nineteenth century policy and practice but were most marked in the mid-twentieth century, produced difficulties for children at the point of transition from junior to upper primary grades in large schools: a problem ultimately resolvable only by the same exercise of bureaucratic authority as had constructed it.

Towards the end of my period of study, as early and middle childhood educational traditions began to merge, the infant-primary divide was increasingly more theoretical and ideological than material. With an across-the-system perspective, rationalisation, co-ordination and co-operation between sectors becoming key elements of administrative discourse and service delivery, it seems that developmental psychology afforded the main justificatory evidence for retaining distinctive provision for children in the first years at school whilst earlier generations of infant specialists struggled to prevent the ethos and empire of yore from passing into the realm of mythology. As for recent cohorts of five to eight year olds, "restructure" in the form of co-located infant and primary schooling coupled with other initiatives which drew the two sectors closer together meant that their experience of junior studenthood and transition to Grade 3 assumed fairly common proportions. That is to say, school type (R-2 or R-7) became a less significant differentiator of early childhood 'lived reality'. Above all, Reception, Grade 1 and

Grade 2 pupils' experience was of being 'the little ones', who on turning eight years of age would be elevated to the status of 'real scholars' in the 'big school'. But this was not the sole aspect of childhood to have been constituted and re-constituted by the imposition of bureaucratically-defined age norms and school structures and processes. The next chapter examines historical debate, policy and practice with respect to the minimum age at which children qualified for studenthood - an equally if not more significant life course transition.

CHAPTER 2

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN? HISTORICAL DEBATE, POLICY AND PRACTICE WITH RESPECT TO AGE OF ENTRY TO SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

In their instructive article on the history of age-graded schooling in America, David Angus, Jeffrey Mirel and Maris Vinovskis identify a decrease in the range of children's ages on entry to school after 1940 as one of the key factors which contributed to today's taken-for-granted level of age-grade homogeneity.[1] Writing in collaboration with Carl Kaestle, Vinovskis further observes that despite the significance of the transition from home to school for the social construction and experience of childhood, and perennial debate over the appropriate timing of this event, historians have made surprisingly little effort to study changing attitudes about when children should go to school and why. The authors proffer several possible explanations for this neglect: lack of information (notably for the nineteenth century), an assumption that there have been no major changes in school commencing age, and a greater concern with older children than younger ones.[2] Gillian Weiss makes much the same point in the introduction to her account of young children and the regulation of their entry into school life in South Australia during the period 1851-1915.

Weiss's analysis of the gradual exclusion of very young children (under the age of five) from public schools confirms the insights generated by Dianne Snow's New South Wales study and that of Kaestle and Vinovskis in reference to nineteenth-century Massachusetts.[3] However, in

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1 'Historical Development of Age Stratification in Schooling', Teachers' College Record, 90:2, Winter 1988, p. 231

2 'From Apron Strings to ABCs: Parents, Children and Schooling in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts', American Journal of Sociology, Volume 84 Supplement, 1978, pp. 39-40. See also Vinovskis' critique of efforts to study school attendance patterns in the 19th century without considering the importance of changes in the age of school entry: 'Trends in Massachusetts Education 1836-1860', History of Education Quarterly, vol. 12, Winter 1972.

3 Gillian Weiss, ' "A Very Great Nuisance": Young children and the construction of school entry in South Australia, 1851-1915', History of Education Review, 22:2, 1993, pp. 1-17; Dianne Snow, ' "But they're only babies": policies and practice marginalising the very young from NSW state schools, 1788-1920' in Noeline Kyle (ed.), Women as Educators in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Australia, Wollongong, University of Wollongong Press, 1989, pp. 67-83; Carl Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis, 'From Fireside to Factory: School entry and school leaving in nineteenth-century Massachusetts' in Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), Transitions. The Family

contrast to the Australians' reliance mainly on traditional historical sources, the American pair adopt the approach of revisionist historian Michael Katz in additionally making extensive use of quantitative sources to provide evidence about fluctuations and differences in school entry patterns over time and according to such variables as urban/rural community, sex of child, parent occupation, family size, ethnicity and religion.[4] Complementing this work are studies of historical rationales for determining age of entry to school in England, which similarly focus upon the issue of state vis-à-vis parental responsibility for the care and education of infants, but also the relationship between their attendance and an array of contextual factors (social, economic and demographic; schooling purposes, organisation and practices; changing intellectual ideas about young children and early childhood education).[5]

Drawing on the literature surveyed above, yet extending the period of analysis beyond its main concentration on the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this chapter details changing patterns of school entry in South Australia - from colonial times when age of admission was unregulated, to the universal practice of enrolment at age five by the late-1960s. It also examines the recurrent themes as well as shifting terms of reference in official and public discourse about the minimum age at which children should be compelled or permitted to attend school, or engage in formal learning (these being seen as distinct though related questions by contributors to the debate). It will be argued that the progressive narrowing in the range of children's commencing ages during the course of the late-nineteenth and twentieth century was largely a consequence of efforts to create an efficient system of state schooling, with chronological age as its central organising principle. Furthermore, akin to the situation revealed by studies of the home-school transition in other regions, any theoretical justification for designating a particular age of entry was secondary to practical considerations.

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and the Life Course in Historical Perspective, New York, Academic Press,1978, pp. 135-185 and 'From Apron Strings to ABCs', op cit.

[4] See Michael B. Katz, 'Who Went to School?', History of Education Quarterly, 12:3, Fall 1972, pp. 432-54

[5] Examples include Maureen McGee and Tynette Wills, When Should Schooling Begin?, Occasional Papers in Education no. 3 - Policy Studies of the Early Childhood Planning Project, Trenton, New Jersey State Department of Education, 1978; R. Szreter, 'The origins of full-time compulsory education at five', British Journal of Educational Studies, 13:1, 1964, pp. 16-28; Nanette Whitbread, The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School. A history of infant and nursery education in Britain 1800-1970, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972; Martin Woodhead, 'School starts at five...or four years old? The rationale for changing admission policies in England and Wales', Journal of Education Policy, 4:1, 1989, pp. 1-21

"FOR AGE IS NO DISTINCTION IN EDUCATION": YOUNG CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL, 1836-1874

In the early colonial period of South Australia's history, parental rights over their children were clearly assumed, and education, as a private responsibility, was organised according to familial means and preference. Many of the colonists' young progeny had little or no formal instruction, although they might acquire the basics later in life. Reuben Gill's experience constitutes one example:

> He was a Cornishman and a miner, and, like those born of poor parents [in the 1820s], received but a scanty education. On reaching manhood, however, he saw the advantage of being able to read and write, and, by dint of hard study and a little friendly help, managed to master 'the three Rs', and to secure a fair smattering of scientific knowledge.[6]

Joseph Verco (b. 1 August 1851) was typical of children from wealthier backgrounds. After learning the alphabet at his mother's knee (she pointing to the letters whilst reading her newspaper, Bible or some other book), at the age of seven he was sent to Miss Tilney's young ladies' seminary for twelve or eighteen months. He next attended a boys' school kept by Mr. Francis Haire, proceeding from here in June 1863 to the renowned Adelaide Educational Institution (commonly known as Young's School) where he was moved up to the most advanced class after a year.[7]

Whilst Joseph's age on entry to school coincided with that regarded as proper in Western European tradition,[8] infants as young as eighteen months or two years were included in schooling provision from the beginning of white settlement in South Australia. Witness Walter Bromley's account of the pupils he taught using British and Foreign School Society materials in the colony's first school, conducted on Kangaroo Island:

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[6] 'Reuben Gill' in G. F. Loyau (1885), Notable South Australians, Adelaide, Austaprint (facsimile edition), 1978, p. 61

[7] 'A Colonial Boyhood: some recollections of Sir Joseph Verco, 1858-1867', South Australiana, 2:2, September 1963; 'An Adelaide boy a century ago', Education Gazette (SA), 77:894, 15 March 1961, pp. 51-57

[8] For details of the origin of seven years as the 'proper' age for embarking upon formal education, see Adolphe E. Meyer, An Educational History of the Western World, New York, McGraw Hill, 1965, ch. 1-3 or the summary in Ken Hopkins, 'At what age should schooling begin?', Educational Magazine, 39:4, 1982, p. 4

> Altogether I had 24 under my care, none exceeding the age of 10 or 11; and out of the whole number, only two could read fit to be heard - and only one of them knew anything of figures - and I had seven young ones who didn't know the letter A: but I have the pleasure to say that [before relinquishing the position in May 1837] all the Boys and Girls of the 1st class could work long division; and the rest, with the exception of a child only two years old, could spell words of 2, 3 or 4 letters.[9]

In Adelaide it became common practice for infant males to be educated along with the daughters of 'respectable' citizens in small private-venture schools run by women. Thus did one advertise her services in the daily press:

> Miss Nihill begs to inform the inhabitants of Adelaide that she has opened a day school for young ladies and boys not above four years old, and trusts that her unremitting attention to the improvement of the pupils committed to her care will merit their approbation as well as their patronage.[10]

Such enterprises and their working-class counterparts, the 'dame' schools, were widely supported later in the century when children below the age of five were precluded from attendance at government schools. Meanwhile, in the two decades following the state's initial move to regulate the market by licensing teachers (1851), private schools continued to attract a goodly number of under five and five to seven year olds in comparison with the schools licensed by the Board of Education.

Table 2.1 Ages of scholars, 1861 and 1871

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[9] Letter from Captain Walter Bromley, Adelaide, 4 June 1837, Quarterly Extracts from the correspondence of the British and Foreign School Society, no. 44, 31 December 1837, p. 5, BFSS archives, West London Institute of Education

[10] Southern Australian, 18 August 1838

	Under 5 years			5 and under 10 years		
1861	male	female	total	male	female	total
licensed schools	474	436	910	2614	2106	4720
private schools	342	268	610	1050	1419	2469
total	816	704	1520	3664	3525	7189
1871						
licensed schools	433	362	795	4018	2974	6992
private schools	371	418	789	2122	2318	4440
total	804	780	1584	6140	5292	11432

Source: Statistical returns of schools, SAPP, 1860-61, no. 98; Census 1871 - School returns, SAPP, vol. 2, 1872, no. 9a, p. 3

The foregoing statistics indicate that, whether by choice or necessity, many parents sent their offspring to school at an early age. Nor, when the colonial state intervened in education in a limited way, were they prevented from doing so. Certainly the 1847 Ordinance (No. 11) 'for the encouragement of public education' provided no financial incentive for teachers to instruct infants, since its second clause stated that the Governor's authorisation for payment of a salary could only be procured where the parents of at least twenty children between the ages of **six** and sixteen desired their tuition, and where at least one Justice of the Peace certified his knowledge of these families' residence as genuine and also attested to the moral habits of the teacher. However, in his evidence to the 1851 Select Committee 'appointed to consider the propriety of bringing in a general education measure', W. A. Cawthorne (one of the colony's leading educationalists) proposed that the ages of pupils be "without any restriction, for age is no distinction in education". Accordingly, he continued, "infant schools could be provided for, which the present Ordinance practically excludes".[11] The Committee unequivocally endorsed Cawthorne's sentiment. Its sixth recommendation, "that the ages of scholars should not be limited", was subsequently translated into legislation without comment.

[11] Report of the (Legislative Council) Select Committee on Education, SAPP, 1851, Appendix M, p. xiii

Table 2.2 Ages of children attending licensed schools, 1853 - 1873 (end of year totals)

Year	5 yrs. & under	6 - 10 yrs.	11 - 14 yrs.	15+ yrs.
1853	19.5%	60%	18.75%	1.75%
1854	18.0%	58%	21.5%	2.5%
1855	19.5%	56.5%	21.5%	2.5%
1856	19.75%	57.5%	20.5%	2.25%
	6 yrs. & under	7 - 10 yrs.	11 - 12 yrs.	13+ yrs.
1857	28.75%	48.5%	14.25%	8.5%
1858	31.5%	45.2%	16.1%	7.2%
1859	32.1%	48.5%	13.3%	6.1%
1860	33.6%	48.7%	12.4%	5.3%
1861	31.6%	47.6%	13.7%	7.1%
1862	37.0%	42.8%	13.4%	6.8%
1863	36.7%	42.6%	14.5%	6.2%
1864	36.3%	41.6%	15.8%	6.3%
1865	37.4%	42.4%	14.5%	5.7%
1866	28.5%	51.0%	13.5%	7.0%
1867	25.1%	49.7%	16.3%	8.9%
1868	24.1%	50.4%	17.1%	8.4%
1869	22.6%	50.8%	17.8%	8.8%
1870	22.7%	48.6%	18.7%	10.0%
1871	22.6%	47.6%	19.2%	10.6%
1872	22.2%	49.1%	18.3%	10.4%
1873	23.4%	48.3%	17.5%	10.8%

Source: Board of Education Reports, SAGG, 1853-1873

Clause 5 of the Education Act assented to on 2 January 1852 and which remained in force until 1875 stated that: "instruction shall be given to scholars, unexclusively, who shall be of age and capacity to receive it".[12] Under these permissive conditions, there being no agreement as to what the phrase "age and capacity to receive it" meant in practice, the proportion of children 'of more tender years' steadily increased in the decade 1855-65 before settling at approximately one quarter of the total licensed school population during the late 1860s and early 70s. [See Table 2.2 preceding this page.]

On several occasions following his appointment in 1851, the Inspector of Schools, Dr William Wyatt, attributed this preponderance of young children in almost every licensed school to the withdrawal of older children "for the sake of their services at home".[13] Regarding the actual presence of children below the age of seven years in classrooms, W. S. Moore, Master of the licensed Pulteney Street school in Adelaide, explained to the 1868 Select Committee on the Working of the Education Act that

> when a parent has three or four more children in the school we cannot refuse to take another of this age in. It is too young to take care of itself, and must be with its brothers and sisters.[14]

As Weiss points out, this reference to the need for younger children to attend with their older siblings is suggestive of the conclusion reached by Katz and by Kaestle and Vinovskis in the North American context: that schools often provided a mother with some place to send the child when she went out to work.[15] Alternatively, Mr Stow cited to parliamentary colleagues his own case of being sent to school at the age of four years "because he was so much trouble at home", whilst the Hon. A. Sandover contended that "many mothers would feel an interest in sending children at that age if it was only to get them out of the way while performing the [house]work

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[12] Victoriae Reginae No. 20. An Act to Promote Education in South Australia, by aid towards the erection of Schools and the payment of stipends to Teachers

[13] Reports of the Board of Education, SAGG, 27 October 1853, p. 709 ; 21 February 1856, p. 123

[14] Report of the Select Committee (House of Assembly) on the Working of the Education Act, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 56, 1868-69, Minutes of Evidence, q. 771

[15] M. Katz, 'Who Went to School?', p. 44; C. Kaestle and M. Vinovskis, 'From Fireside to Factory', p. 163

she necessarily had to do".[16] Weiss further posits that for working class children, starting school fairly young would enable them to enter the work force at an early age but also to achieve a basic level of literacy and numeracy - a strategy which one politician argued ought to be particularly encouraged among farming families since their children's labour was required so soon.[17]

Whatever the reasons for the influx of very young children into licensed schools, official attitudes towards them were ambivalent. On the one hand, Inspector Wyatt commented approvingly that beginning school at the age of five years or under might, in the end, ensure a longer period of attendance than the average of just two years; and that the youngest pupils showed more signs of advancement than older children whose attendance was less regular.[18] Given, too, the "terrible falling off" in attendance after the age of eleven (a fact to which Wyatt frequently alluded in his reports to the Education Board), it was considered all the more important to "get hold of the children early". Moreover, an English authority was quoted as saying:

> An ordinary child of three years old is far better at school than idling in the gutters, or already tasting the fatal liberty of the streets, which cause, after poverty and parental indifference, prevents, perhaps more than any other, the education of so many youngsters.[19]

On the other hand, much concern was expressed about the inefficiencies wrought by the inclusion of such young children in a developing system that made no special provision for them. In the context of its evolving model of 'the good school', the nascent educational bureaucracy shared Moore's view that children under the age of seven were "a very great nuisance" - augmenting the teacher's labours and disrupting the instruction of 'real' students above this age. "Many an intelligent master or mistress", it was repeatedly said, "is obliged to devote much valuable time in taking pupils through the alphabet, which elsewhere would be

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[16] SAPD, 1873, pp. 674, 1253

[17] SAPD, 1873, p. 674 - Mr Pearce

[18] Reports of the Board of Education, SAGG, 4 March 1858, p. 178; SAPP, no. 41, 1866, p. 6

[19] Mr Brodie, Committee of Council on Education (England), quoted in Board of Education Report, SAGG, 3 June 1869, p. 755

taught in an infant school or at home"; and the "unavoidable necessity of thus frittering their time in conducting mere infants over the threshold of knowledge" had the effect of "lowering the maximum standard of progress".[20]

The participation of so many youthful scholars in state-supported schooling during the 1850s and 60s, then, was tolerated by Wyatt and the Board of Education to the extent that it offset the large proportion of children aged between five and fourteen years who were noted as not attending any school or whose parents withdrew them "before they obtained the rudiments of a fair education", together with others whose unpunctual and irregular attendance plus long intervals of entire absence frustrated attempts at orderly teaching.[21] In addition, the flexibility of school entry age allowed under the 1851 Act evidently suited parents well, whilst the classroom presence of little ones served the useful social purpose of protecting them from moral danger on the streets should they not be otherwise supervised. Yet with the number of infants at licensed schools growing apace, by the late 1860s separate and distinctive arrangements for their instruction were considered a necessary concomitant of their continued attendance. But, as the previous chapter notes, the Board had no power to actually establish schools. The other option, of course, was to eliminate the 'nuisance' by exclusionary measures - a move officials did not contemplate, given their over-riding concern to secure maximum enrolments and keep children in school as long as possible.

Against this background, and with a view to redressing perceived inadequacies in schooling provision under the 1851 Act, Parliament debated two Bills (in 1871 and 1873 respectively) before passing a third one in 1875 whose compulsory attendance clause signified a major turning point in the construction of school entry age.

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[20] Reports of the Board of Education, SAGG, 3 November 1853, p. 721; 2 March 1854, p. 176; 15 February 1855, p. 131; 4 March 1858, p. 178

[21] Report of the Select Committee on the Working of the Education Act, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 56, 1868-69, p. 1; Minutes of Evidence - Dr Wyatt, qq. 31-32

"IF THERE WAS NO AGE FIXED THE TEACHER WOULD BE OBLIGED TO RECEIVE BABIES IN ARMS": REGULATING SCHOOL ENTRY, 1875-1915

By the early 1870s the benefits of a 'thoroughly national' system of education, free to all who could not pay, unsectarian, and compulsory wherever schools existed, were commended in support of an expanded state role in the schooling of colonial youth. The legislation formulated to give effect to this 'one best system' notably set age parameters for attendance at school, thereby defining the limits of state involvement vis-à-vis parental rights and responsibilities with respect to children's care and education. Between what ages compulsion ought to apply, however, was a controversial question.

Although less of an issue than school leaving age (if amount of discussion is a measure), the minimum entry age of seven years specified in the 1873 and 1875 Bills generated lively parliamentary debate and motions to amend the relevant clause to allow five or six year olds to attend. For each of these ages, a precedent existed elsewhere that informed the opinions of politicians. Five years was fixed in the English legislation of 1870. Six years was the permissible age but seven years the compulsory age designated in the 1872 Victorian Act upon which the South Australian draft legislation was consciously modelled. Seven years had long been the accepted school commencing age amongst the upper classes in European society. Notwithstanding these considerations, the arguments advanced in favour of one age or another mostly turned on practicalities, yet also reflected prevailing middle-class notions of 'the young child' and his/her place in family, school and wider social context.

Thus, for example, moves to reduce the age standard proposed by the Government were opposed on the grounds that having to travel up to two miles every morning was too physically demanding for "a little bit of a toddler of six years old". Worse, the emotional cry resounded, to compel the attendance of five year old children "who might be of a delicate constitution" was "nothing short of cruelty".[22] Suggestions that the proviso "children of not less than five years may attend school" be added to the compulsory clause, or that it be amended so that the minimum permissible age conformed with the six years fixed in Victoria, drew the further

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[22] SAPD, 1873, pp. 315, 1393; SAPD, 1875, c. 668

criticism that precocious development would be encouraged. Moreover, some objected, the resultant increase of 'toddlers' in classrooms would "necessitate a number of female teachers" or else "prevent the master from doing his duty to the other scholars" - not to mention add to the cost of education in return for a negligible improvement in literacy and numeracy rates (since "in no part of the world were children of five or six found to be very forward", Mr Krichauff declared).[23] Only if infant schools were established, wherein the youngest pupils could be instructed "in a suitable manner", ought any lowering of the age specified in the Bill be mooted, several other members opined.

The counter case argued by those who considered that there was an age under seven at which children might begin school consisted of four main points. First, given that the Act was especially intended to benefit the working class, their children should be permitted (but not necessarily compelled) to attend at a young age because "parents could not keep them at school till they were 17 or 18" - their labour being essential to the family economy.[24] Relatedly, it was acknowledged that many working-class children did start school considerably earlier than the proposed statutory age, and that this was "a great convenience" to parents - just as it was where three or four older siblings attended. Then, too, Mr Smith contended that numbers of bright children were capable of going to school at five years of age and it would be "a hardship to exclude them", whilst Mr Landseer was of the opinion that all children could "get over a good deal of the drudgery of their education" if the lower limit of compulsory attendance was reduced.[25]

Third, apart from the simple belief that seven years was too late to begin at school, concern was voiced that in contrast to the 1,724 children under five and another 1,624 under six year olds attending schools in 1872, "hardly any of this age would avail themselves of the system" if

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[23] SAPD, 1873, pp. 327, 674. Note: As Weiss points out ("A Very Great Nuisance", p. 2), the emergent model of 'the good teacher' was heavily biased in favour of males, who were assumed to be best fitted to teach the higher branches of learning to older students between the ages of seven and fifteen and boys in particular. Women were preferred to instruct younger children and girls, but all three groups (female teachers, girls, and boys under seven) were not highly regarded within the fledgling profession and educational bureaucracy.

[24] SAPD, 1873, pp. 675, 1253

[25] SAPD, 1875, cc. 668, 525

seven years were set as the minimum. The "very important fact" that these 3,348 children represented a significant portion of the colony's total school population was one members were bound to take into consideration before confining the education to children over seven, Mr Boucaut averred.[26] Besides, Mr Lindsay replied to the argument that more female teachers would be required to instruct infants and so avoid their disruption to the 'real' business of teaching older pupils:

> most of the teachers had wives or daughters, often both, who assisted in the school and would be quite competent to take charge of children between five and six years of age.[27]

Finally, Mr Angus thought that if citizens were to be taxed £90,000 annually for the education of the colony's youth, then parents ought to have the same privileges as were currently enjoyed. That is, they should be allowed to send their children to school "at as early an age as they liked, or as soon as they were fit to be sent from home". Pursuing the implications of this point, Mr Stevenson objected to the introduction of a permissive provision into a compulsory clause and stated that it made no sense to say that infants might go to school unless the teacher was compelled to receive them. The alternative of not defining a minimum age at all was quashed by Mr Stow, in whose view Clause 13 of the 1873 Bill quite properly fixed seven years as the youngest age for school entry. "If there was no age fixed", he warned, "the teacher would be obliged to receive babies in arms".[28]

Stow's sentiments were evidently widely shared. Consistent with the schooling habits and attitudes towards children of their own class, rather than those of the labouring poor, politicians adhered to seven years as the lower limit of compulsory attendance when passing Clause 20 of the 1875 Education Act. Nonetheless, younger entrants were not excluded from the schools. The question as to whether children should be admissible at five or six years was eventually resolved in favour of the former age - but not younger, lest the elementary schools become nurseries (to quote the Attorney-General). The 1875 Act also made provision for infant

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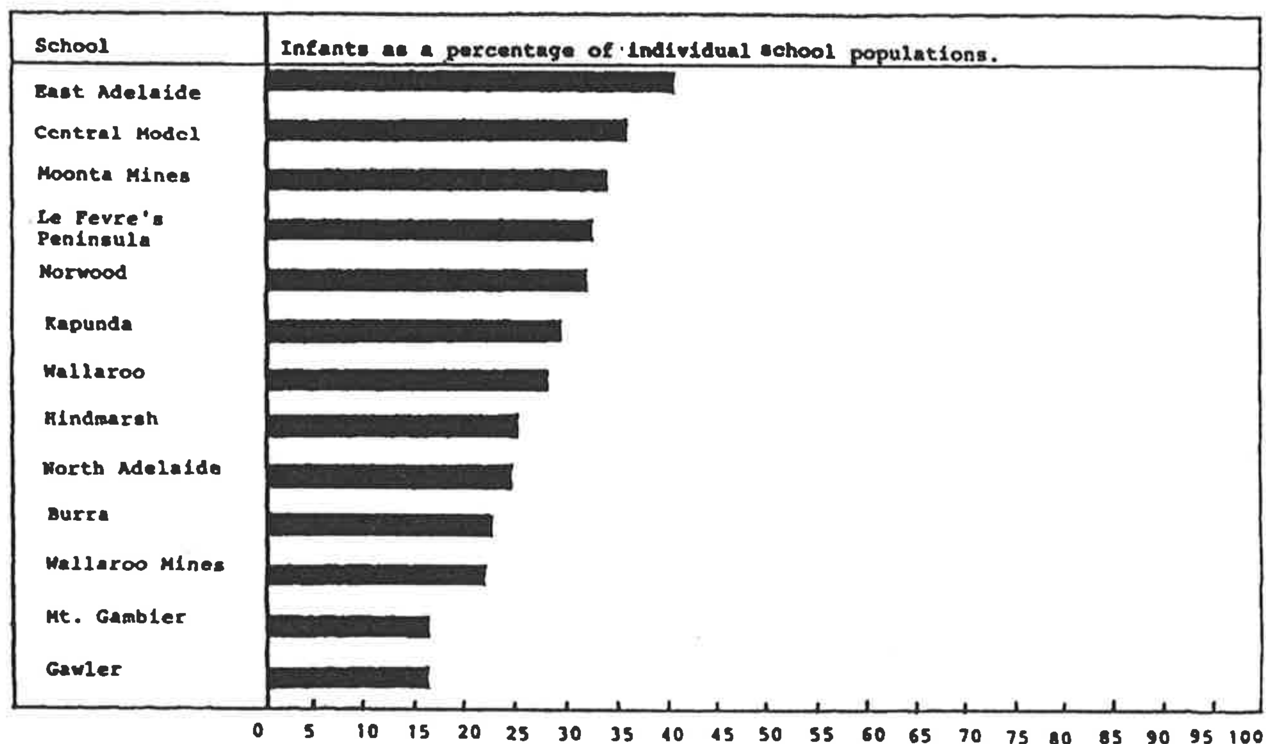
[26] SAPD, 1873, pp. 367, 674, 675. See also SAPD, 1875, c. 668 - Mr Krichauff

[27] SAPD, 1873, p. 675

[28] SAPD, 1873, p. 674

Figure 2.1 Percentage of infants in selected schools, 1880



Source: Gillian Weiss, ' "A Very Great Nuisance": Young children and the construction of school entry in South Australia, 1851-1915', History of Education Review, 22:2, 1993, p. 9

(Statistics obtained from: Report of the Minister Controlling Education for 1880, SAPP, no. 44, 1881, pp. 49-53)

schools, and, in fleshing out the deliberately skeletal legislation, the 1876 Regulations of the newly-constituted Council of Education placed no restriction on age of entry to these departments of large public schools. Children over the age of seven, however, were not allowed to remain in them.[29]

By such device, the competing views of legislators and marketplace realities with respect to school entry age were reconciled. Thereafter, attendance figures were re-categorised, with 'infants' being grouped as under five years and five to seven years. This suggests that schooling authorities, like Parliament, regarded five years as the dividing line between 'mere babies' and 'junior scholars'. In turn, seven years apparently signalled the onset of 'school-aged childhood proper'. Any who evaded the compulsory clause and therefore started school 'late' were soon designated a problem - one that was to assume equally significant proportions as commencing school 'too young' when the model of efficient state schooling was further refined.

Children were not just differentiated more precisely by age in the language of schooling at this time. Their school entry patterns began to diverge according to whether an infant school was nearby (and affordable) or not, and these differences persisted well into the next century. Moreover, in the two decades after Clause 20 of the 1875 Act came into force, there was a radical change in the age profile of scholars at government schools. Children under compulsory school-going age were an increasingly small percentage of the whole elementary school population. Although children under seven constituted up to 41 per cent of the population in individual schools with an infant department [see Figure 2.1], the total number of under-fives was not large and declined from 908 in 1878 to 192 in 1891.[30] As Weiss indicates, by 1882 children under five constituted only one per cent of government school enrolments, and when this is compared with the much higher percentages a generation before it seems that working

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[29] Regulations 53 and 54 of the Council of Education under the provisions of Act No. 11 of 1875, SAGG, Gazette Extraordinary No. 2, 7 January 1876, p. 40

[30] Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 35, 1879, p. 9: SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1892, p. vii

class perceptions of an appropriate starting age had steadily risen from a three to four-year-old level to settle at about age five.[31]

This trend towards a narrowing of school commencing ages to around five years in large schools is well illustrated by the case of Hindmarsh. From Table A.1 in Appendix B, it can be seen that over the period 1882-1895 the percentage of under-fives admitted to the infant department dropped from 35.6 to a mere two per cent. The percentage of children entering at age five rose from 24% in 1882-86 to 66.5% in 1892-95, and whilst the percentage who began at six years remained approximately one-quarter of all pupils enrolled, the percentage entering at seven years or older declined from 18.4 to 2.5 per cent. A closer analysis of the Hindmarsh Infant School statistics reveals a minimal percentage difference between boys and girls entering at two and three years, and at seven years or older. Boys, however, were more likely than girls to start school at the age of four, five and six years (except in the period 1882-86, when there was a negligible gender difference between those admitted at age six). More significant variations are apparent, though, on examining entry patterns by parent occupation. Table A.2 (Appendix B) shows that the sons and daughters of skilled and unskilled workers were far more likely than those from middle-class backgrounds to start school earlier than both the permissible and compulsory ages for attendance.

Wherein lies the explanation for the declining practice of sending under-fives to public schools, which, on the figures published in the Minister of Education's Annual Reports, is particularly noticeable between 1886 and 1891? Weiss suggests that the trend may have been assisted, even instigated, by unofficial discouragement of very young children on the part of individual (non-infant) schools or teachers and some Inspectors. The odd inspectorial comment does indicate a feeling that there was no educational or other benefit to be derived from attendance prior to age five, whilst Mr Noyé, the head teacher at Willunga (south of Adelaide) was probably not alone in refusing "to take children on any pretence except they are within three months of five years old".[32] The Education Department, however, attributed the decrease in under-fives at public

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[31] G. Weiss, "A Very Great Nuisance", p. 9

[32] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence, q. 4261, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882. See also Senior Inspector Dewhirst's statement that children of five, but not

schools to parents choosing to send their younger children to a private school or else to keep them at home.[33] What it failed to acknowledge was that the very circumstances of state schooling in the late-nineteenth century almost certainly contributed to such decisions. For, in contrast to the more informal and flexible arrangements in small, cheap and 'inefficient' private establishments, the classroom routines, strict discipline and hours of state schooling placed a heavy strain on children 'of tender age'. As Chapter 1 notes, there is little doubt that young children attending schools without an infant department (that is, the majority) were instructed in the same manner as older ones. Nor were the classes in infant schools at this time "patterncards of progressive practice", to quote Weiss. Moreover, when Regulation 157 of 1885 specified that children over five years of age in infant departments were subject to examination according to the program fixed for the Junior Division in other schools, the "great wear" imposed by "having to work children up" would have been similar to that on Class I pupils as described by the Headmaster of Norwood Model School.[34]

As the economic slump of the mid-1880s in South Australia deepened into a depression, the rapid downturn in attendance rates amongst under five year olds within the state system might further be linked to the inability of many more parents than previously to afford the 4^{d} per week fee charged for the instruction of children under eight years of age, especially in instances of also having to find 6^{d} per week for older siblings still under compulsion.[35] With the worsening economic climate in the 1880s also, many infant departments were closed - partly due to insufficient student numbers, but mainly because they were considered too expensive to run. Denied access to specialist provision for children under five, parents in these districts frequently opted not to send them to the state school until they were older.

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younger, would be better off at school than in the streets, qq. 4723-24, and Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1879, p. v

[33] Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, p. vii

[34] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 4012-18, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882

[35] Pavla Miller notes that between 1883 and 1887 the proportion of children receiving free places in state schools more than doubled - increasing from 10.8% to 23.7% of those in quarterly attendance. Long Division. State Schooling in South Australian Society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, pp. 65-66

The Education Department thus had no need to officially prevent the attendance of children below the age of five: the workings of its model of efficient schooling, unofficial exclusionary measures and the virtual demise of infant departments in combination with economic conditions produced the same effect. It is therefore somewhat surprising that when the 1891 'free education' Act affirmed five years as the youngest permissible age for entry to school, the bureaucracy immediately acted to formally preclude under-fives from gaining admission.[36] Some parents responded by providing false birthdate information when seeking to enrol their 'under-age' child - a strategy which the Department instructed head teachers to counter by requiring a birth certificate or duly authorised written statement. Those children in classrooms subsequently found to be ineligible for school had their names struck from the Register and were told not to return until "of age". In numerous instances, though, particularly in small rural schools whose very existence depended on 'keeping up the numbers', children younger than five attended anyway and head teachers apparently colluded in this.[37] Inspectors were wont to overlook such cases in light of the Department's current commitment to extending educational facilities throughout the State - no matter how remote, tiny and widely-scattered a community might be. In the Adelaide metropolitan area, by contrast, one apparent motive for adhering firmly to a 'youngest age' of five was to curb the use of public schools as a form of day care.

According to Markey, the number of women in the Australian workforce doubled in the 1880s and by 1891 women represented one quarter of urban wage earners.[38] Miller notes in reference to the official figures for Adelaide and its suburbs that regardless of social claims about women's primary role, the workforce participation rate amongst females aged 15-60 grew from 28.4% in 1881 to 32.9% in 1891. By 1911, she calculates, 27.2% of all women over fifteen

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[36] Victoriae Reginae No. 507, 1891. An Act to further amend the Education Act, 1875. PRO, GRG 18/173 - Education Department Acts and Regulations. Note: From 1892, 1(b) of the Directions printed at the front of each Admission Register stated that "Children under five are not to be admitted to school". Previously it was written that "except in Infant Departments, children under five are not to be registered" (which did not further preclude their attendance). This instruction grew out of the Council of Education ruling: "Children under 5 years of age. Resolved that children under this age may attend school for the present. The names of children under the age of 5 years are, however, not to be entered in the School Register." See Council of Education Minutes, Minute no. 1901, 26 February 1877, PRO, GRG 50/1, vol. 8

[37] See, for example, SAPD, 1895, p. 1532 - Mr Shorter.

[38] Ray Markey, 'Women and labour 1880-1900' in E. Windschuttle, Women, Class and History: feminist perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978, Sydney, Fontana/Collins, 1979, pp. 84-5

were engaged in paid labour (notwithstanding any who did so on a casual basis, not reflected in the Commonwealth Census statistics).[39] Mellor observes that the need for supervised child care increased in proportion to the number of women in paid work, and that even for mothers working in their own homes some relief from the distraction of 'wee mites' must have been helpful. Yet few creches were available, or affordable. (At the South Adelaide Creche, which catered specifically to "women who go out to work by day to earn their living", children were washed, fed and amused between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. for two pence per day - a relatively high fee in comparison with the school fee of 4$^{d.}$ per week charged for infants in South Australia prior to the 'free education' Act of 1891.)[40] Moreover, with the tightening of school attendance requirements and increasingly effective administration of the law in this regard, compulsory school-aged siblings were less available to mind younger children in the home. Free kindergartens and privately-run nurseries were more than a decade away; the alternative was to send under five year olds to a cheap, 'inefficient' private school (which education officials were at pains to eradicate) or commit them to a relative or neighbour's care. Otherwise, as one working mother in Sydney described:

> "Yes m'm, [I go out to work] mostly everday. Either washin' or cleanin'. What do I do with the children? Well, yer see it's like this. The lidies where I go won't have no youngsters about the place, so I have to leave 'em 'ere."
> "Outside? Well, you know, I couldn't leave the door open, so I 'ave just to lock them out." And there they were [recorded the early kindergartener whose question elicited the foregoing response], three grubby mites, sitting on the narrow curb, with their feet in the gutter.[41]

The exclusion of 'mere babies' from the state school system thus conflicted with parents' desire for safe child minding and imposed particular hardship on the labouring poor.

While administrative policy and social practice were being drawn into alignment with respect to not enrolling children before they turned five, attention also focused upon those whose entry to

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[39] Pavla Miller, Long Division. State schooling in South Australian society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, pp. 86-7; Table A.4 (reproduced from W. A. Sinclair, 'Women at work in Melbourne and Adelaide since 1871', Economic Record, vol. 57, 1981, p. 345), Appendixes, p. 372

[40] Elizabeth J. Mellor, Stepping Stones. The development of early childhood services in Australia, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, pp. 32, 53-4

[41] Quoted in M. Anderson, 'The story of the Kindergarten Union of New South Wales', Sydney Kindergarten and Preparatory Teachers' College Journal, no. 18, 1938, p. 20

school was delayed until they reached the compulsory age of seven or even later. As early as 1876, Inspector Dewhirst commented in reference to the scholars he had examined:

> the numbers present in the Junior Class, the ages of which may be supposed to range from five to seven, are considerably less than those of the First Class, whose ages may be regarded as extending from seven to nine, with a mean of six in the one instance and eight in the other. This indicates that parents are not sufficiently alive to the advantages of sending their children to school at an early age.[42]

Elaborating in his evidence to the 1881-83 Education Commission, Dewhirst (and several other witnesses) told how children coming to school at seven years instead of five or six left themselves inadequate time to be prepared for the Standard of Class I, or to pass the Compulsory Standard before turning thirteen (the upper limit of compulsory attendance).[43] Initially a child entering school at age seven was considered to be capable of covering the Junior work in the first six months or so of their mandatory placement in Class I. However, as the curriculum and grades became more thoroughly systematised, the amount of examinable knowledge increased, and the dynamics of payment-by-results pushed up attainment standards, such 'late starters' were seen to be at a disadvantage.

Expressions of concern about tardy entrants were also linked to overall attendance patterns, notably among working class children whose irregularity and short period of stay at school remained a problem from the viewpoint of schooling and welfare authorities.[44] Further, in an attempt to render the instruction in Class I more efficient, and in recognition of the fact that not only were children in junior classes compelled to be promoted to this grade at seven years of age but many came to school at five, in 1890 a two-year preparatory course was designed.[45]

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[42] Report of the Council of Education for the thirteen months ending 31 December 1876, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 34, 1877 - Inspectors Reports, p. 10

[43] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 3567, 3642-43, 4719, 4722, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882

[44] For details, see Ian Davey, 'Patterns of Inequality: school attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in John Hurt (ed.), Childhood, Youth and Education in the Late Nineteenth Century, History of Education Society of Great Britain, 1981; Kerry Wimshurst, 'Child labour and school attendance in South Australia, 1890-1915', Historical Studies, 19:76, April 1981, pp. 388-411.

[45] Education Regulations, SAGG, vol. 6, no. 50, July 1890, p. 65. Regulation 132 - Junior Division actually read: "The course for this class is divided into two parts. As a rule, children will not be promoted to Class I until they have reached the full age of seven years; but as many come to school at five years of age it appears necessary to provide for more than one year's instruction in the Junior Division. It is understood, however, that such children as are seven years old will be promoted if they satisfy the inspector in either standard".

This action lent weight to Dewhirst's earlier call for children's attendance to be made compulsory at five years instead of seven. Adding to the pressure on legislators to reduce the statutory age for entry to school, a census taken in 1889 by the Adelaide Board of Advice listed only forty per cent of five to seven year olds in the city area as attending public and private schools. The colonial census of 1891 found a similar percentage of under-sevens to be "uneducated".[46]

Over the next two decades, whilst educators continued to complain of those coming at seven that "by the time we have eradicated their rather confirmed habits and ideas formed in early life it is time for them to leave again", the desirability of children starting school at five years of age was enhanced by the wider application of Froebelian kindergarten methods in 'baby classes'.[47] With the introduction of training for infant teachers early in the new century, too, headmasters of large city schools began to use Visiting Day each year as a forum for advising parents to send their children as soon as possible after turning five so they would have the advantage of "two years' good educational grounding under a kindergarten system of teaching". Thus did Mr Pavia of Norwood School inform one such gathering of visitors:

> When a child comes at seven, he must be put onto formal work at once, and compelled, as it were, to work hard to attain the recognised standard before he left the infant school at the age of eight years. Other little ones came at five. They had several years in which to learn the formal work. The teacher could take them slowly, adapting the steps to the developing mind, and weaving in between happy times and much kindergarten work. Therefore such children could have that joyous experience which was their due of childhood, and could gain in their development something which older children must miss.[48]

Concomitantly, the Director of Education, Alfred Williams, drew the attention of Parliament to the existing two and a half year range in children's school commencing ages, which he declared

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[46] Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1889, p. 28; Census of 1891, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 74, p. 87

[47] 'Education Notes' - report by Mr W. T. Shapter (Headmaster of the suburban Richmond school) to parents on visiting day, The Register, 29 August 1908, p. 13. In praise of teaching the youngest pupils according to 'the kindergarten principle', see 'Dr Cockburn on the New Education', The Register, 29 May 1890, p. 4; the Minister of Education's speech in opposition to a proposed levy of 1s. per week on children under seven so as to reduce overcrowding in state schools, SAPD, 1895, p. 904; 'Pleasant paths of learning', The Register, 5 April 1900, p. 4; Reports of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1905, p. 13 and vol. 3, no. 44, 1908, p. 4

[48] 'Education Notes - starting school young', The Register, 17 June 1911, p. 10

"considerably increased the difficulties of infant teachers". If all normal, healthy children were required to attend at six years, he added, the 'machinery of school' would be placed on a more rational basis and operate more smoothly.[49] At their Annual Conference in 1911, the South Australian Public Teachers Union (SAPTU) indicated that:

> We also favour the proposal to extend the school-going age from six to fourteen years. ...This will bring us into line with practices in other countries, and give us eight years to do the work, which is now compressed into six. It will give us more time in which to make deep and lasting impressions on the minds of our pupils, while making the work lighter for both teacher and scholar.[50]

At least one contemporary observer, though, objected to the push for a single starting age of five or six being motivated by the quest for 'rational efficiency' rather than having its basis in educational theories. Bureaucrats and teachers, he wrote, "view the increase in average attendance as part of the goal, and not [the children's] physical and intellectual welfare together".[51]

Given a steady decline in the number of children enrolled at South Australian government schools, from a record high of 63,138 in 1901 to less than 53,000 in 1910, securing an increase in average attendance was indeed prominent on the Department's agenda. For instance, Director Williams devoted most of his 1907 Annual Report to discussing the "unsatisfactory state of affairs" revealed by official figures on the progress of public education since the turn of the century. [See Table A.3, Appendix B.] The 13.6% decrease in students registered on state school rolls over the six years to 1907, he noted, was closely matched by a 14.4% reduction in private school enrolments. Moreover, as the figures issued by the Commonwealth Statistician in 1908 were to confirm, similar conditions prevailed in the eastern States (New South Wales, Queensland, and especially in Victoria where the numbers in public schools decreased by 21,000 between 1902 and 1906 according to the table Williams produced).[52] Using a diagram

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49 Report of the Minister Controlling Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1909, p. 13

50 'Teachers' Conference proceedings: reforms advocated', The Register, 5 July 1911, p. 7

51 'Letter to the Editor', The Register, 4 September 1908, p. 3

52 Report of the Minister Controlling Education, Appendix A - Director's Report, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1908, p. 12; 'Teacher and Pupil - population and enrolment', The Advertiser, 11 July 1908, p. 7

Figure 2.2

Graph showing the correspondence between the birth-rate, taken in periods of six years, and the number of children instructed in each year from 1896 to 1906

GRAPH, showing the correspondence between the birth-rate, taken in periods of six years, and the number of children instructed in each year from 1896 to 1906.

Number instructed shown by full line;

Number of births in periods of six years;

Source: Report of the Minister Controlling Education - Director's Report for 1907, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1908, p. 13

[reproduced on the preceding page] to demonstrate that "there is a correspondence between the total number of births during successive periods of six years and the number of children enrolled in our schools during the sixth year from the end of each period", the Director suggested that the steady expansion of the state system up till 1901 had been arrested by the declining birth rate - a subject which had attracted much recent comment.[53]

Together with a decrease in the density of the population in outlying districts, he elaborated, diminishing enrolments in consequence of the diminishing birth rate made the administration of education more difficult and the cost of instructing each child more expensive:

> [W]hile the Department is using every effort to bring educational facilities within the reach of all children in the State, it is faced with the serious problem of finding teachers for an increasing number of very small [half-time and provisional] schools. ... Last year [1907] there were 8,623 **fewer** children instructed than in 1901 for an increased [overall] cost of £362.[54] [original emphasis]

Provided that greater efficiency resulted from this increased expenditure, Williams concluded, there were no grounds for anxiety. But if the falling off in pupil numbers continued, as he predicted it would for some years to come, the situation could prove "embarrassing". Here, then, was another reason to support lowering the compulsory age for school attendance to six years whilst encouraging entry at five, and the raising of the leaving age to fourteen. Such amendment to the compulsory clauses in 1915 did in fact restore educational progress. Following only slow growth in the four years leading up to the passage of the legislation, in 1916 enrolments jumped by 4000 to finally exceed the level of 1901.

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[53] Director's Report for 1907, op cit.
Note: In his Presidential Address to the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society (Annual Conference, University of Tasmania, September 1982), Ian Davey observed: "Williams was right. During the 1890s there was a spectacular decline in the Australian birth rate. Whilst this was partly due to changes in marriage patterns and the age structure of the population, most of the decline was caused by a reduction of fertility within marriage - between 1891 and 1911, the average size of completed families fell from more than 7 to 5.25. ... As Hicks in *This Sin and Scandal* shows, this caused enormous concern among doctors, clergymen, politicians, publicists, editors and many others who believed that the decline in fertility, the slow population growth and rapid urbanisation at the turn of the century threatened the future of the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia. These fears culminated in the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth rate in New South Wales in 1903, chaired by Dr Charles Mackellar, to investigate 'the effects of the restriction of child-bearing on the well-being of the community'." (author's typescript, p. 2)

[54] Director's Report for 1907, p. 12; see also 'Statistics showing progress from January 1st, 1876, to December 31st, 1907', p. 11, reproduced in Appendix B

During the course of the 1911-13 Royal Commission on Education and in parliamentary debate on the 1915 Education Act that this inquiry spawned, the subject of school entry age attracted wider discussion than ever before. Williams reiterated to the Commission his opinion that school attendance should be compulsory from the age of six years. But, having been impressed by the English and American kindergartens he visited in 1907 whilst on an official tour, he also considered that children of five or younger could be admitted to infant departments, where they

> should be kept mainly at play and singing and interesting games that will develop their powers without their knowing it, and they could be happy all the time. ...They would then be prepared to go into the primary school, and all the children in the primary school would work up the one age, six, and move forward from there.[55]

Pavia, in turn, reaffirmed the Teachers' Union position on the need to alter the compulsory age to six years and to encourage entry at five when the child was "at its impressionable stage". Senior Departmental officers and teachers further called for a uniform commencing age of six to be fixed so as to resolve the problem of seven-year-old school beginners raising the average grade-age in junior classes and posing difficulties in the matter of promotion. For, in cases of children who entered "somewhat late", a conflict arose between consideration of their scholastic 'backwardness' and the fairness or wisdom of keeping them "for a long time associated with the little children".[56]

On the other hand, the medical profession and several members of the Royal Commission echoed previously published lay opinion that sending a child to school before the age of seven was prejudicial to its health and physique. Exception might be made where kindergarten instruction was available, one doctor conceded, but seven years was quite early enough to begin 'the ordinary curriculum' in a general public school, "with all the mental and physical strain involved in it, and the seclusion which, to a certain extent, it necessitates".[57] Expanding

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[55] Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence, q. 4033, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1912

[56] ibid, Appendix F - Education Office reply to 'A statement of the sentiments and opinions of teachers in the service of the Education Department' (supplied by the Executive of the Teachers' Union, 12 January 1912). See also Inspector Charlton's evidence (q. 4914) regarding promotion in the lower classes, which he referred to as "the great bête noir of the teachers".

[57] Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence - Dr S. Rogers, q. 5572; also qq. 5597-5600, 5648-51; Dr A. Lendon (medical adviser to the Education Department), qq. 5761-65, 5799; W. Ramsey Smith (permanent head of the S.A. Department of Public Health), qq. 5825-28, SAPP, vol.

upon the latter point, Lillian de Lissa, Principal of the Kindergarten Teachers' College, tempered her view that children were ready to enter primary school at the age of six with the observation that such kindergarten classes as existed in state schools were not true kindergartens: they were too big and the teachers were inadequately prepared.[58]

Any move to formalise and thus extend the Department's practice of admitting children a year or two earlier than the current attendance requirement was therefore again seen as being conditional on appropriate educational provision for infants, whilst seven years was still commonly regarded as the age at which serious learning began. The bone of contention, then, was whether the coincidental statutory school-going age should be reduced. Persuaded by the medical evidence tendered to it, the Commission did not think so. Yet, being equally convinced of the advantages of children spending up to two years in preparation for 'ordinary school life', it did not suggest that five and six year olds be refused admittance.[59] In short, the status quo should prevail. When the matter came before Parliament two years later, however, a compulsory starting age of six was determined upon and in accordance with Departmental Regulations children remained eligible for entry at five. Notably, these age parameters for commencing at school have not since been permanently altered, and over the next half-century children's ages on admission narrowed to within the new limits.

AND SO THE CHILDREN MOSTLY CAME 'ON TIME': SECURING A SCHOOL COMMENCING AGE OF FIVE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Minister of Education, Mr Vaughan, prefaced his outline of the attendance provisions in the 1915 'consolidating measure' with the statement:

> We alone among English States consider that six years, beginning with the child's seventh birthday, and terminating with his thirteenth, are sufficient to equip him for making his way in the world, and for joining in the great competition between the races of mankind.[60]

2, no. 27, 1912. The letter to the Editor printed in The Register, 4 September 1908, p. 3 is a good example of the same position being argued by a member of the public.

[58] Final Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 8179, 8198, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 75, 1913, p. 26

[59] Final Report of the Royal Commission on Education, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 75, 1913, p. vi

[60] SAPD, 1915, p. 799

He also drew on turn-of-the-century child-saving rhetoric to assert that children who came to school at seven were "usually from inferior homes" and hence least able to afford to lose a year's teaching. More significantly, their life on the streets up to this age gave them opportunity to develop into "youthful larrikins". Some politicians, though, unimpressed by Vaughan's social efficiency and social control arguments, opposed lowering the compulsory starting age to six years on the grounds that it would exacerbate overcrowding in schools, add to building construction, classroom equipment and teacher training costs insofar as special provision for infants was deemed necessary, and prove inimical to children's general health and physical development.

Two other themes pervaded the 1915 debate in parliament on requiring children to attend school a year earlier than hitherto. Reminiscent of points raised in discussion of the school attendance clause in 1875, several members contended that it was not the duty of the state to take charge of infants younger than seven - in effect, "to run wholesale nurseries". Indeed, in the view of Messrs. Robinson, Allen and Peake, to "still further seize the child and take it out of the house and drag it to the school" was both unnecessary, given the numbers already being sent at an early age, and contrary to parents' right to have control of their progeny.[61] A second set of arguments hailed back to 1895, when it was proposed to levy a fee of 1s. per week on children under seven in order to reduce overcrowding in state schools. If seven years remained the compulsory starting age, some politicians predicted, this would have the same effect as the (rejected) motion twenty years before: closing down small schools, particularly in country districts where only eight or nine scholars attended and a large proportion of them were younger than the statutory age. This concern led into extensive discussion of what actually constituted 'school-going age' in the Bill, since in another section it was proposed to establish primary schools wherever at least six children aged five to fourteen years would attend. Once this clause was passed, Mr Ryan claimed, "we practically affirm a principle that the age of five shall be the compulsory age for school-going".[62] The clause in question merely gave scope for

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[61] SAPD, 1915, pp. 1218, 1512-13

[62] SAPD, 1915, p. 1406

extending educational facilities in outlying sparsely-populated areas of the State, it was quickly pointed out, and the designation of five years for this purpose was not to be confused with the age for compulsory attendance.

Objections duly dealt with, the Government's original proposal that compulsion apply to children at age six if there was a school within one mile of their home passed into law; as did a clause adding the proviso: "Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to disentitle a child who is not between the ages of six and fourteen years to attend a public school, unless prohibited by regulation from attendance".[63] Under current departmental regulations, children were permitted to attend at five years - indeed up to a year younger, except that their names were not to be entered in the School Register until they turned five. But with an increase of 12,000 primary school enrolments in the last four years of the Great War, the aforementioned proviso had to be invoked in instances where schools across metropolitan Adelaide found it impossible to accommodate all the children seeking admission - particularly at mid-year.

In initial response to the problem of having "nowhere to put additional scholars, even the sheds being already occupied by classes", exacerbated as it was by an acute shortage of teachers, head teachers were issued with a Circular which stated:

> The Hon. the Minister of Education has decided that admission of scholars as per Regulation XVII, 6 (new XIX,1) to schools already overcrowded shall be confined to children of the compulsory age, viz, six years or over. This applies only to children who are not at present enrolled in any school. Children under six years of age who have already enrolled will be allowed to continue their attendance.[64]

With no promise of improvement on the temporary arrangements made to relieve the situation until the education vote could be increased, in 1919 the Government contemplated a further option: amending the 1915 Act "so as to make the commencing age seven instead of six where

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[63] Georgii V Regis, A.D. 1915, No. 1223. An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to Public Education, Section V, clauses 41(1) and 44. Note: The Government's commitment to establishing schools in 'scattered districts' was given effect by the enactment of Clause 30.

[64] Circular to Head teachers, June 1918 (as cited to infant mistresses who were granted permission to refuse admittance to new scholars under the age of six owing to limited space in the school), PRO, GRG 18/2/1455 - Submissions according to Regulation XVII (6). See also the Director of Education's memorandum of 31 May 1918 recommending this course of action, GRG 18/2/1331, and further applications in GRG 18/2/1223, 1335, 1462, 1658

necessary".[65] A summary of the oppositional case assembled by the SAPTU Executive is worth quoting at some length, not least because it usefully locates dominant teacher opinion in contemporary social and educational context:

> For nearly twenty years the Teachers' Union strove to secure the following reforms: (1) Extension of the school-going age; (2) Compulsory attendance on each school day. These were obtained under the 1915 Education Act. Owing to the abnormal conditions occasioned by the war (2) has never been rigidly enforced, and the percentage of attendance is little, if any, higher than under the old Act [of 1905] which required only four days' attendance per week. For the same reason, no doubt, hundreds of exemptions have been and are being granted to children under fourteen, so that the extension of the school age from 13 to 14 is but a partial gain. The only real gain was the added year from six to seven, and this is now also placed in jeopardy by the proposed amendment.
> The proposal looks innocent enough: "The Minister shall have the power to exclude children under seven from overcrowded schools".
> Who will decide whether the school is overcrowded, and furthermore, what constitutes overcrowding? Even if the minimum of 120 cubic feet were taken as the basis, the great majority of our schools would be overcrowded, and it is thus easily seen what enormous power the proposed amendment would give to an unsympathetic or parsimonious Government.
> Apart from being a distinctly retrograde step from an educational standpoint, it would entail hardships and create anomalies.
> 1. The curriculum provides for eight school years. Children entering at seven would not reach Grade VII before the age of fourteen, and would thus lose the opportunity of entering a high school.
> 2. Bright children would also be debarred from competition for such exhibitions and bursaries as have an age limit.
> 3. In contiguous localities there might be the anomaly of children on one side of the street having to attend school at six years, and on the other side at seven. This would add still further to the difficulties of enforcing the compulsory clause; nor should one set of children be penalized to the extent of two years' schooling.
> 4. Overcrowding is generally prevalent in the city and large centres, therefore the children of the working class would chiefly suffer from the proposed amendment.
> 5. Parents in crowded centres anxious for their children's opportunities would be obliged to pay for them at private schools. This would amount to a form of class taxation.
> ... In the present conditions of industrial unrest, a shifting population carries with it many transfers from school to school. A child transferred from a penalized school would be unable to keep pace with the work of his school mates in the same grade, whilst one transferring to a penalized school would be ahead of his class, and his progress arrested.
> There was a very strong feeling that it was a dangerous principle to prevent children in any way from their rightful period of education. Rather, they should be encouraged in these days of after-war reconstruction to seek every opportunity for the fullest education possible, and the question of accommodation, which has been the teacher's worry and bugbear for years, should be squarely faced and met.[66]

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[65] Minister of Education's reply to the Workers' Educational Association deputation re. overcrowding of schools and inadequate training facilities for teachers, 13 June 1919, PRO, GRG 18/1/46. See also Report of the Director of Education for 1919, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1920, p. 17

[66] 'The Teachers' Union and the proposed amendment of the Education Act', SA Teachers' Journal, 5:2, 29 August 1919, pp. 28-29

This submission was tendered to the Minister of Education two months after he received a deputation from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), similarly urging the Government "to take steps immediately to extend and reconstruct the existing Primary and High School buildings or erect new ones in order to eliminate the overcrowding of schools and the existence of too large classes".[67] The whole question was one of finance, the Minister replied, and despite his placing of the WEA and SAPTU requests before Cabinet it was decided to temporarily suspend the operation of Clause 41 in the Education Act rather than commit funds to the construction of extra classrooms.

Resorting to such a solution re-kindled debate about the age at which education should become compulsory, as evidenced by the time spent in discussing this issue at the 1920 WEA Conference.[68] In addition, although the Inspector of Infant Schools complained that "congestion makes for commonness, is death to the individual, and is a serious handicap to the infant teacher who is trying to be progressive in her methods", she joined with Chief Assistants in recognising that much dissatisfaction existed among parents when five and six year old children were refused entrance to school because of lack of accommodation. She also reiterated the teachers' union position as argued before the 1911-13 Royal Commission:

> if children were excluded until seven years, much of the joy of work would be lost, since between the ages of five and seven the children take their work slowly and happily. If, however, they began school life at seven they would enter upon serious work at once, and, indeed, either be compelled to do two years' work in one, or pass into the primary school unfit to cope with that stage of the curriculum.[69]

In the face of continued parental and teacher pressure, in 1921 the legislative solution of 1919 was replaced by the device of adding a paragraph to the Departmental regulation on school entry dates. It read:

> Children under six years of age shall not be permitted to attend any school in which, owing to the limited space, it is found necessary to exclude children in order to

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[67] Resolutions of the Second Annual Conference of the Workers' Educational Association placed before the Minister of Education, 12 June 1919, PRO, GRG 18/1/46

[68] For details, see Third Annual Conference of the Workers' Educational Association (14-17 April 1920), Second day's proceedings, pp. 5-7, WEA Minute Book 1920

[69] Inspector Longmore's Report, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1920, p. 30; 'The Teachers' Union and the proposed amendment of the Education Act', p. 28

> reduce overcrowding, and a certificate to that effect signed by an Inspector shall be sufficient evidence that the space is found to be limited as aforesaid.[70]

Notwithstanding the application of this exclusionary measure in certain schools, the mean chronological age of pupils in admission classes (Kindergarten and Grade I) declined by approximately five months State-wide over the decade 1921-1931. [See Tables A.4 and A.5, Appendix B.] With the onset of the Great Depression, however, another challenge was mounted to the principle and practice of children starting school before they turned six. In contrast to the strong endorsement of this trend by the 1926 Directors of Education Conference, it was again urged that the statutory commencing age be raised - this time in the interests of economy. As one correspondent to the Editor of *The News* put it: "would it not be a saving of money if no child were admitted to our public schools under the age of seven years?".[71] Fortuitously, on the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry set up in late 1930 to co-operate with the State Advisory Committee on Public Finance in determining whether and how educational expenditure could be reduced, other means were adopted to manage the economic crisis in and through schooling.[72] The steady movement of the 1920s towards school entry at five years of age or even a little earlier thus continued uninterrupted in the 1930s. Notable exceptions were those children for whom the widespread poverty attendant upon the Depression was a cause of deferred enrolment.

The 1940s witnessed a significant upswing in the numbers admitted to government schools earlier than the compulsory age. In explanation of the surge of enrolments amongst $4^1/_2$ - 5 year olds in particular, the Minister of Education's Report for 1944 pointed to growing parental demand for a longer period of education for their children, the exigencies of war, the "excellent work" being done in infant schools, and the cumulative effect of an increased birthrate from 1939 onwards. The Director of Education, Charles Fenner, further advised the Minister in

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[70] Regulation No. 322, 28 September 1921, PRO, GRG18/134 - Regulations under the Education Act, vol. 1

[71] 'Infant schools', The News, 28 September 1931. See also 'School age', The Advertiser, 10 October 1930. For a report of the Directors of Education Conference at which the lower and upper age limits of compulsory schooling were discussed, see 'Compulsory attendance at school', The Advertiser, 1 June 1926 or the Register article of the same date, 'Education Conference: Brisbane reviewed'.

[72] For details, see P. Miller, Long Division, ch. 10

anticipation of his receiving a deputation from the Secretary of the Communist Women's Committee and others seeking permission for under five year olds to attend school:

> The actual school entry age is six years, but there is a tendency to the lowering of this age, largely arising from the influence of free kindergartens and Commonwealth Health Centres. It is a tendency that I think has good value, but, so far as this deputation is concerned, I explained to the parents that the practice of the Department was to accommodate children under five who were healthy and mentally well-developed, provided that the Head Master certified that there was accommodation available.[73]

Regulation XIX(1) now specified that children younger than five could gain entry to school only with the Director's approval, Fenner elaborated in a letter to the Secretary of the St Morris School Committee, but he was prepared to treat sympathetically any parent's application which indicated that their child aged between 4 years 6 months and 4 years 11 months had been to a kindergarten and was "strong in body and eager to learn". As to the exclusion of children from Class I-V schools if their enrolment would mean further overcrowding, which Regulation XIX(1) also provided for, the Superintendent of Primary Schools informed one headmaster in December 1942:

> the Department hesitates to exercise the authority of this Regulation because it is contrary to the whole trend of education today. Everything is pointing to the extension of school attendance both upwards and downwards, and I personally do not wish teachers to refuse admission of children who are five years of age or less.[74]

The reasons given for wanting a child to start school early in the hundreds of applications received annually from parents and guardians reflect those delineated in the 1944 Education Report. In addition, some are reminiscent of nineteenth-century substitute child-care motives. Others were related to families' or children's individual circumstances. Thus, in the war years, mothers frequently cited in connection with their desire or need to engage in paid labour, the fact of their husband's absence on active duty - if not that he had been killed. Cases where this

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[73] Director of Education to Minister of Education, 13 June 1944, PRO, GRG 18/2/1820 - Attendance of children under five. See also the Director's follow-up memorandum to the Minister, 29 May 1944, GRG 18/2/315.

[74] Superintendent of Primary Schools to G. F. Crane, Head teacher, Mt Burr Public School, 12 December 1942, PRO, GRG 18/2/991 - Applications for permission to enrol children under five, 1942-43

involved munitions work or in essential war-time industries were more likely to be approved than requests on the grounds that domestic help was unobtainable, else both parents were struggling to run a small business with a four year old underfoot or in danger on the streets. Cramped or otherwise unsatisfactory living conditions occasioned by the current housing shortage was deemed an acceptable reason; pure convenience in terms of domestic arrangements was not. Pleas that the mother was in poor health, hospitalised, invalid, or strained by the responsibility of caring for several children under school-going age (often including a new baby) and otherwise elderly or sick family members, were generally treated favourably. So were appeals that it was difficult to keep youngsters out of mischief when the foregoing considerations were taken into account.

There were isolated instances where early school entry was sought as a remedy or in compensation for 'backwardness', physical, language and behavioural defects, the child's poor mental or general health, or irregular attendance associated with family mobility. Sometimes it was because there was no private school or kindergarten nearby, or affordable, or accessible - as was true of the kindergartens adjacent to the Glenelg, Challa Gardens, Blair Athol and Highgate public schools, which all shared problems of overcrowding.[75] A few parents simply stated a preference for sending their four year old to a state school rather than the local kindergarten or other kind of school. Many, though, mentioned the advantages of spending time in the Kindergarten class and a further two years in infant grades in terms of easing the child's transition and adjustment to 'the big school' and its concomitant of formal work. Commonly, too, reference was made to the value of making an early start to school so as to accustom wayward offspring to discipline and authority, or to enhance the child's future schooling and career prospects (numerous parents having already mapped out their son or daughter's life!). Otherwise requests were based on little Marlene or Desmond's anxiety to begin school - usually to be with siblings or friends, or for the companionship of children of their own sex and age group in the absence of these in the neighbourhood. Lastly, there was the child 'ready for school', whose parent generally asked that one or more of the following factors be considered: the school was in close proximity to home, there were siblings in attendance (for

[75] 'Kindergartens cannot help. Ban on 5-Year-Olds', The News, 10 May 1944

protection), Phyllis or Raymond had spent previous time in a kindergarten, s/he was 'smart' and/or a 'big' girl/boy for their age, and there was either no-one else to look after them in the house or inadequate help in coping with a large family. If the applicant was particularly knowledgeable about the Department's criteria for admitting children under five, they also furnished letters of support from the head teacher, a doctor, welfare officer or child psychologist, depending on the case being argued.[76]

Initially the vast majority of applications were approved. But as head teachers and the Inspector of Infant Schools began to complain that the admission of new scholars aged five and under at mid-year necessitated adjustments in every class to make room for them, and that this was "not in the best interests of the boys and girls, especially those admitted in February", the Director endorsed the Superintendent of Primary School's recommendation that children be permitted to start at the prescribed times only if they were within one month of five years old, unless there were 'special circumstances'.[77] From the beginning of 1943, then, relatively few children qualified for entry to school under the age of 4 years 11 months. There nonetheless remained an "extraordinary variation" in children's commencing ages, Fenner announced to the Education Inquiry Committee which began collecting evidence in March of that year, and at his request a special return was filled out by schools in conjunction with the 1944 age-grade census so that the exact dimensions of this 'problem' could be known.

Analysing the statistics thereby generated in the broader context of the Department's quest for a tighter age-grade 'fit', the Research Officer, A. C. Hitchcox, noted that 78 per cent of children at government schools were enrolled earlier than the statutory age of six. Of these, eight per cent were under five, with most having started at 4 years 11 months, but on occasion as young as 4 years 6 months by special permission of the Director. Further, the percentage who commenced at five years or under was significantly higher in metropolitan schools compared with those in the country - markedly so in metropolitan schools with an infant department. [See

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[76] Applications for permission to enrol children under five, PRO, GRG 18/2/991/<u>1942</u>, 18/2/1820/<u>1943</u>, 18/2/315/<u>1945</u>, 18/2/37/<u>1946</u>

[77] Chief Clerk to Director of Education, Admission in schools of children under six, 8 December 1942, PRO, GRG 18/2/991

Tables from the Research Officer's analysis of the special return in connection with the 1944 age-grade census

Source: A. C. Hitchcox, 'School Commencing Age', EG (SA), 60:700, 15 November 1944, pp. 213-14

Table 2.3 (I) Pupils' commencing ages in government schools State-wide

	under 5	5 yrs.	6 yrs.	7 yrs.	8 yrs.	9 yrs.	10 & over
no. ch'n. (63,935)	5,575	44,478	12,722	1,007	113	21	19
% of total	8.72	69.57	19.90	1.57	0.18	0.03	0.03
	78.29% under 6				1.81% at 7 or over		
		98.19% under 7					
			99.76% under 8				

Table 2.4 (II) Commencing ages at metropolitan compared with country schools

	under 5	5 yrs.	6 yrs.	7 yrs.	8 yrs.	9 yrs.	10 & over
Metro. (32,601)	12.21%	74.13%	12.96%	0.58%	0.09%	0.02%	0.02%
	86.35% under 6				0.71% at 7 or over		
Country (31,334)	5.09%	64.83%	17.12%	2.61%	0.27%	0.04%	0.03%
	69.92% under 6				2.955 at 7 or over		

Table 2.5 (III) Commencing ages at metropolitan schools with and without an infant department

	under 5	5 yrs.	6 yrs.	7 yrs.	8 yrs.	9 yrs.	10 & over
With Inf. Dept. (20,604)	13.4%	75.3%	10.7%	0.5%	0.1%	0.01%	0.01%
	88.7% under 6				0.6% at 7 or over		
Without Inf. Dept. (7.073)	8.7%	71.7%	18.7%	0.7%	0.1%	0.05%	0.05%
	80.4% under 6				0.9% at 7 or over		

* In all these tables the figures in brackets are the number of children concerned.
Note: Hitchcox found the percentages to be "nearly equal" for boys and girls (p. 213). Hence he did not give them separately in the tables.

Tables 2.3 - 2.5 on the preceding page.] This was to be expected, Hitchcox commented, given the shorter distances between home and school in densely-settled areas and the "more attractive provision for beginners" in infant schools.[78]

Fenner's reference in another forum to the fact that under the Education Act "compulsion comes within one mile at six, two miles at under nine, three miles at 9+ and so on" was additionally relevant to Hitchcox's next conclusion from the figures: that "in country areas as a whole the majority of children started school before they were six, but the majority is considerably narrower in the sparsely populated areas which are served by small schools".[79] Lastly, although less than two per cent of pupils State-wide had their entry to school deferred until aged 7+, the rural percentage was 2.95 compared with 0.71 in metropolitan Adelaide. The concern here, the Research Officer remarked, was the connection between admission to school at age six or over and the degree of 'retardation' (over-agness for grade) amongst pupils - the percentage of children in both categories being "relatively large" in small country schools compared with those in metropolitan schools and infant departments in particular. Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis discuss this issue in detail, so it is simply to illustrate the importance attached to children coming to school 'on time' if they were to make 'normal' age-grade progress through the course of instruction that the following extract from Hitchcox's article is quoted at this juncture:

> From the departmental viewpoint, a child is considered to be retarded if, on 1st. July (when the age-grade census is taken) he is seven or over in Grade I, eight or over in Grade II, nine or over in Grade III and so on. ...
> The low degree of retardation in metropolitan infant departments, despite the fact that their pupils spend a longer period over Grades I and II than those of other schools, is largely accounted for by the relatively large percentage in them (95 per cent) who commenced before they were six.[80]

Indeed, Hitchcox added, the early start to school which had become "somewhat more general" during the last few years augured well for sustaining the (desirably) lower average grade ages

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[78] A. C. Hitchcox (Research Officer, Education Department of S.A.), 'School Commencing Age', EG (SA), 60:700, 15 November 1944, p. 213

[79] Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Minutes of Evidence, 1943 [hereafter referred to as Bean Inquiry Minutes] - Dr C. Fenner, Book 1, p. 25, PRO, GRG 18/171; A. C. Hitchcox, 'School Commencing Age', p. 21

[80] A. C. Hitchcox, 'School Commencing Age', pp. 214, 217

he calculated had gradually occurred over the period 1937-1943. It also likely meant an increase in the percentage of pupils who were still under compulsion on completing the primary course and were therefore able to undertake several years of secondary education (this, too, being a major Departmental goal).

Tabling its final report in 1949, the Education Inquiry Committee chaired by E. L. Bean and witnesses appearing before it devoted considerable attention to the subject of school entry age and 'allied problems', including those issues raised by Hitchcox's article. For example, Fenner attested to the fact that:

> The majority of children have left school before they are fourteen. ... The average age of children who sit for the Qualifying Certificate is 13 years 3 months. There is a tendency in Britain to reduce the upper [age] limit for leaving the primary school for entrance to secondary schools. In England this was reduced to 11+ ... [but] 12+ is a better age and that is the aim in South Australia.[81]

Clearly, then, it was preferable for children to start school at five so they could proceed after the now seven years of primary schooling to a secondary course in accordance with the proposed age standard of twelve years. The Director also sought greater standardisation of school entry ages through a tightening of the compulsory attendance provisions in the Education Act. For, he declared, an additional defect in the system at present,

> is that the school age in South Australia is loose, both in regard to the beginning and the ending. ... I recommend that everyone be required to attend school if they live within two miles of a school, whatever their age, giving the parent option whether they commence at 5 or 6, and I would permit no exemption under the age of 14 or 15, even though the qualifying certificate or some equivalent examination may have been passed, except in proved cases of illness, poverty, or distressing circumstances.[82]

Early childhood experts called to give evidence strongly favoured a school commencing age of five, notably so that children might have the advantage of time in a kindergarten class. Yet they were at pains to distinguish between permitting entry at this age and making it compulsory, and between these age standards and that for embarking upon formal work. Thus, Mavis Wauchope, Senior Lecturer in Infant Method at Adelaide Teachers' College, advised the Bean

[81] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Dr C. Fenner, Book 1, p. 2

[82] ibid, p.35

Committee that the option of attending at five was "satisfactory" from the viewpoint of teachers and the majority of parents. As for Fenner's concern about the existence of too wide an age range on admission, she corroborated Hitchcox's findings that this was essentially a rural phenomenon: in infant schools almost all children enrolled on turning five. Such 'early admission' was not of any direct scholastic benefit, she continued. On the contrary, in smaller schools where formal work was begun at the outset "it may even prove a real handicap, for the child develops feelings of discouragement and inferiority which later on have to be overcome". But in infant departments, she claimed, entry at five had the indirect effect of enabling a child to enjoy a six-month period of adjustment to "a difficult situation", to simultaneously retain their confidence and spontaneity, and hence to tackle the work "of a later stage" more adequately.[83] Nonetheless, Wauchope did not wish to see five years become the compulsory age. First, she reasoned, because children's 'readiness levels' varied so much. Second, because in schools with no kindergarten provision the pupils would be required to start straight away on 'routine work', which in her opinion ought not to commence until the age of 5.6 - 6+ years in the case of reading, 6.6 - 7 years for writing in script (even later if cursive were used), and 7+ for simple arithmetic. When pressed, however, she stated that, in keeping with modern principles, these 'tool subjects' should begin according to "individual readiness" rather than "by the calendar".

The same themes permeated the evidence tendered by Miss Heinig, Federal Officer of the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development, and the Inspector of Infant Schools, Florence Blake. Both women agreed that most children were ready for school at five if the work on admission was approached "through games, rhythmic exercises and well graded individual material".[84] But they were at variance over whether a start to 'definite work' should proceed on the basis of the child's 'developmental age' or chronological age. In Heinig's view, the schools ought to offer a program that allowed for "various gradations of slower and faster adjustments" on entry, and for pupils to move into Grade I or II when they were physically, emotionally and mentally able to digest the material. The teacher's judgement, she suggested,

[83] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss M. L. Wauchope, Book 2, p. 265

[84] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Florence Blake, Book 2, pp. 248, 251; Christine Heinig, Book 1, p. 216

might be supplemented by administering a number of the standardised tests currently available. Blake, on the other hand, defended the prevailing largely chronological age-based practices of infant departments. It was "more satisfactory" from an organisational perspective to deal with the 5 - 5.6 year old group as a kindergarten class, she explained. And whilst on the Departmental Psychologist's recommendation a six year old entrant with a mental age of five was placed in this group alongside others considered to be 'socially undeveloped' at six, children coming at the compulsory age were generally put into Lower Grade I, since by regulation they were due in primary school at eight. Besides, she argued:

> I do not think a child of six would want to be with an age group of five and do the [kindergarten] work. The apparatus, being designed for younger children, would be too simple. There is a big difference in development between five and six. ...
> The ideal is [to begin formal work] when the child is ready, but with a large class it is not expedient for a teacher to differentiate between children and allow some to have books and some not, but she is prepared to accept the best efforts of the boys and girls, and to give individual help to any backward ones.[85]

By the same token, Blake added, if a recently-turned-five year old entrant had attended a free kindergarten or nursery school, it was common practice not to give them more of the same but to assume their readiness for Grade I work and place them with the 5.6 - 6 year age group accordingly.

The other major issue raised by Wauchope and Blake was the half-yearly admission and promotion system in infant departments, which they were concerned to retain in order to ensure that all five year olds (bar those just referred to) had a preliminary period in Kindergarten. Their concern was also to minimise differences in age amongst children in each of the six-monthly half grades into which the curriculum of these schools was divided: an issue elaborated upon in the next chapter. Turning, then, to the Final Report of the Education Inquiry Committee, it is significant to note that the views of early childhood witnesses were highly influential in shaping its recommendations on school commencing age.

The Bean Committee rejected suggestions that the compulsory age for school attendance be lowered to five years on several grounds. First, the statistics analysed by Hitchcox in 1944 and

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[85] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Florence Blake, Book 2, pp. 249-50. For the contrasting views of Miss Heinig, see Book 1, pp. 216, 219, 221

Table 2.6 Children younger than statutory age in government schools on 1st. July, 1943-1947

Year	Number under 6	Total in Grade I	Percentage under 6	Average age of Gr. I pupils (yrs.)
1943	4,910	10, 278	47.8	6.2
1944	5,317	10,796	49.2	6.1
1945	5,694	10,818	52.6	6.1
1946	6,158	11,113	55.8	6.1
1947	7,050	12,041	58.5	6.0

Source: Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Final Report, SAPP, no. 15, 1949, p. 12

Table 2.7 Births: South Australia, 1932-1947

Year	No. of Births	Year	No. of Births
1932	8,561	1940	10,017
1933	8,900	1941	10,956
1934	8,459	1942	11,278
1935	8,270	1943	13,145
1936	8,944	1944	13,311
1937	9,410	1945	14,033
1938	not recorded	1946	15,813
1939	9,618	1947	16,317

Compiled from: Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), First Report, SAPP, no. 15, 1945, p. 9; Final Bean Report, p. 12; A. C. Hitchcox (Research Officer) to the Director of Education, Admission of children to Infant Departments, 16 September 1949, E.D. 179/49 enclosed in E.D. 1/4/5

those from a sample of seven metropolitan infant departments furnished by Inspector Blake in 1943 indicated that where kindergarten classes were accessible most parents already sent their children to school well before the age of compulsion. Since that time, as Table 2.6 on the preceding page shows, this practice had become still more general. To secure the attendance of an even greater proportion of younger children, the Committee thought, it would simply be necessary to increase the proper facilities: "a better method than compulsive legislation". In the second place, the Report stated, some children of five were "not old enough to face the hazards, and in the case of those living at even a moderate distance, to endure the weariness of the regular journey to and from school".[86] Third, since entry to school "usually gives rise to some degree of emotional disturbance", it was considered that parents must be wholeheartedly willing to send their children at five. Compulsion, because it would only be required otherwise, could hardly be exercised at a more damaging age, the Committee warned.

Fourth, the Report declared, it would be a backward step to lower the compulsory age unless there was appropriate provision for the youngest children. But to provide suitable premises, furniture and equipment, a course of activities adapted to five year olds' powers and interests, and teachers thoroughly trained for the work in every primary school was "impracticable" at the present time. Furthermore:

> To bring children into the schools at the age of 5 merely to introduce them a year earlier to reading and writing and number work would be worse than pointless - it would be for many children mischievous. Today the schools are struggling to throw off some of the burdens arising from the premature introduction of many topics. We certainly shall not lend our support to any proposal which would lay a great burden upon the teacher and cause grievous bewilderment to the children. If the schools can provide for the 5 year old the matter and the spirit of the kindergarten ... there will be few indeed of those within reach who will not attend them. But if the schools cannot so provide, the children should not be required to attend.[87]

Finally, concern was expressed that setting a compulsory age of five would intensify the enrolment crisis caused by a doubling in the number of births in South Australia between 1932 and 1947 [see Table 2.7 and the cartoon reproduced from the *Teachers' Journal*], and the

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[86] Final Report of the Education Inquiry Committee [hereafter referred to as Final Bean Report], SAPP, no. 15, 1949, p. 12

[87] ibid

Figure 2.3 "And still they come!!!"

Source: <u>SA Teachers' Journal</u>, 33:7, 25 August 1947, p. 10

accompanying difficulty of obtaining sufficient numbers of qualified infant teachers. In fact, until more such appointments could be made, the Committee believed, consideration should be given to excluding five year old children from overcrowded and inadequately staffed schools as an emergency measure.

In the context of its other recommendations, the Bean Committee further argued that with the adoption of the principle of individual progression, which meant "matching of the tasks and skill subjects to the powers of the child at every stage", there need be little fear that children admitted at six rather than five would be a year behind. Indeed, were pupils released from the lock-step of class instruction, they would "on the average accomplish more from the age of six than they do now from the age of five".[88] In also commending 'maturity' as an additional basis upon which admission to school, promotion, and the work in each grade should be organised, the Committee was mindful of existing pressure to enrol children at five, bring them together in chronological age groups and promote them annually so they could transfer to Grade III at 7+ and thence to secondary school at 12+ for a minimum term prior to reaching the statutory leaving age. Consequently, the Final Report drew attention to school entry procedures in relation to the variability of children's ages on admission, and to the system of pupil classification and promotion in infant departments with respect to 'the retardation problem'. Again, these subjects are discussed at length in later chapters of the thesis.

In consideration of prevailing social trends and educational conditions, then, and given its own philosophical leanings (or at least those of Dr H. H. Penny, Principal of Adelaide Teachers' College, who wrote the Final Report), the Bean Committee saw compulsion at the younger age of five years as neither necessary nor practicable; and as undesirable in the case of attendance at non-infant schools. The Education Department subsequently took cognisance of the Committee's recommendations on school entry only insofar as they coincided with its own policy decisions (for instance, to retain twice-yearly admission). For its most pressing concern over the next decade was to find means of coping with the enormous stresses placed on the lower end of primary schooling as the birth rate continued to rise and large-scale immigration

[88] ibid, p. 13

swelled already over-sized infant classes.[89] The accompanying severe shortage of teachers and school buildings was to some extent redressed by employing Temporary Assistants, the introduction of short training courses, student-teacher recruitment programs in secondary schools in addition to the relaxation of age and qualification requirements for entry to teachers' college and the raising of allowances once there, the construction of new schools and portable classrooms, and by using temporary premises. In the absence of adequate pre-school provision, however, the Department was not initially prepared to reverse the continuing trend of early entry to school in order to further relieve the strain on teachers and accommodation.

Thus, in 1949, the Director of Education exhorted head teachers to "explore every avenue" before refusing the admission of children aged between five and six at mid-year, when many schools went from "just about holding the position" to being overwhelmed by the numbers of additional enrolments. Rent a hall, use a room in a secondary school or make some internal adjustment to classes, he advised; and only if it still proved impossible to find space for all those seeking entry should the youngest amongst them be excluded (after gaining approval to do so). In the event that extra accommodation became available after the second intake date, he added, as many as possible on the waiting list were to be taken in.[90] With some overcrowded schools nonetheless being granted permission to exclude all under six year olds as per Regulation XIII(2), in the same year it was proposed that parental requests for the 'concessional admission' of children under five be declined. Although senior officers of the Primary Division preferred the alternative of meeting accommodation and staffing needs more quickly, tighter control of school entry was effected by increasingly rigorous enforcement of a new rule: that any child turning five after either of the two admission dates (even a day later) be denied attendance at Class I-V schools until the next half year, except in 'special cases'.[91]

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[89] For details, see the Minister of Education's Annual Report for 1948 and 1952-56 inclusive, SAPP, no. 44 in each case. Also 'New school year opens. Overcrowding problems', The Advertiser, 9 February 1949; '22 S.A. schools to be built: Govt. plans', The News, 9 February 1949; 'More pupils - teachers' burdens' The Advertiser, 22 July 1949; 'Schools can take all children', The Advertiser, 7 January 1950

[90] 'Mid-Year Admissions', EG (SA), 65:755, 15 June 1949, p. 123

[91] Director of Education to Minister of Education, Admission of scholars to primary schools, 14 September 1949; Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education., Admissions to infant grades in 1950, 19 September 1949, Education Department Registry archival files, E.D. 179/1949 enclosed in E.D. 1/4/5. The introduction of this mechanism was reported in The News, 22 June 1950. For the official notice to teachers, see

Not unexpectedly, numerous parents responded in the same way as their counterparts did sixty years earlier, when the Department likewise formally debarred under-fives from school. The head teacher at Hendon, for example, reported two cases of mothers deliberately over-stating their child's age on the enrolment form so as to gain them entry, whilst in making proper application for her 'under-aged' son to be admitted, Mrs T. of Whyalla wrote: "I'd rather not advance his age as do so many". Yet others expressed resentment when, on checking the Register of Births, Infant Mistresses removed the names of ineligible children from the roll.[92] In the first years after the new ruling was instituted, though, some latitude still existed. As the Superintendent of Primary Schools indicated in January 1953, where a child was a week or two under age, and where there was room at the school, special exceptions were made. But by 1956 the number of applications submitted and approved on the grounds of 'special circumstances' had dramatically fallen, at which point the Minister was assured that henceforth "only very strong reasons" would be regarded as justifying exceptions to the rule, and that otherwise "the non-admission of children under five to our schools is being strictly enforced".[93]

Applications and letters of protest regarding the limiting date for admitting under-fives continued to flow into Head Office. Hence, in March 1957, it was suggested that "valuable time" would be saved if the grace period allowed for enrolling children whose fifth birthday fell after the entry date in February and at mid-year was abolished. The Minister of Education readily concurred, since it was at his direction that the one month's grace instituted in 1943 had been reduced to a week or so, and this was done "with a view to eventually providing no margin at all".[94] A notice gazetted in April 1957 thus informed teachers that in future only those

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'Admission of children entering school for the first time', EG (SA), 66:773, 1 December 1950, p. 229; and with the addendum re. special circumstances, EG (SA), 70:821, 1 December 1954, p. 248.

92 F. L. Hussey to Superintendent of Primary Schools, 27 March 1953; Mrs J. Trenwith to Director of Education, 29 April 1955; also Mrs J. J. Coombe, 8 February 1955, PRO, GRG 18/53/1953 and 1953A. For reference to the resentment shown by parents of under-aged children on an earlier occasion, see Infant Mistress, Ethelton I. S., to Director of Education, 15 March 1944, PRO, GRG 18/2/1820/1943.

93 Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools (ASPS) re. letter from Mrs L. Loftes to the Minister of Education, 19 January 1953; Deputy Director of Education's note to the ASPS, 18 January 1956; Director of Education to Minister of Education, 17 January 1956, PRO, GRG 18/53/1953 and 1956 - Attendance at school of children under five

94 Memorandum to Director of Education, Mid-year admissions, 6 March 1957; Deputy Director of Education to Minister of Education, 12 March 1957, PRO, GRG 18/2/53A/1956

Table 2.8 Percentages of children entering South Australian government schools at different ages, in different areas

Age on 1st. Jan. 1955	Metropolitan Industrial	Metropolitan Residential	Country towns	Rural areas
4.0 - 4.5	4	1	-	-
4.6 - 4.11	46	45	18	6
5.0 - 5.2	25	27	21	22
5.3 - 5.5	20	23	22	18
5.6 - 5.8	3	3	17	18
5.9 - 5.11	1	-	12	18
6.0 - 6.2	-	-	4	9
6.3 - 6.5	-	-	4	4
6.6 and over	1	-	3	5

Source: Australian Council for Educational Research, Admission to School and Promotion in Infants' Grades, ACER, Melbourne, March 1957, p. 21 (extract from Table 12)

children who had actually turned five were to be admitted. Reinforcing this instruction, a circular was sent to heads of schools, who in turn informed parents verbally to the accompaniment of Departmental letters and newspaper coverage of the ban. Subsequently, the Staff Inspector reported that, to his knowledge, no exceptions had been made.[95]

This, then, was the situation when the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) survey, *Admission to school and promotion in infants' grades*, was published. More than ninety per cent of children in South Australian government schools commenced before the age of six, according to the summary of findings, with the majority having started shortly after turning five (to give an average age on entry of 5 years 3.2 months). No observable differences between the ages at admission of boys and girls were noted. But historical differences between pupils' commencing ages according to the district in which they lived persisted. [See Table 2.8 on the preceding page.] There was no evidence to justify any assumption of variation between industrial and residential areas in metropolitan and provincial cities, the Enquiry team concluded. However, a "striking difference" existed between metropolitan Adelaide, "with its well organised infant departments which take the younger children", and the country town and small rural schools which enrolled a higher proportion of older children.[96]

With the ban on not-fully-five year olds remaining a "fixed rule", from 1959 onwards a decline in the number of new enrolments occasioned by a falling off in the birth rate meant that all children aged between five and six could be accepted into the schools, and it is apparent from Tables A.6 and A.8 in Appendix B that by 1963 the vast majority were coming 'on time'. For, in this last year prior to abolition of the system of half grades in infant schools, the chronological ages of pupils in admission classes had narrowed to a mean of 5.03 years for

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95 Staff Inspector to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Mid-year admission of five year olds, 23 April 1958, PRO, GRG 18/2/53A/1956. For the official notice and press reportage of the change to Regulation XIII(1), see 'Admission of children entering school for the first time', EG (SA), 773:840, 15 April 1957, p. 127; '4 year olds "too young for school"', The Advertiser, 29 January 1958; 'Ruling on age for school' The News, 12 December 1958

96 Australian Council for Educational Research, Admission to school and promotion in infants' grades, Melbourne, ACER, March 1957, pp. 12, 17, 22; also The Early Years. A summary of an Enquiry into Age of Admission, Classification and Promotion Practices in Australian Primary Schools, Melbourne, ACER, 1957, p. 8

both sexes in Preparatory (formerly Kindergarten) and 5.27 years (5.28 for boys, 5.26 for girls) in Lower Grade I. In schools without separate provision for infants, the comparative mean age in Grade I was 5.62 years for boys and 5.58 years for girls. But as Table A.12 (also in Appendix B) shows, from 1968, when Preparatory classes became a system-wide feature of primary schooling in South Australia, the mean chronological age in this kindergarten grade at non-infant schools closely approximated that in infant schools.

Enrolment at or near five being firmly entrenched in social practice, debate about the compulsory and permissible age of entry increasingly focused on the issue of 'school readiness'. The regularity with which newspaper articles and correspondents' letters appeared on the subject of "the correct age for school" provides one index to the growing controversy amongst educators, clinicians and parents as to whether, in terms of individual children's cognitive, social and emotional maturity, five years was 'too young' or 'too old' to be enrolled.[97] Teachers' inservice conferences during the 1960s and 70s were also devoted to the topic of readiness in relation to school commencing age. At one such conference in February 1964, reference was made in the opening address to the fact that

> children who begin school on the same day differ in age, mental ability, social maturity, previous experience, in size, shape, health, physical growth, and in nationality; they are the only group of children who come to us ungraded in any way, except that they have reached the age of five years. They need a period of preparation, of getting ready for more formal work ... a period of adjustment that varies in length according to each pupil.[98]

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[97] See, for example, Miss G. L. Menear (on retiring after 42 years as an Opportunity Class advisory teacher in the Psychology Branch), 'Some start too soon at school', Sunday Mail (SM), 14 April 1956; Professor R. G. Cameron (formerly of the University of Western Australia), quoted in 'School age too young', SM, 9 November 1957; 'Best time to start school. By Mary Smith, child psychologist', SM, 1 February 1958; 'Adverse effect [of starting school at six]' by "Don't Agree", SM, 11 July 1959; Mr E. Golding (SAIT President), 'Six is school age', The Advertiser, 20 August 1959; Dr Leslie McLeay, 'When should a child start school?', Advertiser, 21 June 1960; 'Begin school at two: U.S. educationist', The News, 12 August 1961; 'Experiment may change school age' (report of Prof. J. W. Birch, University of Pittsburg, on starting children at an average age of four years), News, 8 August 1962; Miss Mary Swift (Victorian pre-school educationist), 'High pressure in education', Advertiser, 20 October 1965; Henry Schoenheimer (Education Correspondent), 'That first year...when we are four or five', The Australian, 25 January 1965; Professor R. J. Goldman (Dean of Education, LaTrobe University), 'The "3Rs" at three', Advertiser, 1 January 1970.

[98] Miss C. Melva Sando, Assistant Superintendent of Primary schools, Address to teachers of Grade I from schools in the East District without infant departments, 'Inservice Conference on "Readiness"', EG (SA), 80:928, 1 April 1964, p. 121

Local, interstate and New Zealand delegates who delivered papers at the 1978 conference on school entry organised by the South Australian Education Department elaborated the argument:

> There is a tremendous range in the abilities and 'readiness' of children of the same chronological age. Some children of four and a half years may well be more 'ready' for school than some children of five and a half years. Keeping children out of school until the age of five years will do nothing to ensure that only those children who are 'ready' for school are admitted, and may well disadvantage many children, particularly those not attending a pre-school, by denying them access to the sort of environment which would help them to progress and to gain new skills and experiences.[99]

Indeed, as several authors of articles published before and after this event pointed out, the only virtue of chronological age as a criterion for admission to school was its objectivity. The lack of broad-based, valid measures of readiness, together with familial pressure to admit children as early as possible, had greatly contributed to the essentially arbitrary designation of five years as the age of transition from home or pre-school to school, some writers suggested. However, it was vital to ascertain children's developmental status and to take account of this when reviewing the case for either lowering, raising or retaining the current age of entry, especially with respect to the admission of 'special' children: the "apparently bright or precocious" and those from 'priority areas' who did not normally attend a kindergarten (for example, non-English-speaking migrants, Aborigines, and those living in economically deprived circumstances). Moreover, citing overseas research and the trend in Britain and the USA towards extending early childhood educational provision, critics of current school admission policies directed attention to their strict interpretation and inflexible administration. Additionally, earlier entry for children in the aforementioned groups was advocated, even though a large body of evidence indicated that starting school 'too young' produced negative effects.[100]

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99 (author unknown), 'When is a child ready to start school?', p. 2. Paper prepared for South Australian Regional Conferences on School Entry, August 1978

100 For details of such arguments and the evidence adduced in support of these views, see J. W. Halliwell, 'Reviewing the reviews on entrance age and school success', Journal of Educational Research, 59:9, May-June 1966, pp. 395-401; Richard M. Brandt, 'Ready or Not?', Childhood Education, 43:8, April 1967, pp. 448-51; Simone Howells, 'Education '74. An Occasional Series. At what age should children begin school?', Canberra Times, 11 March 1974, p. 2; Marion de Lemos, 'Raising the age of entry to school: What is the evidence?', Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 6:3, September 1981, pp. 39-43; Ken Hopkins, 'At what age should children begin?', Educational Magazine, 39:4, 1982, pp. 3-6; R. H. Barnsley and A. H. Thompson, 'Gifted or learning disabled? The age of entering school may make the difference', Early Childhood Education, 18:1, Spring 1985, pp. 11-14; Linda Vining, 'Going to school - ready or not', The Practicing Administrator, 11:2, 1989, pp. 17-18

Wide community debate and formal proposals to raise or lower the commencing age in post-1960 South Australia[101] engendered no alteration of the administrative and legislative parameters for school entry which dated from the passage of the 1915 Education Act. Nor did the 1969-70 (Karmel) and 1980-81 (Keeves) Committees of Enquiry into Education make any recommendations to this effect. Instead, the related issues were addressed by introducing a 'continuous admission' scheme and by means of an officially-sponsored emphasis on the necessity of providing flexibility, continuity, integration and 'stage-appropriate' instruction in early childhood programs so that individual differences amongst school beginners might be catered for. Only in 1989 was there a potential challenge to established policy and practice, with the Australian Education Council's adoption of a common entry age as one of the agreed national goals for schooling in Australia. But, unlike some other States, South Australia was not about to institute yet another review for this purpose, since:

> In 1987 a new policy on school entry age was introduced ... following consultation with parent groups and relevant principals' and teachers' associations. Local school communities have now made the necessary adjustments to their enrolment procedures and the policy is working well.[102]

Otherwise, the provision for 'gifted' children to enrol at $4^1/_2$ years under a new policy introduced in 1995 represents the sole change to the limits on school commencing age as they stood at the conclusion of my period of study (1990): viz, compulsory attendance at six years and a bureaucratically-defined 'earliest age' of the child's fifth birthday.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis reveals how chronological age came to be used as a basis for regulating the timing of children's transition from home to school, and to forge distinctions between 'babies' too young to attend, 'infants' assumed to be capable of undertaking a junior course of

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[101] For formal proposals to change the commencing age in South Australia, see (Karmel) Enquiry into Education, SAIT Committee - Infant Sub-committee, notes and recommendations re. age of admission to school, submitted to a special meeting of the Infant Mistresses' Association, 21 April 1969, JPPA archives, Forbes J.P.S.; 'Submissions to Karmel Committee, SA Teachers' Journal, 2:25, 8 April 1970, pp. 8-9; 'Future of Infant Schools. I - Age of entry', SA Teachers' Journal, 4:19, 22 November 1972, p. 14

[102] Minister of Education and Children's Services, South Australia, to Minister for Education, Victoria, 8 February 1991, Education Department Registry archival files, E.D. 8/2/3A. For background details on the AEC's goal of a uniform national enrolment policy, see Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA), Resolution 3.10: Age of entry, Darwin Conference, 1981, Annual Conference resolutions 1977-84, and APPA Position Paper, May 1988, JPPA archives; APPA President to Director-General of Education (SA) re. concern expressed at the recent APPA Conference in Perth about the variety of policies throughout Australia covering school entry age and requirements, 13 September 1985, and the Director-General's reply, 7 October 1985, E.D. 16/8/11C

instruction and those of 'real school age' who were ready for formal lessons. It further points up the fact that the rationale for designating a particular age for compulsory or permissible attendance had less to do with educational or psychological theories than factors such as historical precedent, recent interstate and overseas developments, political expediency, economic conditions, demographic structure, and the availability of teachers and specialist infant school provision or other forms of child care and education. The current aims, organisation and practices of state schooling were likewise major determinants. Thus, the work of developmental stage theorists like Piaget formed but a *post hoc* justification for setting an earliest school commencing age of five years and for deferring 'serious' learning until children were six or seven. Indeed, post-World War II 'readiness' research had no impact on the strict chronological age-based arrangements for admission to school: only inside infant classrooms.

In also tracing changes in nineteenth and twentieth century school entry patterns, the chapter records a gradual narrowing in the range of children's starting ages after 1875, to ultimately fall within the parameters established by legislation and bureaucratic directive by the late-1960s. It has been demonstrated, too, that although the overall social trend was to send children to school at five, fluctuations occurred in times of demographic, social and economic crisis. As the statistics already presented and the graphs (Figures A.2 and A.3) in Appendix C additionally illustrate, significant differences existed amongst beginning school cohorts in the past - largely in relation to type of school attended (infant /non-infant). But in the 1970s and 80s negligible variations are evident, no doubt due to the introduction of uniform junior primary grade organisation across the State. Distance between home and school as a factor in explaining urban/rural discrepancies similarly declined in importance once government-subsidised bus transport became available in country districts, whilst it seems that gender never functioned as a differential of any consequence in the matter of school entry age.

With regard to the professional, public and parliamentary discourse surrounding the definition of 'school-going age', several themes persisted. Children ought not to be compelled or permitted to attend school at a 'young age' unless suitable provision for them was available, but enrolment at five was to be encouraged so that pupils might be adequately prepared for formal

work. Infants, particularly those in working class communities or suffering the exigencies of war, were better off at school than left unsupervised at home or in the streets. Yet classrooms were not to become nurseries and teachers mere nannies in the absence of alternative child-care. The orderly progress of students and the efficient functioning of the school should be the prime consideration in fixing an age limit for admission, but existing social practice and parental pressure with respect to enrolling children 'early' was an argument for not setting this too high. By the same token, between 1875 and 1990 the focus of debate shifted from the social control function and the educational benefits associated with beginning school life before the statutory age, to concern that children came 'on time' at five years so they could make the transition from infant classes to 'primary school proper', and from here to secondary school, in accordance with the age standards affixed to these organisational breaks in the state education system. More recently, an emphasis on school readiness and equity considerations with regard to admission procedures emerged, and it is on the latter subject that the next chapter concentrates.

CHAPTER 3

"CHILDREN ON ENTRY SHOULD NOT VARY TOO WIDELY IN AGE": TWENTIETH CENTURY CHANGES IN THE PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION TO SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

If there is a dearth of historical studies on school commencing age, the origins of and changes in procedures for admission to school have been totally neglected by Australian historians of education. Yet, as this chapter aims to show, bureaucratic regulation of the timing of school entry during a year significantly contributed to the narrowed age range in the grades into which beginning scholars were placed. From an official viewpoint this outcome was highly desirable, since it enabled the teaching in infant classes to proceed on a more efficient basis. It also meant that, once other reforms in graded school organisation were instituted, pupils could advance through the course of instruction with their chronological age peers. But the chapter is equally concerned to examine school admission policy in terms of how it was "stimulated and confronted by popular constituencies as well as the major power players, [and] distorted in implementation and experience": that is, in accordance with Harold Silver's historical view of policy.[1]

Hence, in discussing the South Australian Education Department's move to systematise initial entry to school by imposing fixed admission dates, and, later, to progressively supplant its twice-a-year enrolment model in favour of 'continuous admission', consideration is given to the influence of parents and teachers on the policy process and administrative practice. Additionally, the relevance of school size for the 'lived reality' of starting school is focused upon. Lastly, on the evidence available (and this is sketchy for the first half of the century), it seems that the bureaucracy's designation of precise transition points from home or pre-school to school generated as much controversy as did related policies on age of entry; and that even

[1] H. Silver, 'Knowing and not knowing in the history of education', History of Education, 21:1, 1992, p. 101

when the avowedly more flexible and equitable 'fifth-birthday entry' mode was gradually introduced in the 1970s, its operation, too, was problematic.

PARENTS WOULD SOON BRING THEIR CHILDREN 'TO TIME': REFORMING SCHOOL ENTRY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1900s-1960s

Prior to 1908, the Education Department had issued no rules governing children's enrolment at school beyond the need for head teachers to record certain particulars obtained from parents or guardians. But in August 1907, a newspaper article noted:

> A great majority of parents send children to school before they have reached the age at which attendance becomes compulsory, and the result is that almost daily teachers in city and suburban state schools, particularly, are called upon to register new pupils. The effect is to disorganise the system to a certain extent because the younger children cannot be dealt with exclusively, and in consequence have to be put in classes with others who have had months of training. Children under seven years of age are not examined until they have been at school 6 months, and under the present examination conditions it is not intended to examine any children individually if they are under 6 years and 9 months of age. It has been found that continuous admission of children to the schools has been such a hindrance to the work of the teacher, who necessarily has to devote more attention to the backward pupils, that a change is contemplated. It is not unlikely that on his return from England [which he was visiting as part of an international study tour], Mr Williams [the Director of Education] will issue orders that new scholars are to be enrolled only at stated periods, such as the beginning of each quarter or half year.[2]

In the following March, the practice of admitting children every Monday morning was again observed to be "a stumbling block against steady and sustained school progress".[3] The special attention that entrants whose ages ranged from five to seven years required before a teacher found their educational level "considerably hampered" the class work, headmasters were quoted as saying. Ideally a class should start off together and go through the year's syllabus without interruption, they added; and although this state of affairs was "impossible", some improvement on the present arrangement could surely be made. It was their intention, therefore, to approach Director Williams with the suggestion that a regulation be drawn up which permitted the admission of first time entrants to large schools only at the commencement of each quarter.

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[2] 'Young children and school work', The Advertiser, 16 August 1907, p. 4

[3] 'Teacher and pupil', The Advertiser, 14 March 1908, p. 13

Given the bureaucracy's continuing quest for a uniform system of instruction - one characterised by whole-class teaching of homogeneous age and ability groups - Williams was clearly amenable to such a proposition. As he indicated to the 1912 Education Commission, after reiterating that increased organisation was needed in respect to all educational matters:

> If [children] started their education at six years, and were admitted twice in the year, they would come in together, and [we] would not have groups in the various grades. That caused great trouble to the teachers.[4]

Here was justification indeed for issuing, within months of headmasters' formal representations, a regulation stating that:

> In schools of Classes I to VI, teachers will admit children who enter school for the first time during two periods only. The first period shall be the week immediately following the date of the annual examination of the school and the second shall be six months from that date.[5]

Such initial non-specificity of admission dates and the limitation on entry to just two periods annually drew immediate criticism. One headmaster, who considered that Regulation 120 would "probably act harshly in some instances", argued in defence of making the provision "more elastic":

> [T]he date of examination differs at all schools, and unless the parents receive prompt information on that point it is quite likely their children will be debarred for a full six months. Or, again, there might be sickness or an epidemic in the house just at that particular time and it seems hard merely as a result of that misfortune that children should be shut out of the school for half the year. Then it might happen that at the time of the annual examination the child will be 6 years and 3 months old. Before the second admission comes around that child will be 7 years and 3 months old, and consequently will have been under the truancy law for three months. All these contingencies suggest to me the advisableness of discretionary power being vested in the head teacher.[6]

In 1909, the last point was addressed by inserting a clause in Regulation 120 to the effect that the ruling applied to children under compulsory age. Those upon reaching seven years (or on turning six, once the 1915 Act lowered the statutory attendance requirement to this age) were

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[4] Mr Williams' evidence, summarised in 'Education Commission. The Primary System', The Register, 19 March 1912, p. 9

[5] Regulation no. 120, 9 July 1908, PRO, GRG 18/134 - Regulations under the Education Act, Vol. 1

[6] 'New Education Regulations. Teachers' opinions', The Advertiser, 11 July 1908, p. 9

thus still to be admitted at any time of the year. Regarding the first point, when the responsibility for conducting examinations and determining promotions passed from inspectors to head teachers in 1913, the process standardly occurred in December and the two admission periods were accordingly changed to the first week after the Christmas and midwinter holidays. In ensuing decades, precise dates for school entry each year and associated pupil birth-date cut-off points were specified each year, establishing a pattern of beginning and mid-year enrolment of 5+ year olds that was to endure until the 1970s - but not without eliciting further criticism, as we shall see.

On the remaining issue, it appears from retrospective evidence that the Department's determination upon semi-annual admission instead of more frequently was a logical next step in the organisation of those state elementary schools which, since the mid-1870s, had made provision for instructing pupils younger than the age of compulsion in separate infant departments. It will be recalled that the curriculum issued for such departments in large public schools had four sub-divisions, with the examination standard for the highest class being equivalent to that of the Junior Division in other schools, and that group promotions to Class I of boys' and girls' departments were made half-yearly.[7] Arguably, the introduction of twice-yearly entry to school grew out of these late-nineteenth century arrangements and certainly served to regularise them in the twentieth. For, when the primary course of instruction was restructured to accommodate the extended limits of compulsory attendance and the state's expansion into secondary education as provided for under the 1915 Act, the work of each half-grade in the infant department of Class I-III schools was specified as covering a six-month period, with promotions occurring at corresponding intervals to coincide with the beginning and mid-year admission dates.[8]

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[7] See Programme of Inspector's Examination - Public and Provisional Schools (Junior Division, Class I-V); Infant Schools (First-Fourth Class), SAGG, 29 May 1878, p. 1548; Regulations of City Model Schools, Reg. no. 4, SAGG, 9 April 1874, p. 589

[8] For the specific instructions to this effect issued by the new Director of Education, W. T. McCoy, see Course of Instruction for Primary Schools with notes & appendices, Adelaide, Government Printer, 1920, Appendix II. On the origins of half-grades in infant departments in connection with twice-yearly admission, see A. C. Hitchcox (Research Officer), memorandum to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Length of time spent in infant departments, 31 May 1957; M. Mead (Inspector of Infant Schools), Comment on report by Research Officer, September 1957, Education Dept. (SA) Registry archival files, E.D. 1/4/5

Significantly, however, the graded curriculum and promotion practices in the vast majority of South Australian primary schools were organised on an annual basis - a fact to which twice-a-year admission ran directly counter. Furthermore, although small country schools far outnumbered those in the State's few densely-populated centres, and most rural classrooms presumably had the capacity to admit pupils below compulsory age individually, only after 1919 were the very smallest (Class VI) schools exempt from Regulation 120 (re-issued as No. 322).[9] In schools with larger enrolments, a decade of experience with semi-annual admission led teachers to concur that major problems were posed by and for the mid-year cohort and 'compulsory entrant'. In this regard, an article published in the *SA Teachers' Journal* is worth quoting at some length:

> The infant or junior course of work is based on a two year's period, Grade I and II. Children admitted in January take their work slowly and happily, and pass on to the primary school with a foundation clearly and soundly laid.
> It naturally follows that children admitted in July will have to complete twelve months' work in six months. Either they must be 'crammed' and the work made a burden, or their time is wasted, and they pass on to the next grade unfit for the higher stage of work. If all children were admitted in January, teachers in Grades II and III would receive children at a much more uniform standard.
> Our present system of grading and examination demands that a certain amount of work must be completed in every grade by the close of the year. The junior school curriculum includes much that is bright and joyous for the little beginner. ...The easy stages are taken at the beginning of the year, and as the year advances, and power of thought and concentration develops, the more serious periods increase. A child entering the school in July has missed the preparatory stages which have engaged the earlier children for six months.
> In January the junior grades are formed, class space allotted, and the school staff apportioned. But continuity of work is upset by the second set of newcomers in July. With neither space nor additional teacher, place must somehow be found for them. Either the whole junior department must be reorganised, class numbers increased, children moved from one grade to another, or - the newcomers must be left in shed or corridor, with a monitor or such other substitute for [a] teacher as may be found. ... Colds prevail. Absences begin and the habit of irregular attendance is easily formed at this stage.
> Further difficulties are met when children reaching the compulsory age are admitted at any time during the year. In a large school this means weekly admissions. It means that there are always children beginning amongst more advanced pupils, ... the holding up of the majority whilst the newcomers receive special attention, or the neglecting of newcomers who sit in a whirl of difficulty and bewilderment. ... Constant newcomers means added strain to the teacher, who is trying to complete a twelve months' curriculum in twelve months.[10]

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[9] Amendment to Regulation no. 322 (formerly no. 120) of 1913, PRO, GRG 18/134

[10] 'School Admission', SA Teachers' Journal, 5:2, 29 August 1919, pp. 35-36

This article is revealing in a number of ways. It illustrates the current unquestioned status of graded school organisation with its associated lock-step curriculum arranged in annual stages and underlying assumption of uniformity in children's chronological mental development. It reflects the recently-emergent influence on state-provided infant schooling of kindergarten philosophy and practice as well as the child study movement, in stressing the importance of a preparatory period of instruction, characterised by a play-centred approach, before under-six year olds embarked on formal subjects. In focusing much of its attention on the organisational difficulties created by mid-year and intermittent entry to school, it also furnishes an index to the bureaucracy's emphasis on efficiency as a major goal of the education system. In this regard it is noteworthy that preference was expressed for a single admission period at the start of the school year, which its many advocates argued "would give some measure of relief to the teachers concerned, and provide for more efficient work in the infant department."[11] Evidently, though, the possibility of a wholesale return to the earlier practice of individual admissions was not to be countenanced - such resolve being reinforced in 1931 when the Department published a 'reminder' notice directing attention to the relevant regulation in order to discipline those head teachers who continued to enrol children below compulsory age more frequently than twice a year.[12] Nor did the alternative of admitting beginners only in February or at mid-year, as mooted at the Annual South Australian Public Teachers' Union Conference in 1930, attract official support.[13]

Little mention is made of the impact of the new school entry policy on young children and their caregivers in the home. With respect to the latter, the article merely asserted: "If parents were given to clearly understand that children would only be admitted in January or July, they would soon get in the way of looking ahead and bringing their children to time."[14] It may nonetheless be inferred from other research on the family, the state and schooling in the late-nineteenth and

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[11] ibid, p. 35

[12] 'Admission of children under six years of age', EG (SA), 47:534, 16 January 1931, p. 2

[13] South Australian Public Teacher' Union (SAPTU) 35th Annual Conference proceedings re. the compulsory clause in the Education Act, 19 August 1930, ANU Business and Labour Archives, Box 227, SAPTU Minute Book 1930-31

[14] 'School Admission', op cit., p. 36

early-twentieth century[15] that constraints imposed on the timing of children's entry to school had significant implications for domestic arrangements and parental authority. Furthermore, much clearly depended on head teachers exercising their own discretion to admit pupils on occasions other than those specified in the Regulations. Whether motivated by concern to increase average enrolments (as was the official perception) and thus retain existing classification and staffing levels, if not to avoid a small school's closure, or in sympathy with family needs or preferences, the outcome was the same: some parents availed themselves of any flexibility in neighbourhood school admission practices. Centrally-determined policy, then, was not always complied with where it conflicted with individual or local circumstances.

The main issues raised in the *Journal* article constituted themes which were to dominate professional discourse on school entry over the next half-century. No change to the policy of group admission staggered across two points of the year was likely, however, while it continued to serve the organisational interests of separate infant schools as vigorously protected by the women in charge of them. Whenever the second admission period was threatened with abolition or modification, infant mistresses worked effectively through their professional association and its Departmental representative to maintain the status quo. One example of the sway exerted by the Infant Mistresses' Club (IMC) on school entry policy-making was its success in securing a reversion to the original mid-year date for the second intake of school beginners, which in 1942 had been altered to the start of Term 2 in line with the change made from four terms a year to three.[16]

Writing on behalf of the IMC, the Inspector of Infant Schools, Florence Blake, submitted three reasons why the middle of the year was a more satisfactory admission point than in May:

> 1. [Under the amended Education Regulation of November 1942] the first entrants for the year have only 15 weeks in the Kindergarten class whilst the second group

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[15] See, for example, P. Miller, Long Division. State Schooling in South Australian Society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, ch. 4 - 'The difference between comfort and distress': compulsory schooling and patterns of working class life.

[16] Amendment to Regulation XIX(1) - Admission of children under six years of age, EG (SA), 59:681, 15 April 1943, p. 95. For details of infant mistresses' case in support of a return to the mid-year date, see PRO, GRG 18/2/991/1942; GRG 18/2/885/1945

> has 30 weeks. The course of instruction is such as to provide for a half year of 22 weeks.
> 2. Promotion from Kindergarten to Lower I at the end of first term is too soon for such a change as the children only had 15 weeks in the class and in the school. This period is not long enough to determine whether a child is sufficiently developed to adapt himself to the requirements of the higher class.
> 3. Fifteen weeks is not long enough for class teachers to get to know their pupils and a change so soon is considered to be accompanied by some risk [in that children need] to gain that sense of security necessary for their future well-being in the school.[17]

The Superintendent of Primary Schools, W. T. Martin, was sympathetic to the infant mistresses' position, informing the Director, Charles Fenner, that they would not have raised the question if they had not experienced "some special difficulty in organisation" within their schools, and if they were not honestly of opinion that the amended regulation was not operating in the children's best interests. On the other hand, he continued, it seemed rather early to rescind the new Regulation (No. 322) after only a year of its application. It should obtain for at least another twelve months, Martin opined, and in the interim perhaps an additional sub-division - "a kind of Lower Lower I" - for a period of six or seven weeks might be instituted so that children comprising the first intake could have a "fair" time in Kindergarten.[18]

Rejecting this solution, and discerning no move to reinstate the "original condition" by December 1944, Blake wrote a further letter to the Director, in response to which he agreed to receive a deputation of infant mistresses three months later. Persuaded by the detailed case they presented, and on Superintendent Martin's recommendation, Fenner pursued the matter with the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation in May 1945. Within days, notice was given of the return to a mid-year admission date - effective immediately.[19] In consequence, the misfit between the amended second date for school entry and the six-monthly basis of infant

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[17] Inspector of Infant Schools to Director of Education, 25 September 1943; Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Admission of children under six years of age, 17 November 1943, PRO, GRG 18/2/991. For further details of the 'defects' associated with the admission of new entrants in May in lieu of immediately after the last Saturday in June, see Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Minutes of Evidence, 1943 - Mavis Wauchope (Senior Lecturer in Infant Method, Adelaide Teachers' College), qq. 1317-19, PRO, GRG 18/171, Book 2

[18] Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Admission of children under six years of age, 17 November 1943, PRO, GRG 18/2/991

[19] 'Admission of children under six years of age' (reproduced from SAGG, 17 May 1945), EG (SA), 66:707, 15 June 1945, p. 125. For official correspondence and infant mistresses' notes on the issue prior to publication of this notice, see Mid-year admission of new scholars in primary schools, PRO, GRG 18/2/88/1945

departments' organisation was relatively short-lived. So too was the resultant dislocation of classroom and staffing arrangements, and the much criticised disparity in the length of time February compared with May entrants spent in 'preparatory'.

Infant mistresses' views again prevailed in 1949, averting implementation of a recommendation that children under six years of age be admitted to school at the start of first term only in order to rationalise scarce resources. Gaining crucial support once more from the Superintendent of Primary Schools, they argued that the suggested change would merely defer facing the current problem of staff and accommodation shortages, that delinquency among those not enrolled was likely to rise, and that the many children whose parents chose mid-year enrolment for the benefits of six months' kindergarten instruction would regrettably be limited to six weeks' preparation for Grade I as presently typified the experience of February entrants in non-infant schools.[20] The Department was also forcefully reminded of the 1942-49 Education Inquiry Committee's reasons for rejecting a single admission period. First, that since children's birthdays did not conveniently cluster around one point of the year, failure to turn five or six near a sole enrolment date would mean waiting up to twelve months for the next - a very long time from the young child's perspective, and contrary to the modern tendency to extend schooling downward as well as upward. Second, restricting entry to February would result in the intake including an unacceptably wide age spread - a prominent concern in the light of recent advocacy of chronological age-based classes and promotion through the primary grades to thus accomplish the Department's aim of all pupils undertaking a minimum period in secondary schools before reaching 14 years of age (when they could legally leave).[21]

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[20] Director of Education, memorandum to the Minister of Education, Admission of scholars to primary schools, 14 September 1949; Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Admissions to infant grades in 1950, 19 September 1949. Ed. Dept. (SA) Registry archival files, E.D. 179/49 enclosed in ED 1/4/5

[21] Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Final Report, SAPP no.15, 1949, pp. 1, 3-15. See also the information communicated by Dr H. H. Penny (Principal of the Training College, Bean Committee member and author of its final report) to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, cited in Admissions to infant grades in 1950, E.D. 179/49.
Note: Mavis Wauchope's evidence to the Bean Committee on the 'birthdate effect', and her statement that there would be "too big a difference in age" in Kindergarten classes if new scholars were admitted all at once, clearly shaped the views expressed in the Education Enquiry's final report. See Bean Enquiry Minutes, qq. 1330-33

Burgeoning primary school enrolments during and after World War II in consequence of rising birth rates, the continued trend towards children starting school aged five years or slightly younger, and a wave of immigration in the 1950s, strengthened the hand of infant mistresses in preserving twice-yearly admission. For, in many infant classes, the large numbers could not so readily have been absorbed if pupils were accepted all at once in February. Moreover, popular demand for places in separately-established infant departments grew disproportionately to that for enrolment of children in other government schools, and the crisis in numbers deflected attention away from the mode of school entry in favour of limiting the age at which children could commence school. Accordingly, as had proved necessary during the decade after the legal starting age was lowered to six and the reconstituted infant school system attracted increasing enrolments, amendments to the regulation governing admission authorised the exclusion or delayed entry of children under compulsory age as a means of managing periodic over-crowding of junior classrooms.[22] Further to these temporary measures, the timing of school entry was more narrowly circumscribed for all prospective beginners.

As may be recalled from Chapter 2, earlier twentieth century practice was to admit children younger than five provided they were 'healthy and mentally well-developed', although their names were not to be recorded in the roll book until they had actually turned five. But from 1943 the admission of each under five year old required the Director of Education's approval, whereupon concern about the clerical effort expended in dealing with the hundreds of applications received annually contributed to the ruling in 1957 that henceforth children starting school must be fully five years of age.[23] Concurrently, the previous leeway of up to one month's grace with respect to pupils' birth dates vis-a-vis the specified enrolment days was also eliminated. The amended regulation stating that no child under five on the day school opened, or on the 1st of July, would in future be admitted to an infant school, initiated a constant flow

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[22] For the earlier period, see the rewording of Regulation XIX(1) as issued in a Circular to Head Teachers, June 1918, and submissions received from infant mistresses seeking permission to exclude under six year olds in accordance with its provisions, PRO, GRG 18/2/1331. For the amendment enacted to restrict new enrolments after World War 2, see 'Mid Year Admissions', EG (SA), 65:755, 15 June 1949, p. 123. Applications for additional accommodation and for permission to defer enrolment of beginning pupils during the late-1940s can be found in PRO, GRG 18/2/888

[23] 'Admission of children under six years of age', EG (SA), 59:681, 15 April 1943, p. 45; 'Admission of children entering school for the first time', ibid, 73:849, 15 April 1957, p. 127. See also the extensive files on approvals for enrolment of under-5 year olds, 1943-57, PRO, GRG 18/2/nos. 37, 313, 991, 1820

of parental complaints concerning children who, at subsequent admission periods, missed qualifying for school entry by a few days.

Parents described the latest system as "farcical", "causing consternation", and "definitely precluding any long-term planning" (regarding pre-school enrolment, for example).[24] The case argued by the father of Pamela S., whose birthday fell just one day past the 'correct' mid-year entry date, typifies one set of concerns:

> As this date on which a child turns five varies from year to year it appears unfair that had my child been five on this date last year she would have eligible, whereas this year she isn't. ... Pamela was unsuccessful in being enrolled at the local kindergarten because it was full, and I feel she needs the extra time at school.[25]

The following letter reflects the perspective of many others:

> As the mother of a child whose birthday falls shortly after June 26th I wish to voice my protest against the injustice of the Education Regulations. ... A child whose birthday falls on 12th February waits only $4^1/_2$ months to begin school but those who happen to be born on June 27th must wait $7^1/_2$ months. In view of the fact that the Infant School curriculum is geared to a $2^1/_2$ year schedule something should be done to alter this. I would greatly prefer my child to have the benefit of $2^1/_2$ years of infant training rather than having her rushed through in two years so that she remains in the correct age group.[26]

Initially committed to the new regime it had established, the Department asserted that for administrative reasons the regulation was necessarily applied firmly. But the cumulative pressure of written criticism, protest motions forwarded by parent organisations, and parliamentary questions on the subject ultimately forced a consideration of alternatives.

To community-based agitation for some measure of flexibility to be restored in school admission policy, a number of other developments in the 1960s impelled reform in this direction. The Education Department had previously resisted discontinuing mid-year admission on the grounds that the practice was well established and "appears to conform to the wishes and

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[24] See various letters on dates for entrance to school, Education Dept. (SA) Registry archival files, E.D. 8/2/3

[25] Mr H. H. Sargent, Hectorville, to Minister of Education, 23 April 1965, PRO, GRS 809/001/P, Box 36, E.D. 8/2/9

[26] Mrs S. J. Voyzey to Minister of Education, 12 May 1961, E.D. 8/2/3

convenience of parents to a far greater extent than admission at the beginning of the year only."[27] In the early 1960s, however, it responded more sympathetically to lobbying by the Institute of Teachers and the SA Public Schools Committees' Association on behalf of staff in rural areas, who reiterated their predecessors' view that the second intake of new pupils invariably disrupted the organisation and teaching of infant grades in schools below Class III.[28] Taking into account also the results of surveys showing that in small schools the proportion of children enrolling mid-year was considerably less than in February and approximately half that in metropolitan infant classes, heads of Class IV - VI schools were given greater discretion under Regulation XIX(1) of 1957 to eliminate the July admission period.[29]

It was not anticipated that half-yearly entry would likewise cease in infant schools, since it was "still strongly felt that the $2^1/_2$ year course is ideal". As the Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools (former Inspector of Infant Schools, Marjory Mead) clarified the argument:

> it is desirable that there should not be a sudden, but a gradual introduction to formal work, for the well-known wide spread of ability still needs to be considered. The mid-year admission gives an excellent opportunity for this unhurried start. Little children must not be forced along. ... Children who by the first school day in February are under five years of age now have only five months to wait before admission at mid-year. To wait for twelve months is a very long time and would enormously increase the demand for Pre-Schools and Kindergartens, which are already pressed for room.
> The largest [infant] schools already have very considerable enrolments in February. To settle so many very young children happily into the new school environment is a

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27 Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Discontinuance of mid-year enrolments in small schools, 25 February 1965, PRO, GRS 809/001/P/Box 36, E.D. 8/2/7 enclosed in E.D. 8/2/1

28 SAIT General Secretary to Director of Education, letter requesting that under no circumstances should children be admitted at mid-year to primary schools below Class III "where there are no half-grades as there are in infant schools", 15 March 1960; Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Admittance of children in mid-year to primary schools below Class III, 13 April 1960, and Mid-year admissions, 6 May 1960; Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Mid-year admission of pupils in infant grades in primary schools, 19 July 1961, E.D. 8/2/1. See also Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Discontinuance of mid-year enrolments in small schools, 25 February 1965, E.D. 8/2/7, enclosed in E.D. 8/2/1

29 For details of surveys on the distribution of new entrants across the two admission periods, see A.C. Hitchcox (Research Officer), Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 12 September 1949, E.D. 179/1949 enclosed in E.D. 1/4/5; Australian Council for Educational Research, Admission to School and Promotion in Infants' Grades, Melbourne, ACER, 1957; Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Mid-year admissions, 17 August 1960, E.D. 8/2/1.
Note: It was provided in 1956 (E.D. 6629) that "If any Head Teacher, particularly of a small country school, considers that the admission of children at mid-year would embarrass the organisation or teaching work at the school, he should report the facts to the Director of Education and each case will be considered on its merits". See the notice including this provision, 'Admission of children entering school for the first time', EG (SA), 73:857, 2 December 1957, p. 338

> major task. ...To add another group, the size of the mid-year one, should the latter be abolished, would very greatly increase the clerical work and organisation.[30]

Nonetheless, having permitted an alteration to the enrolment pattern in some country schools, officers in the Primary Division began looking to proposed and actual practice interstate, in England, and especially in New Zealand, for other 'acceptable' admission schemes.

The potential for adopting an alternative model of school entry was enhanced when in 1964 the demise of half grades in infant schools undermined the historical rationale for perpetuating twice-yearly enrolment. Additionally, with a decline in fertility rates, the numbers of rising-five year olds in the population tapered off after having peaked with the 1961 cohort. Smaller enrolments meant greater opportunity to experiment with alternative entry procedures. Further, official attention was drawn to times for admitting children to school by British research on the 'birthdate effect'.[31] Simultaneously, the ascendant ideology of individual differences provided justificatory support for increasing the frequency of enrolment periods during a year.[32] Indeed, it was specifically to "encourage the acceptance throughout the school of variations within teaching groups which must be treated on an individual basis" that the 1969-70 Karmel Committee of Enquiry into Education recommended:

> Entry into school should be continuous on the basis of each child being admitted on the next school Monday following his fifth birthday, or of groups being admitted at monthly intervals according to arrangements worked out by schools.[33]

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[30] Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Mid-year admissions, 10 May 1960, E.D. 8/2/1

[31] For a summary of the (inconclusive) 1950s and 60s British studies on the relationship between intelligence and season of birth, the effect of relative age in grade, and the combined effect of relative age in grade and staggered entry to school, see Marion de Lemos, 'School Entrance Age in Australia: the current debate', Australian Association for Research in Education 1990 Annual Conference paper, p. 5. As deLemos points out elsewhere, though, this same evidence led the Plowden Committee to recommend (in 1967) that Britain should abandon its staggered school entry system in favour of admitting a single intake at the beginning of the year - a recommendation she says was "conveniently overlooked by advocates of the continuous enrolment at age five policy in Australia". (M. de Lemos, 'Long term effects of early school entry', Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 5:1, 1986, p. 6)

[32] Individual differences among children and the implications for primary school organisation became central to the concerns of educators locally, nationally and internationally during the 1960s, as evidenced by the welter of professional journal articles and books published as well as conferences convened on the subject.

[33] Education in South Australia. Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, 1969-70, Adelaide, Specialty Printers, 1971, pp. 173-4

ADMISSION TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE 1970s and 80s:

POLITICS, POLICY AND PRACTICE

The South Australian Education Department radically departed from its traditional, highly centralised approach to policy formation in acting upon the Karmel Committee's recommendation of continuous admission to school. The early 1970s witnessed a general renovation of state schooling and the commitment of a reformist Labor Government to democratisation of decision-making structures and processes throughout the public sector. In this context, the Director of Education, A. W. Jones, enumerated

> six qualities for an education system ... which I am wholeheartedly supporting as most desirable for this Education Department. They are:-
> (1) A non-authoritarian approach to educational matters, which I have preached ever since assuming office.
> (2) A concern for the individual child ...
> (3) Equality of educational opportunity, which is a well accepted aim in this state.
> (4) Diversity of educational institutions, which we believe will come from the freedom given to professional teachers.
> (5) Decentralisation of decision-making ...
> (6) Openness to a variety of ideas from all sources, which is the prime quality that I have hoped to develop in the administration of the Education Department.[34]

It was therefore consistent with the bureaucracy's new politics that, in September 1970, Jones called for parents' and teachers' views on changing school entry arrangements.[35]

Drawing on the official press release announcing the Department's intentions, an *Advertiser* editorial indicated that:

> Although the Minister of Education (Mr Hudson) says no general change ... is likely to be made before 1972, the enquiry is welcome proof of the Department's flexible outlook on this aspect of state education. ... Four systems of entry are being studied - continuous, bi-monthly, twice-a-year and yearly (in January or June).[36]

Notably, however, at Hudson's suggestion, the comments on each scheme drafted by the Director of Primary Education to better inform public opinion were omitted in the memorandum

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[34] 'News and Notes. From the Director-General: One year after Karmel', EG (SA), 88:1015, 1 March 1972, p. 55

[35] Director-General of Education, Memorandum to headmasters, infant mistresses, head teachers, welfare clubs, mothers' clubs and kindergartens: Age of admission to schools, 16 September 1970, E.D. 8/2/3

[36] 'Editorial: When should schooling begin?', The Advertiser (Adelaide), 29 September 1970

issued to schools for distribution to interested parties. Nor was the Minister's underlying concern that these comments "might be taken by some as a departmental attempt to pre-judge the issue" unfounded.[37] A judicious reading of the draft document and other correspondence on this latest move to reform South Australia's school admission policy reveals that senior officers in the Primary Division were personally committed to the New Zealand procedure of fifth-birthday (i.e., continuous) entry from the outset. The divisional head, L. A. Dodd, for example, had previously recommended this option in his overseas study report.[38]

Dodd's preference for continuous admission was particularly influenced by his visit to New Zealand, in which country, he noted, the scheme "seems to have found favour with administrators, teachers and parents".[39] Applied in South Australia, he argued, it would have the support of a good number of infant mistresses and present no organisational difficulties for teachers or problems of adjustment for the child if schools adopted family (vertical) grouping. Moreover, admitting children on or near their fifth birthday would achieve the desired outcomes of reducing the age-range among new entrants, more closely aligning the average age of transfer to secondary school with that in other Australian States, highlighting the importance of individual differences, and redressing parental dissatisfaction over their child's ineligibility to start school having turned five shortly after the fixed date for admission. For such reasons, Dodd endorsed an application in 1969 requesting that the Mistress of Infant Method at Magill Demonstration School be permitted to try out continuous entry of five-year-olds.[40] But when the 408 responses to the Director-General's memorandum were analysed and the results released in November 1970, the immediate future for extending the departmentally-preferred option appeared bleak.

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37 Minister of Education, handwritten note on the covering letter attached to the draft memorandum: Age of admission to school, 9 June 1970, E.D. 8/2/3

38 L. A. Dodd (Director of Primary Education), Report on overseas tour, August 1967-February 1968, Education Department (SA), 1968

39 Director of Primary Education to Deputy Director-General of Education, Age for admission to school of children for the first time, 9 June 1970, E.D. 8/2/3

40 Miss J. P. Sanders to Director of Primary Education, Application to experiment with new intake admission, 26 September 1969, E.D. 8/2/3

Of the entry schemes presented for public reaction, maintaining the status quo proved most popular. A breakdown of the replies by groups showed that teachers largely opted for their Institute's proposal of admission mid-year only, and next favoured retaining the present method or a single admission period in February. Little support was given to fifth-birthday enrolment or entry six times a year - partly in fear that adequate staffing would not be available, but also in conservative response to alternatives with which most classroom teachers were unfamiliar. Among parent bodies, one intake at the beginning of the year gained highest approval; all other respondents favoured the existing system of twice-yearly intakes. Additionally, the replies received from Mt. Gambier and Whyalla schools expressed no great enthusiasm for experimenting in 1971 with February-only and bi-monthly admission respectively, as the Department had planned.[41]

Undeterred by these findings, the Director of Primary Education pushed ahead the reform process by recommending that selected schools trial continuous admission after the 1971 mid-year intake. In seeking authority to proceed with this action, Dodd advised his superiors of ongoing criticism regarding the discriminatory effects of fixed entry dates and, concomitantly, the considerable influence of the Karmel Committee's recommendation on policy resolutions made at conferences of the Primary Headmasters' and Infant Mistresses' Associations. Further, he asserted, the advantages of fifth-birthday entry were gaining wider recognition as a result of staff-parent discussions held in the wake of the survey questionnaire.[42] To advance the case for experimentation with the admission of children as they turned five, Dodd also referred specifically to Kilkenny Primary School whose Principal had repeatedly written to the Department for permission to introduce the scheme. Indeed, the rationale submitted in support of the principal's initiative coincided with, perhaps even helped shape, that promulgated by key senior personnel within the Primary Division, professional organisations and schools.

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[41] Director-General of Education to Minister of Education, Entry into infant schooling (analysis of questionnaire replies and recommended action), 12 November 1970, E.D. 8/2/3

[42] Director of Primary Education to Deputy Director-General of Education, Age of entry into primary schools, 16 June 1971, E.D. 8/2/3

The Kilkenny submission argued that one obvious advantage of instituting continuous admission was that children whose birthdays currently fell between the specified enrolment dates would instead have an extended period in the kindergarten class: a matter

> of great significance in this particular school where some 70% of children are of migrant origin and up to 80% of the very high proportion of southern European origin, especially Greeks, Yugoslavs and Italians, have little or no English on entry.[43]

Apart from lengthened exposure to forms of compensatory education in such instances (a stance other proponents of fifth-birthday enrolment adopted towards children who had not experienced pre-school), attention was drawn to the fact that

> whatever is done in respect of [individualised learning] generally throughout the State in the long term, ... until some adventurous school introduces continuous entry on the fifth birthday it is difficult to see how other schools will be able to observe practices and ... how any really effective in-service and pre-service training can be given.[44]

Kilkenny staff were well placed to trial the scheme, it was contended, since they already had two years' experience of family grouping and individual progression - organisational practices which reformers viewed as valuable adjuncts to continuous admission.

Kilkenny Primary was thus a logical (and politic) inclusion in the total of six schools chosen to pioneer the New Zealand system of individual admission in South Australia, commencing on 2 August 1971. The Department also responded positively to the suggestion made in some replies to the Director-General's memorandum that the relative merits of **all** entry schemes outlined be assessed in practice. As Jones informed the Minister:

> In 1971 I am asking the Principal Research and Planning Officer to watch closely as a control group the progress of infants admitted to Whyalla and Mt. Gambier schools at February and July admissions. ... He may be able to conduct similar surveys in other centres. ... At the same time Regional Officers can sell to parents and staff the worth of experimenting with other forms of admission.[45]

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[43] Chairman, Kilkenny Primary School Committee, to Minister of Education, 29 April 1971, E.D. 8/2/3. See also Alec Talbot (Headmaster, Kilkenny P.S.) to Director-General of Education, Admission of 5 year olds, 7 June 1971

[44] Chairman, Kilkenny P.S. Committee, loc cit.

[45] Director-General of Education to Minister of Education, Entry into infant schooling, 12 November 1970, E.D. 8/2/3

Arrangements were subsequently made for schools in Mt. Gambier to trial a single intake during February 1972 of all children who turned five by July that year, while in Whyalla new entrants would enrol at the start of each term (the scheme of six entry dates a year as originally proposed having been amended to three).

At the end of 1972 these trial schemes were extensively reported on in the *Teachers' Journal.* Summarising the detailed findings Dodd (now Acting Director-General) made available for publication, it was noted that one intake in February "does nothing to reduce the inequalities that arise in setting a regulation date of entry for children who turn five throughout the year".[46] At the other end of the spectrum, continuous admission was commended in terms of its sound educational base. Yet difficulties experienced by the six pilot schools in implementing the procedure moderated their expressions of support, such that, as the *Journal* feature recorded:

> An unexpected result of the trial period has been the fairly general recommendation that ... its introduction should be gradual [and clearly] will require appropriate inservice and preservice preparation of teachers at all primary levels. It is too soon to recommend it as a general policy.[47]

In contrast, entry on the first day of each term evidently presented the least organisational problems, had merit in shortening the waiting period between admission dates compared to once- or twice-yearly enrolment, and was "practicable in the present educational climate of schools and conditions of staffing and accommodation".[48] Finally, by way of compromise, the review proposed undertaking a "guarded step" towards continuous admission in the form of entry at the beginning of each term but with authority to elect to enrol children more frequently - an alternative which had received "quite strong" support in the public opinion survey and was aligned with the policy direction now endorsed by the Teachers' Institute.

Under the circumstances it was decided not to force the pace of school entry reform State-wide, but rather to expand the experimental program in 1973 so as "to clarify the organisational and

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[46] 'Trial schemes of school admission', SA Teachers' Journal, 4:20, 6 December 1972, p. 12

[47] ibid

[48] ibid

educational issues".[49] For the same purpose, during May of that year the newly-appointed Director of Primary Education, A. E. Wood, visited schools in New Zealand. On returning, like his predecessor, Dodd, he cited the successful operation and popularity of fifth-birthday admission there as grounds for South Australia adopting the practice. Armed also with the updated results of experimentation locally, together with recent evidence indicating that "the two entry dates allowed by Regulation cause more dissatisfaction among parents than any other single issue", Wood recommended to the November meeting of Management Conference:

> 1. The admission of children on their fifth birthday be accepted in principle.
> 2. Schools should be allowed to seek approval to introduce this scheme, outlining any additional accommodation and staffing needs.[50]

Divisional heads were provided, too, with details of the administrative implications should continuous admission be instituted in stages over the next three years, as further suggested in the discussion paper Wood issued.

With the proviso that in 1974 only those schools requiring no extra teachers or classroom space be granted permission to enrol new pupils as they turned five, and that the remainder proceed on a priority basis depending on the Department's ability to resource them, the plan to phase in "this more equitable mode of entry" so that it would extend to all children by the end of 1978 was agreed to.[51] Early in the new year a ministerial statement to this effect was circulated to schools and released to the press, which duly reported that:

> Continuous admission of five-year-olds will begin in about 150 country and 25 metropolitan schools on July 1. It is part of the Department's program for more individual teaching of students and for individual progression and achievement. ..."It reduces the problems encountered by some children who fall just outside the age limit for the February or July intake", [the Minister of Education] Mr Hudson

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49 Superintendent of Primary Education to Mr G. N. Jackson (Headmaster, Stanvac P. S.), 19 July 1973, E.D. 8/2/3

50 Director of Primary Education to Director-General of Education, Age of admission to primary school (draft discussion paper), 17 October 1973; Re-drafted discussion paper and reply to marginal notes (Age of entry - primary schools), 6 November 1973; Report on the admission of children to school in three experimental approaches', E.D. 8/2/3

51 Minister of Education's statement: New Government policy on admission of five year olds to school, 24 December 1973, reproduced in Education Department Circular P76/12, E.D. 8/2/38, enclosure 25(L)8; Director-General of Education, Annual Report for 1974, SAPP, no. 44, 1975, p. 26

> said. "It means newcomers to school can be helped to settle in by fellow students who already know the ropes".[52]

In May 1976 the Director-General informed an interstate enquirer that principals were expected to discuss the new policy with teachers, parents, the school council and local kindergartens prior to applying for approval to commence the scheme. To date, he indicated, the proportion of state schools admitting children continuously was approaching half the total. It was rapidly becoming apparent to concerned authorities, however, that considerable resistance to fifth-birthday entry existed and would likely impede progress towards the goal of full implementation according to schedule. A detailed submission tendered to the Minister on behalf of the Loxton school community, appealing for government policy to be altered to three intakes a year, constituted a case in point.

Ranging widely in its criticism of the recent change, the Loxton Primary School Council argued, first, that there seemed to be no reason why all schools in the State should have continuous admission "thrust on them as a matter of overall policy. ...[S]chools should be able to determine their own policy to suit local needs".[53] Having advised against adoption of the scheme, such prescription was viewed as contrary to the concept of school autonomy in decision-making and school councillors' role in the process, which were respectively the perceived spirit and intent of A. W. Jones' 1970 'Freedom and Authority' memorandum and as defined by the 1972 Education Regulations. Second, in the Council's opinion, if Departmental officers wished to avoid parental complaints about waiting times for admission due to accident of birth, then enrolment once a term would accomplish this without the educational disadvantages to the child and difficulties for personnel in schools and kindergartens attendant upon fifth-birthday entry. In this regard, the experiences of Loxton Primary and its feeder pre-school in 1975, when children were admitted to school on seven dates across the year, were cited to demonstrate how, despite extensive planning, discussion and consultation, continuous admission engendered many problems.

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52 C. Milne (Education writer) 'Schools to take pupils when they turn five. Twice-yearly intake goes', The Advertiser, 28 March 1974, p. 3

53 D. W. Huxtable (Secretary, Loxton P. S. Council) to Minister of Education, Continuous admission, 16 September 1976, E.D. 8/2/38/25(L)8

Prominent among the 'difficulties' identified in the Loxton submission was the strain on teachers unused to small group instruction and always being confronted by new entrants who could do "practically nothing", such that one teacher averred that not only had she taught everything six times by December, it was "like having a baby every month. The new one got the necessary attention but the one six months old almost died of malnutrition".[54] Nor were those children themselves not long in the Reception class a help, as the Minister had claimed was an advantage of the new entry mode. Commenting next on the theoretical principle of individual difference which was central to the official rationale for introducing continuous admission, the school found that in practice the "wide diversification" of teachers' time and skills it required greatly decreased their effectiveness to each child. Moreover, a point was reached in the year when infant classrooms were at maximum capacity and additional enrolments could only be absorbed by overcrowding, or reorganising middle primary grades. The school's Principal was thus led to conclude that "teachers needed the persistence of Job, the strength of Superman and the dedication of the priesthood" to make continuous entry succeed.[55]

Parental criticism of the scheme focused on their reduced contact with the Preparatory class teacher and principal compared to that available with twice-yearly enrolment. By the same token, more frequent opportunities for children to commence at school reputedly lowered the previously high rate of parental involvement in the affairs of the Loxton Pre-School Centre, stemming from the attitude: "My child will only be here for a few months". The pre-school staff further opposed continuous admission on the grounds that the consequent "restless movement" through kindergarten caused program chaos and severely limited their ability to spend time doing "more mature" things with older children. From the Director's perspective, exit administrivia was an "ongoing chore", while finances became a "confusing conglomeration" of fees having to be collected throughout the year since no fixed amount per term or half-year could be charged.

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[54] ibid

[55] ibid

The Loxton School Council astutely observed that continuous admission seemed to require low class numbers, and that "whilst the generous staffing in schools in recent years is acknowledged, economic cuts could force pupil-teacher ratios to rise in the future"[56] - as indeed they did with the onset of economic recession in South Australia in 1975. Councillors were also critical of

> the continual restlessness caused by educational innovations, especially those thrust on [teachers] by administrators in Adelaide. It could well be that, in the long run, more traditional methods prove to be better. The Department's haste to declare a blanket policy after such a brief trial period is a matter of some concern.[57]

For all the reasons articulated, the Loxton school felt justified in moving to once-a-term entry in 1976, this being seen as a "reasonable, workable compromise in balancing the needs of teachers and children against the stated wishes of parents (i.e., for starting on 5th birthday)".[58]

That Loxton's voice was not crying in the wilderness is evidenced by the motion passed eighteen months later by the Riverland Association of School Councils in support of once-a-term admission, and another carried unanimously by 21 principals from the Central Northern Region. The latter motion stated

> that each individual school after assessing its needs and resources, and after full consultation between staffs, councils and parents, should have the freedom to decide upon the organisation for admission in the school.[59]

These principals additionally requested the Department's consideration of several matters before it decided to make continuous admission compulsory. In relation to the link officially promulgated between vertical grouping and admitting children to school on an individual basis, it was pointed out that the two organisational practices were not synonymous: in some schools fifth-birthday entry was working well with reception classes and straight grades. Nor could the

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[56] ibid

[57] ibid

[58] ibid

[59] Secretary, Principals' Group, Central Northern Region (District no.2) to Minister of Education, Motion re. compulsory education, 24 April 1978, ED 8/1/141A. See also Secretary, Riverland Association of School Councils, to Director-General of Education re. motion passed at last meeting, n.d. (received 28 April 1978), E.D. 8/2/3

much publicised figure of 75% of schools having adopted the new scheme by the beginning of 1978 go unquestioned, since this did not represent 75% of **admissions** - many large schools having retained two entry dates due to staff and accommodation shortage or scepticism about the rationale for change. Indeed, some opined that the continuous admission policy was politically motivated; others saw the quality of teaching rather than any particular method or organisational model to be the main factor in treating the child as an individual. Furthermore, they contended, no sound proof had been presented that this mode of entry was educationally advantageous to children.

The disruptive effects of continuous admission on classroom organisation and teaching, especially as numbers built up in the latter part of the year, and the claim that children's interests were **not** served by this entry mode, emerged as dominant themes in other correspondence received by the Director-General and Minister of Education.[60] In some schools, too, infant teachers were

> disappointed, to say the least, that we were not afforded the opportunity to present our viewpoints in any recent meetings or discussions, as were held between Departmental Officers and School Principals, where no teacher involved with continuous intake was invited.[61]

The Central Northern Principals' Group took up this concern, advising the Minister that:

> Since August 1970 when the 'Freedom and Authority' memorandum was issued, the emphasis in the Dept. has been for decision-making to be pushed down as close to school level as possible, with the emphasis on each school staff making professional decisions in consultation with parents. Although the Dept. is covered by two phrases, 'within the broad framework of the Education Act' and 'the general policy set by the Director of your Division', it would seem a retrograde step to many to bring about such a major change in policy without consulting all teachers who will be affected to determine their feelings on the matter.[62]

At the same time, the Primary Principals' Association recommended that schools be authorised to formulate their own admission procedures within the parameters of terminal entry and fifth-

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[60] See, for example, letters to the Minister of Education from Chairman, Para Hills P. S. Council, 14 April 1978; Mr R. Millhouse (Member for Mitcham) re. Westbourne Park P. S., 3 July 1978; Mrs W. I. Billinghurst and other signatories re. Marion P. S., 16 August 1978, E.D. 8/1/141A

[61] Junior Primary teachers, Sturt Primary School, to Minister of Education, 7 December 1977, E.D. 8/1/141

[62] Secretary, Principals' Group, Central Northern Region (District no.2), to Minister of Education, 24 April 1978, E.D. 8/1/141A

birthday enrolment. On this point, the Assistant Director of Curriculum-Early Childhood Education suggested that principals were interpreting current policy too rigidly, whereupon they replied that

> either the policy has been interpreted more strictly by Education Department Officers when speaking to principals or else there has been some sort of breakdown in communication because there are few principals aware of the degree of flexibility which you indicated is already built into the policy.[63]

The Department initially adopted a somewhat defensive stance in formally responding to criticisms of continuous admission. The reply to Loxton's submission, for example, reiterated that the policy decision was made for educational reasons in the interests of children, while motives for phasing in the scheme included the need for inservice education to support teachers and so that staff could plan and prepare adequately before introducing the procedure in their school. In countering charges that the imposition of continuous entry system-wide contradicted moves to devolve decision-making to school level, it was pointed out that schools were required to work within general policy as determined by the Director of Primary Education and communicated by circular. Regarding 'school readiness' levels among just-turned-fives, councillors were reminded that attendance was not compulsory until age six and children could be enrolled at any time between their fifth and sixth birthdays. Critics were to note, too, that parents generally appreciated their child's equal rights with others to start school on turning five irrespective of their birth date under the new provisions. Moreover, it would be "inconceivable" to change the policy at a stage when (in 1976) half the State's schools had implemented it.[64]

In response to the 'difficulties' schools reported experiencing, the Department defined the real problem as being the need to provide for children's continuous learning, not their continuous entry to school. This need was represented as having always been there, but in becoming more apparent under the new admission policy teachers were challenged to address it. The official solution, then, was for staff to change their ways: abandon traditional graded classroom

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63 Principal, Para Hills Junior Primary School to Minister of Education, 5 July 1978, E.D. 8/1/141A.

64 Assistant Director of Schools-Early Childhood Education to Director-General of Education, Letter from the Loxton Primary School Council Inc. on policy on admission of five year olds into schools, 8 October 1976.. E.D. 8/2/38

organisation in favour of vertical grouping, adopt individual and small-group instead of whole-class teaching methods, provide a curriculum matching children's own interests and abilities, and plan classes on the basis of the full year's enrolment.[65]

In 1978, however, the validity of many concerns expressed by school constituencies began to be acknowledged. The February 8 issue of the *Education Gazette* announced that during this year the Department would concentrate on providing the necessary conditions in terms of staffing, resource material and inservice training for those schools already implementing continuous admission. Other schools were not required to commence the scheme as yet, but would be encouraged to make preparations for doing so through a "positive program of support" to teachers. Meanwhile, a project team of the newly-established Early Childhood Curriculum Committee would compile a Continuous Admission Resource Folio in two stages: a guide to administrative procedures, class arrangements and liaison with parents and pre-schools, followed by a listing of alternative resources to assist teachers in planning the curriculum to cater for children's continuous learning.

Further ground was ceded to the opposition when a notice gazetted in July advised schools that:

> Although the original intention of the policy was the admission of children on or immediately following their fifth birthday, there is [now] flexibility within the scheme to allow for small groups of children to enrol together. This may approximate monthly enrolment. It is recommended that this be a flexible arrangement so that in consultation with the parents involved a small group of children may commence on a date convenient to their birthdays.[66]

This statement was intended to serve as an interim guide to principals. For, in May, subsequent to a meeting of Teachers' Institute and departmental officers at which the factors influencing schools' decision not to adopt continuous admission were discussed, approval was given for the establishment of a committee to review school entry policy. Under the chairmanship of the Director-Research and Planning, this committee was charged with making recommendations by

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65 For such prescription, see Minister of Education to Junior Primary teachers, Sturt P. S., 5 January 1978, E.D. 8/1/141; Hon. Dr Don Hopgood (Minister of Education), 'Article on Continuous Admission', SA School Post, 10:3, September 1978, p. 22

66 'Admission of children to school', EG (SA), 6:21, 12 July 1978, p. 504

1 December on the present policy's continuance or variation as well as on associated policies and practices. To assist its deliberations, written submissions were invited and a meeting was negotiated with Junior Primary Teachers' Association members so they could 'freely discuss' the issues.

Rather than undertake its own survey of attitudes and practices regarding fifth-birthday entry, the Continuous Admission Review Committee decided to rely on the results of questionnaires distributed by the Junior Primary Principals' Association (JPPA) in June 1978.[67] Notably, from the 63 responses it had received, the JPPA concluded that the concept, if not the actual operation, of continuous admission was generally accepted by principals and teachers - although, again, flexibility of implementation was seen as essential to meet the differing needs of schools and parents. Accordingly, it recommended that where possible children should be admitted to school on a monthly or more frequent basis. Such endorsement of existing policy, albeit with some modification, was reinforced by further links forged between education authorities in South Australia and New Zealand during 1978. Specifically, the candle long held by Miss R. N. Rogers (Assistant Director of Curriculum-ECE) for fifth-birthday entry burned even more brightly after she attended the February NZ/OECD Conference at Massey University, and the August New Education Fellowship meetings in Adelaide, where the NZ Council for Educational Research 'Going to School Project' was reported on.

In her official capacity, Miss Rogers had been a driving force behind South Australia's change to a policy of continuous admission; just as now it was in no small measure due to her influence, with backing from colleagues within the Early Childhood Section and prominent school principals, that the Review Committee recommended the policy's retention. Nonetheless, the ground-swell of school-community opposition was also heeded, for in seeking to resolve "the conflicting principles of uniformity and local choice" the Committee proposed that the following policy become effective from 1 January 1980:

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[67] Junior Primary Principals' Association, Details of questionnaire sent by Sub-committee on Continuous Admission, June 1978; Some implications from the survey of admission policies of schools; Draft copy of JPPA admission policy, JPPA archives, Forbes J. P. School

> The admission of children aged five shall be provided for in all (junior) primary schools at the beginning of each school term, but within that provision schools should endeavour to receive intakes more frequently. The choice will be made on the basis of the interests of children after consultation between principal, staff and local community, having regard to the arrangement adopted in neighbourhood schools, if appropriate.
> The enrolment of a child aged five is a matter of parental choice and when this choice is made, the child shall be admitted to school at the next intake.[68]

Ministerial approval subsequently being bestowed on this 'compromise policy', as it was officially viewed, information regarding it and related matters was gazetted in 1979. Absolute adherence to its provisions was required from the beginning of the 1980 school year.

Reviews of enrolment procedures instituted under the new policy revealed a "significant level" of parental dissatisfaction with those applied by certain schools - in some instances because they had not been consulted. Evidence confirmed, too, the fear expressed by one Regional Director that intakes would become the norm unless something stronger than 'encouragement' to admit children more frequently was incorporated in the policy. A small-scale survey late in 1980 suggested that a major reason for schools' tendency to revert to less flexible arrangements was "teachers' reluctance to accept multiple groupings, which indicates a lack of confidence in their ability to deal with a range of individual differences".[69] In 1981-82, other schools were reported as still not having abandoned twice-yearly admission, whereupon they were instructed to at least provide for entry once a term. Yet more were apparently persuaded to change to continuous admission in order to improve their staffing prospects.[70] Indeed, as new enrolments declined State-wide, some principals were known to 'fudge the figures' and so take advantage of the quite differently-intended policy whereby schools were staffed from the beginning of the year on the basis of estimated enrolments up to and including the intake at the commencement of third term.

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[68] Committee to Review Continuous Admission Policy, Report to Policy Committee, December 1978 (revised July 1979), pp. 11, 26, E.D. 8/1/141. The same wording was adopted in the policy statement approved by the Minister of Education and published in EG (SA), 7:23, 25 July 1979, p. 525

[69] Associate Director of Curriculum to Deputy Director-General of Education (Resources), Review of school admission policy and practice, 7 May 1981, E.D. 8/1/141. On the issue of terminal intakes becoming the norm, see Regional Director of Education - Murraylands to Deputy Director-General (Schools), Continuous admission policy - comments, E.D. 8/2/3

[70] Minister of Education to Director-General of Education, School staffing - Central Western Region, 15 December 1981; Telex message in reply from the Regional Director, 21 December 1981, E.D. 8/2/3

Nor did the implementation of more frequent admission times produce corresponding reform of classroom organisation and curriculum practice in all schools, as sought by Early Childhood officers. This less than satisfactory outcome was attributed to junior primary teachers' failure to appreciate or understand the philosophical principles underlying the change to continuous admission.[71] However, with the aid of the Resource Folio, a brochure for parents, and a film entitled 'First Days' used for preservice and inservice teacher education, schools gradually conformed to the policy itself - even if obedience was often to the minimum requirement which, with the move to a four-term school year, was increased to four admission periods annually.

Children's experience of starting school in the 1970s and 80s, then, was determined by the particular school attended. Some were able to begin on or near their fifth birthday where individual, weekly or fortnightly entry procedures were instituted. More commonly, they enrolled with others in a group whose numbers varied according to school size and whether intakes were accepted on a monthly, once-a-term or (until the early 80s) twice-yearly basis. At the level of official policy, officers in the Early Childhood/Primary Directorate with the support of key principals relentlessly pursued their objective of effecting system-wide school entry practice on the New Zealand model, but local school opinion successfully wrought a series of concessions so that the legislation finally enacted represented a much compromised version of 'continuous admission'. As such, the policy became no longer known by this title, but instead: "Admission of children aged five years".

It is lastly significant to note that, irrespective of the problems which accompanied its introduction, the more flexible mode of school entry which was extended to all schools by 1981 did produce the penultimate effect, from a bureaucratic perspective, of narrowing pupils' ages in admission classes to a mean of 5.00 years in infant (Reception - Grade 2) schools and 5.01 years in 'ordinary' (Reception - Grade 7) primary schools. [See the figures for 1968-81, Tables A.12 and A.13, Appendix B.] No sooner had this outcome been secured, though, than it was contested by the Keeves Committee of Enquiry into Education, upon whose recommendations the first years of government schooling in South Australia were restructured. Consequently,

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[71] National Conference, 'First Years of School in Perspective', Adelaide, May 1984, 'Situation Reports - South Australia', p. 56

whilst children's ages on entry to school remained at the level achieved in the early 80s, after 1984 the average grade-age in Reception rose by five to six months for the reasons discussed in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

CONCLUSION

Functioning alongside policies regulating age of entry to school during the twentieth century, and in the broader context of graded school organisation, the South Australian Education Department's efficiency-motivated device of restricting admission to infant classes to designated times of the year served the 'useful' purpose of bringing children together into similar chronological age groups at the beginning of their school life. Administratively and instructionally convenient though this may have been, the essentially urban model of semi-annual admission, which suited arrangements in the infant department of large schools, was constantly challenged when it came to its application in non-infant schools and those in rural areas especially. Indeed, from the outset, a single admission period at the start of first term was favoured by many teachers - most notably at non-departmentalised primary schools whose smaller enrolments comprised grounds for subsequent exemption from the relevant regulation. By the same token, infant specialists concerned to preserve the six-monthly grades and promotion tradition in their division of state schooling fought off efforts to have the second intake period abolished. This meant that for almost half a century after the bureaucracy moved to impose fixed entry dates, significant differences existed with respect to when children actually commenced school, and hence in their relative ages in admission classes, according to whether they resided in Adelaide (or a large town) or in an outlying sparsely-settled district.

However, once junior primary schooling was organised on a common basis across the State in the late 1960s, and with more frequent entry times being a requirement from 1980 onwards, the point at which children began school life and their ages on enrolment diverged much less in relation to the size of the school accessible to them. This is not to further suggest that the fifth-birthday scheme which replaced twice-a-year entry went uncontested, or was administered uniformly. Just as had proved to be the case under the 'old' admission procedure, parents, teachers and school principals agitated successfully for modifications in official policy. Often,

too, the Department's allied intention of reforming classroom organisation and curriculum practice so that individual differences might be accommodated was frustrated: an indication of how pervasive was chronological age as the basic principle of graded schooling.

Having detailed in this and preceding chapters the age standards established for children's transition from home to school, and from junior to upper primary studenthood, it is pertinent to consider how the progress of scholars through the infant/primary course of instruction also came to be regulated on the basis of chronological age. The next chapter thus examines a key aspect of this process: the construction of the 'normal', 'retarded' and 'accelerated' child in relation to the 'educational ages' affixed to the syllabus for those grades into which elementary schooling was divided.

CHAPTER 4

AGE-GRADING AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF NORMALITY AND RETARDATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the way 'normality' and 'retardation' came to refer to the age-grade status of pupils in the twentieth-century primary school. It argues that the retarded scholar, as distinct from those who made 'orderly' progress through the elementary course of instruction in conformity with the official age for each grade level, was a product of bureaucratic attempts to secure a close fit between age and grade - after 1915 a key index of efficiency in the government school system. Turn-of-the-century developments in child psychology, accounting and measurement gave form and impetus to this quest. However, the origins of compulsory attendance, graded school organisation and age standards, also central to the definition and experience of 'over-ageness', lie in the colonial period of South Australia's history. Having reviewed late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century schooling policy and practice with respect to rates of student progress, the chapter outlines how the Education Department perceived and dealt with 'the retardation problem'. It concludes with a discussion of which children were 'too old' for their classes.

In examining the meanings that normality and retardation acquired within a particular institutional context, the following account challenges the common-sense understanding of these concepts as pre-existing categories into which people 'naturally' fall by virtue of innate differences in physiological or psychological capacity. Its emphasis, rather, on understanding the normal and retarded child as social constructs, and the historical specificity and dynamics of the process involved, is informed by R. W. Connell and his associates' important contribution to social theory. Further insights are derived from the work of McCallum, Tyler, Snow, Gillespie, Lewis and Miller. The relevance of their writings to the subject of this chapter is discussed in the Introduction. Lastly, the account builds upon existing South Australian studies of promotion rates in the graded elementary schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

century, noting that these leave scope for a more thorough investigation of the growing significance of chronological age in relation to student progress from one class to the next.

STUDENT PROGRESS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY EFFICIENT STATE SCHOOL

By the mid-1940s in South Australia, three meanings of the term 'retardation' were distinguishable in educational discourse: over-ageness, mental sub-normality, and scholastic under-achievement. As the Education Department Research Officer, A. C. Hitchcox, elaborated by means of an example:

> Young Tom Macaulay, an outstandingly bright lad, is ten years and seven months old, and he is in Grade VII. Educationally, that is to say, his age is eleven or twelve, and so he may be considered an advanced child. If he were only in Grade III he would be considered retarded, as his educational age would be only seven or eight. An intelligence test given by the psychologist, however, shows that Tom has a mental age of fourteen years and three months. He is obviously much advanced in mental capacity, but when we realise that, in Grade VII, he is doing the work designed for children only eleven or twelve years old, we must regard him as educationally retarded. If, on the other hand, his mental age, as revealed by the intelligence test, were only nine years and six months, he would be mentally retarded.[1]

The crucial point to note here is that the first type of retardation, with which this chapter is principally concerned, was defined in reference to an 'educational age' affixed to the syllabus for the various grades into which elementary schooling was divided. This notion of a 'normal grade-age', formulated on the basis of assumptions about the ability of an 'average child' at a given age to undertake school work at a particular level of difficulty, has its roots in the late-nineteenth century. It is thus to the beginnings of graded instruction and the age-base of compulsory schooling which developed subsequent to state intervention in education that we must return for elucidation of the problem posed by children whose chronological age was greater than the standard age for the grade in which they were placed.

Neither retardation nor its converse, acceleration, existed in the early colonial period of South Australian educational history. Within the mostly small, casually organised private schools

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[1] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - I', Education Gazette (SA), 60:696, 15 July 1944, p.141

whose often untrained teachers imparted the rudiments of learning to a broad age-range of pupils, student progress was essentially an individual matter. Educational status was described by naming the page reached in the book used for each subject studied, and it was from this page that a pupil would proceed after any break in what was frequently an erratic school career.[2] In those schools which sought government aid under Ordinance No. 11 of 1847, however, students' proficiency and progress were required to be assessed by a publicly-conducted oral examination held at least once a year. Although no standard that pupils should attain by the examination date was specified in this proviso, such a corollary was a logical development when the state assumed a more direct role in schooling.

In the wake of the apparent failure of the 1847 Ordinance to bolster schooling provision for the children of colonists, the Central Board of Education established by the 1851 Education Act incorporated both examinations and graded instruction in its model of 'the good school'. Two essential ingredients of the formula which was later to differentiate between the 'normal' and 'retarded' child in the primary school were henceforth linked. The request to licensed teachers that pupils be arranged in two to five classes in accordance with the graded lesson books of the Irish National School Society or those of the British and Foreign School Society was perceived by the Board as an important first step in instituting a uniform system of teaching[3] - one which aimed to substitute whole class instruction of homogeneous ability groups for 'inefficient' individualised methods. Relatedly, exam marks would provide a comparative measure of students' academic progress and thereby their suitability for promotion to a higher class; and of the teacher's efficiency in bringing them up to a pre-determined standard of attainment.

As the Inspector of Schools, William Wyatt, revealed in his reports, suggestion and financial incentive (the limits of the Board's influence) proved insufficient to secure these objects during

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[2] For some insights into early colonial schooling, see B. Hyams, L. Trethewey, B. Condon, M. Vick & D. Grundy, Learning and Other Things. Sources for a social history of education in South Australia, Adelaide, SA Government Printer, 1988, chapter 1

[3] Central Board of Education, Minute no. 1024, 3 December 1853, PRO, GRG 50/1. See also 'Regulations of the Central Board ... for the Observance of Licensed Teachers', SAGG, 26 April 1860, p. 378

the 1850s and 60s. In addition to his numerous references to pupils' irregular and unpunctual attendance rendering methodical arrangements almost nugatory, Wyatt expressed concern that:

> It is only in the large schools [of which there were very few] ... that classification can at all be carried out; so that there is a great preponderance of individual teaching which involves a serious loss of the children's time, with much additional labor to the master or mistress. ... Much difficulty arises in estimating the progress of pupils from the diversity of ages at which they first are sent to school; and it is barely possible to institute a comparison between the attainments of pupils belonging to different schools, as the first scholar in one may scarcely be on a par with the average of scholars in another.[4]

Under the aegis of a newly-constituted Board in 1874, the ideal of uniform instruction within a graded classroom structure found concrete expression in the establishment of the first model school and the regulations issued for such others as were to provide a standard of organisation for the public schools generally. Notably, clearly-defined Standards of Proficiency now ordered the curriculum for the various grades into which an 'exemplary' school was divided: those comprising the infant department, and Classes I to V in separate boys' and girls' departments.[5] Building on this foundation, the compulsory attendance clauses of the 1875 Education Act and ensuing regulations detailing the features of 'efficient' state schooling gave more shape to the system upon which institutional constructs of normality and retardation were to be premised.

From 1876, the proficiency standards for model schools formed those of the Inspector's annual examination in all state schools. A note accompanying the published exam program to the effect that children in any one class would be expected to know the work of the class/es below served to remind teachers that lock-step progression through the standards was the new official norm. The regulations issued by the Council of Education (which replaced the Board in 1875) further stipulated that classification of pupils into an appropriate grade on enrolment at school and any promotion thereafter was to be made according to their attainments.[6]

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[4] Report of the Inspector of Schools, SAGG , 1853, pp. 98-9

[5] For details of model school organisation and proficiency standards, see SAPP, vol 2, no. 27, 1874, p. 7; 'Regulations of City Model Schools', SAGG, 9 April 1874, pp. 589-90; SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, Appendix to Minutes of Evidence, pp. 223-9

[6] SAGG, Gazette Extraordinary No. 2, 7 January 1876, pp. 37-45

But superimposed on achievement-based grade standards were age standards; firstly in the form of a ruling that children over seven were not to remain in an infant department other than with an inspector's permission. That is, irrespective of their ability, knowledge or prior school experience, at seven years of age pupils were to be placed in Class I and prepared to take the exam for that standard on the next inspectorial visit. To the regulation providing for the removal of children over seven to boys' and girls' departments within large schools so organised, another was added in 1885: that no child under seven was to be promoted from the Junior Division. Secondly, an average age was designated in connection with each standard: six, eight, nine and a half, eleven, and twelve and a half years in the Junior Division and Class I, II, III, and IV respectively. In this regard, J. A. Hartley, President of the Education Council, used chronological age as an index of children's mental capacity in devising the attainment standards which formed the basis of graded school organisation.[7] Accordingly, age constituted another dimension of pupil classification and promotion - one that over time was to assume increasing significance.

Age standards were also created for school entry and leaving by the 1875 legislation which compelled all children between the ages of seven and thirteen to attend an 'efficient' school for at least seventy days in each half year. Administrative policy, however, subsequently set the commencing age at five and exemption from the legal requirements applied to children who were ill, lived too far from the nearest school, or had attained the Compulsory Standard (that of Class IV). In relation to the age and attainment standards previously outlined, pupils' actual age on starting school and in terms of grade level reached at leaving became central to the definition and experience of retardation.

How, then, did these reform initiatives combine to construct notions of 'normality' and 'retardation' with respect to age-in-grade, and at what point in the history of primary schooling in South Australia did the rate of retardation on this measure emerge as a major problem?

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[7] For Hartley's account of how the average ages were fixed and later deleted from the examination programme, see SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, Minutes of Evidence, pp. 178-9

Under the administration of a reconstructed Education Department after 1878, retarded progress in the public elementary schools largely signified examination failure and consequent grade repetition. Achievement of the required standard for promotion to the next highest class was not simply a function of mental ability. Obtaining the requisite marks was also dependent on a pupil's regular attendance, and on compliance with those aspects of efficient schooling referred to in modern times as the 'hidden curriculum' but which in the 1880s and 90s were both new and contested. The social class, gender and urban/rural dimensions of this equation in the South Australian context have been well documented and explicated by Davey, Miller and Wimshurst.[8] The significance of age in its relationship to attainment-based grade standards, however, has received considerably less attention.

The course of instruction having been organised into discrete segments with a prescribed quota of content to be covered by the time of the examination, together with the vigorous promulgation of whole class methods in lieu of individualised tuition, meant that children who 'missed time' were especially likely to fail. Moreover, the fusion of subjects into grades, which were experienced as whole units, meant that re-completion necessarily entailed an additional period in the same class as opposed to merely improving results in the subjects failed. In this regard it is clear from the available evidence that lack of facility in 'Correct English' and/or arithmetic was particularly responsible for children having to repeat a grade - just as proficiency in reading, modified by arithmetic, was the main basis of initial classification of pupils.

The system of payment-by-results, introduced to discipline teachers into the new order of things, was also a cause of pupils being retained in a lower class, since teachers took full advantage of the regulation allowing them to withdraw from examination those whose attendance or length of enrolment prior to the Inspector's visit fell below a specified level.

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[8] For example: P. Miller, Long Division. State Schooling in South Australian Society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, chapters 3 & 4; I. Davey, 'Patterns of Inequality: school attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in J. Hurt (ed.) Childhood, Youth and Education in the Late Nineteenth Century, Great Britain, History of Education Society, 1981, pp. 1-30; K. Wimshurst, 'Formal schooling and social structure in a working class municipality: Hindmarsh in South Australia, 1895-1910', ANZHES Journal, 7:1, Autumn 1978, pp. 1-15 ; I. Davey & K.Wimshurst, 'Understanding irregular school attendance: beyond the rural-urban dichotomy' in R. K. Goodenow & W. E. Marsden (eds.) The City and Education in Four Nations, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992

Others whom they deemed unlikely to pass were simply not presented, for such instances would otherwise bring down the class percentage upon which the teacher's stipend was partially dependent.[9] Indeed, a certain amount of failure was built into the exam standards themselves: it was not the Inspectorate's intention that every child should make uniform progress through the elementary course. As Hartley, now Inspector-General of Schools, commented in his 1880 Report :

> Our standards are not supposed to be fixed in such a way that a teacher can go on year after year getting 95 to 98 per cent, and it must be manifest to any thinking man that if nearly all the children can pass the various standards at a year's interval the work must be arranged **according to the mental capacity of the dullest**, or almost the dullest, children in the class. We have rather aimed at fixing the different standards in such a way that the average boy or girl can pass with fair work and attendance and good instruction.[10] [original emphasis]

An inevitable outcome of these devices to preserve attainment-based grade standards and classroom organisation was a wide disparity in the ages of pupils in any one class, and a significant number of children who left school on reaching the upper age limit of compulsion without achieving the Compulsory Standard. The first issue was a subject of inspectors' statistical record-keeping for several years after average ages were included in the examination program; the latter became a concern after the turn of the century when the state moved to extend its influence into the realm of secondary education. Both were brought into sharper focus by overseas developments in child accounting and measurement which began to impact on the local educational scene in the early 1900s.

The age range of pupils in attainment-grouped classes under the new system of classification and promotion is illustrated by Joseph March's experience at Red Hill Public School in 1877. He wrote:

> Some big fellows of 16 and others in their early 20s know little more than the alphabet. The teacher divided us into four grades - the junior division, first, second and third classes. Three of us March brothers aged 13, 11 and 9 were placed in the

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[9] Statistics on examination attendance and promotions in comparison with total enrolments for each inspectorial district were published in the annual Education Report (SAPP, no. 44)

[10] Inspector-General's Report, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1881, p. xii

Table 4.1 Age range of students from selected occupational categories in Class I to IV, Hindmarsh Public School, 1884, 1899

	Class I		Class II		Class III		Class IV	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Bourgeois:								
1884	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	9-11	14	10-11	10-13
1899	7-10	7-9	9 -12	9 -10	9 -13	8 -12	10-12	12
Skilled:								
1884	5-11	6-11	7-12	8-10	9-10	9-12	10-12	11-16
1899	7-11	6-11	7-12	8-11	8-12	9-13	10-13	9-13
Labourer:								
1884	5-12	7-11	7-11	7-12	9-12	8-13	10-13	10-12
1899	7-11	7-10	8-12	9-13	11-12	11-12	10-12	11-14

Table 4.2 Percentage of students from selected occupational categories passing the Compulsory Standard at Hindmarsh Public School, 1884-1891, 1892-1899

	1884-91			1892-99		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Bourgeoisie:						
under 13	12	12	12	12	23	17
13+	28	24	26	21	61	38
Skilled workers:						
under 13	7	8	7	12	12	12
13+	17	12	15	30	38	34
Labourers:						
under 13	7	5	6	5	5	5
13+	15	10	13	31	29	30
Total students:						
under 13	7	7	7	10	12	11
13+	17	12	15	31	41	36

Source: Ian Davey, 'Patterns of Inequality: School attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in J. Hurt (ed.), Childhood, Youth and Education in the Late Nineteenth Century, History of Education Society of Great Britain, 1981, pp. 25-26

> 3rd class ... with pupils up to 23 years with beards almost rivalling that of the Head teacher.[11]

Ian Davey's quantitative analysis of the Hindmarsh Public School records, which details pupils' age in grade by sex and parent occupation group for the period 1884-1899, confirms that the age range within individual classes was exceptionally large - particularly in the earlier grades. He notes that in 1884, for example, whereas the average (educational) age was eight years for Class I, the sons and daughters of skilled workers ranged in age from five to eleven and six to eleven respectively. In the same grade, the age range for labourers' sons and daughters was five to twelve and five to eleven. The ages of the boys and girls from these two groups in Class II, with its standard age of nine and a half years, similarly ranged widely: seven to twelve and eight to thirteen for the sons and daughters of skilled workers; seven to eleven and seven to twelve for those from labouring backgrounds. This contrasted with the age clustering of children from bourgeois families, whether male or female, within a three year range in both grades. Even in 1899, as Table 4.1 on the preceding page reveals, four- and five-year age ranges within the one class remained common.

Davey cites additional figures to demonstrate links between late entry into the school system, the high rate of geographical mobility, irregularity of attendance, and the incidence of examination failure at Hindmarsh (again by sex and parent occupation group), which he argues were responsible for the extent of deviation from bureaucratically-defined grade ages. In the years from 1884 to 1891, he calculated, only 46% of the sons of the bourgeoisie, 33% of the sons of skilled workers and 21% of the sons of labourers who were in the school for three or more years were promoted annually. The equivalent figures for girls were 45%, 34% and 14%. Moreover, in the same period, less than seven per cent of both boys and girls under the age of thirteen passed the Class IV (Compulsory Certificate) examination before leaving the school. Nor did success rates improve significantly in the years 1892-99: less than 10% of boys and under 12% of girls at Hindmarsh achieved the compulsory standard prior to their withdrawal from school. Again, though, the chances of examination success at the end of Class IV varied

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[11] A. March, Pioneering Experiences of Joseph March and his Family, 1846-1880 (compiled 1949), MLSA, D2960(L)

according to parent occupation group, as Table 4.2 (reproduced below Table 4.1) shows. Davey thus concludes: "The common experience of students was to repeat at least one grade and a yearly progression through the classes was rare ... the classes in no way could be considered age graded".[12]

In 1879, discrepancies between the actual and official grade-age of pupils in each class were investigated by Inspectors Dewhirst and Burgan. On analysing the data for the public and provisional schools in their respective districts, they noted instances of an "excess of [average] age" up to 3+ years above the Departmental norms - occurring most frequently in country schools. In thus referring to 'over-ageness' in relation to grade standards for the very first time, the inspectors proceeded to articulate its causes: parental neglect of children's education in early life, improper classification by teachers, and evasion of the law requiring attendance at an 'efficient' school from the age of seven so that

> many new scholars, through the action of school visitors are brought into the schools, who, at eleven or twelve years of age could only be placed in the first or second classes.[13]

Beyond non-promotion, then, being over-age for a grade was also a function of making a late start to school, accompanied by inadequate grounding in the basics prior to enrolment. Regarding teachers' poor classification of pupils upon admission, Dewhirst and Burgan both acknowledged the real difficulty experienced when confronted by an obvious lack of correspondence between children's ages and their attainments. In fact, so fraught was the endeavour to pair the two standards as provided for in the 1876 Regulations, the average ages were deleted from the examination program after 1878 - without ever having been operational, moreover, with respect to the bureaucracy's 'plan for calculating payment to a school'. As Hartley outlined to the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts in 1882:

> When the first regulations were issued, in the year 1876, we fixed the average age for each class, and I think some intimation was given that at the next year's examination, if the children were not up to the standard of an average age,

[12] I. Davey, 'Patterns of Inequality: school attendance and social structure in the nineteenth century, Canada and Australia' in J. Hurt (ed.) Childhood, Youth and Education in the Late nineteenth Century, Great Britain, History of Education Society, 1981, p. 14. See pp. 12-15 for details of the other statistics referred to.

[13] Inspectors' Reports, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 35, 1879, p. 16. See also SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1880, pp. 2, 21

> arrangements would be made to reduce the percentages. This was merely tentative. The idea was taken from the Victorian system [of payment-by-results, whereby one twelfth of the marks a class gained in the annual examination was deducted for each month by which the average age of that class exceeded the specified grade-age]. ... We never brought any such rule into force in our department, because our inspectors, on consideration, thought it was not a good rule. I believe teachers are able to work it in Victoria by getting a very sharp child in one class to balance a dull child, so that if the [official educational] age in a class is ten, one child of eight will allow another child of twelve to be in that class. ... [I]t is a perfectly fair way to manage it ... but the temptation is to push a sharp child a little too fast.[14]

Introduction of an "age test", the Headmaster of Kapunda Model School further argued, would be unwise since

> teachers might have very different pupils to deal with ... and there are some schools where they haven't much of a chance, simply because the children are not allowed to attend regularly. [A]ge is not the only factor in the calculation. The number in each class and the average attendance should also be considered.[15]

Then, too, the signatory "J.A.H." (a private teacher of long standing) stated in opposition to the notion that all children should be required at certain specified ages to pass certain examinations (which was implicit in the 1876 Regulations and had been resurrected by a newspaper correspondent in 1880):

> [S]uch a regulation would simply be unworkable, especially in country districts. ... It is only since the compulsory clauses have come into operation that many parents realize the necessity of sending children to school. One consequence of this is that in some schools you will find boys of nine, ten, or upwards who have received little or no previous education, and consequently they will be far behind younger pupils in every branch of school knowledge. How would the age test operate then? I am arguing from facts within my own experience. ... For the present I would suggest that, instead of a pupil being required to reach a certain standard at a certain age, he should be required to show a certain proficiency in proportion to the time he has been at school, due respect being had to the quality, not quantity, of attainments.[16]

Notwithstanding the deletion of an 'educational age' for each grade from the Regulations and the exclusion of age from the 'plan for payment of a school' on the foregoing grounds, during

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[14] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. A. Hartley, qq. 6437-8, 6441, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 178. For the proposed inclusion of an 'age test' in the South Australian 'plan for payment of a school', see Regulations made by the Council of Education under provisions of Act No. 11 of 1875, Regulation 81(3), SAGG, Gazette Extraordinary No. 2, 7 January 1876, pp. 41-2

[15] Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - W. L. Neale, qq. 5454-58, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 115

[16] 'Compulsory Education. To the Editor', The Adelaide Observer, 13 March 1880, p. 448

the 1880s and 90s the grade-age averages in city schools formed part of the Inspector-General's statistical report on the annual results exam. Considerations of age continued to modify decisions about individual pupils' grade placement, otherwise determined by their scholastic achievements, and occasional reference was made to those non-promoted children "grown old in dullness" whose presence in a class rendered the teaching inefficient.[17] By the same token, warnings were issued about encouraging "prodigies of precocity, possessing perhaps a big brain but a weakly body", to advance through the standards too quickly. Pushing on very clever children so that they passed the Compulsory Certificate examination and were thus liable to be sent to work at a much earlier age than older and stronger youths, wrote the Editor of *The Register*, was "a very serious evil":

> Pressure of this kind upon the minds of young people ... should be constantly deprecated. Tragic occurrences which can be distinctly traced to it - although they excite a large amount of public attention - are really only the most prominent results of a widely spread source of unhappiness. ... The wisdom of maintaining the balance of mind and body is generally so far ignored that any abnormal natural conditions are studiously and sedulously intensified. What a satire it is to call such a system educational![18]

Whilst there were thus signs towards the end of the century of a growing sense that chronological age should balance attainment as a basis for regulating student progress through the elementary school, any attempt to restore age-grade norms was likely to be meaningless in practice so long as some flexibility was retained in policies governing school attendance, the commencing age, and dates of admission and examination. Tightening of these provisions was yet to come. In the meantime, the bureaucracy's largest concern focused on the early grades of schooling, wherein the age range of pupils was especially wide and the rate of non-promotion, but also of overly rapid promotion, was seen to be most problematic.

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[17] South Australian Teachers' Association, Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 5 May 1894, SA Institute of Teachers Minute Book 1890-1903; Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. A. Hartley, q. 6449, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, p. 179; Final Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - Inspector Stanton, q. 7209, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 27A, 1882, p. 22

[18] 'Cramming clever students', The Register, 23 October 1897, p. 4

In his evidence to the 1882-83 Education Commission, Inspector-General Hartley indicated that "at first we had no understanding or limit as to age", but that after the average ages were dropped from the examination program:

> Our object was to secure that a child who ought to go into a higher class should not be kept back by a teacher in order that he might have a better percentage. In our conference held at the end of 1880, I think we generally agreed that when a child passed four out of six [subjects] in the second class, or three out of four in the junior or first class, ... that he should be promoted; but it was also understood all through that in this matter an inspector should use his own discretion ... to decline to promote a child ["who was weak in body or had got through by accident"]. ... I believe I, among others, drew attention to the fact that children were getting up in some of the schools too fast, as I was struck by the small size of some of the children in the higher classes ... and then we came to the resolution to discourage promotions from the junior division for children under seven years of age. ... We found the children too young for such forward positions.[19]

Issued as Regulation 49 (originally No. 54 of 1876) and 177 respectively in 1885, the rulings that children over seven were not to remain in an infant department except with inspectorial approval, and that no child under seven was to be promoted from the Junior Division to Class I, were thus designed for a common purpose: to prevent an undesirable mixing of ages in both lower and upper classes.

Chapter 1 of the thesis discussed the tension between attainment and the age standard of seven years for entry to 'primary school proper'. Here it is pertinent to observe that the regulations governing the age of transition to 'real studenthood' functioned to construct not only the junior scholar (which Chapter 1 additionally examined) but the retarded one as well. Henceforth, children permitted by the district inspector to be kept in an infant department or the junior class in smaller public and provisional schools, like 'compulsory entrants' who were placed in a preparatory class to learn their letters, were labelled 'old' or 'backward'. Furthermore, the closer regulation of ages in Class I achieved by delimiting age of stay in infant classes and by curbing the tendency towards accelerated promotion of 'too young' pupils from these grades to 'the big school' laid a basis for narrowing the age range in successive grades - an increasingly desirable feature of state schooling which had so far proved difficult to achieve.

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19 Progress Report of the Commission on the Working of the Education Acts, Minutes of Evidence - J. A. Hartley, qq. 6449, 6458, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, pp. 179-80

It might also be recalled from Chapter 1 that in light of the age standard for transfer to Class I and Hartley's insistence on head teachers' compliance with his directives, attention turned to the ages at which children started school so that pupils could be adequately prepared for the examination standard of that grade. This means of accommodation is encapsulated in Inspector Dewhirst's statement :

> I thought the children should be compelled to [attend school] at five years instead of seven, for as they are compelled to be promoted to the 1st class at seven, they should be in the infant school at 5.[20]

At the same time, the presence of 'mere babies' (two, three, and even four year olds) in state schools increasingly incurred official disapprobation and their marginalisation from the 'real' business of classrooms. As stated in Chapter 2, bureaucratic delimitation of the enrolment age to five years was formalised by the 1891 Education Amendment Act and social practice gradually aligned itself with administrative policy in this regard. By 1900, with children's commencing ages mostly concentrated within a two to three-year range, and with their mandatory promotion to the senior division at seven, the last components of graded school organisation fundamental to producing retardation in the next century were in place. A few details remained: securing full-time compulsory attendance, further standardisation of school entry ages, arrangement of the curriculum in strictly annual stages, and regularisation of times of the year for admission to school, examination and promotion to the next class. All of these refinements were enacted between 1905 and 1920.

CONSTRUCTING OVER-AGENESS, 1900s-1930s

In the context of the Education Department's ongoing quest for school order and efficiency, the first few decades of the twentieth century witnessed a convergence of ideas promulgated by child psychologists, psychometricians, child accountants, and proponents of the 'New Education' and 'social efficiency', which focused attention on pupils who lagged behind their chronological age peers in progressing through the primary grades. Having emanated from such diverse sources, concern about 'over-ageness' variously centred on the classroom and system-

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[20] SAPP, vol. 2, no. 27, 1882, Minutes of Evidence, q. 4722. See also Assistant Inspector's Report for 1881 - Six infant departments, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1882, p. 19

level inefficiencies entailed, the bases of curriculum organisation which gave rise to the phenomenon, and issues of personal adjustment and social control. To these was added advocacy of scientific study, classification and measurement of the problem in order to specify its dimensions more precisely and hence inform its better management, together with a perceived need to maximise the mental and industrial potential of the child population by matching educational provision to pupils' differential capacities.[21] Although the problem itself was not of recent origin, a whole new discourse developed around these concerns.

Thus, for example, Inspector Martin reported in 1906 that

> teachers are often hampered in their work by pupils considerably older than others of the same class. ... It appears that their size, as well as their age, make them very conspicuous. They are generally considered by teachers dull and backward, and in the larger schools are so often ridiculed, if not bullied, by the bright and normal children, that their school lives are not the most happy.

He went on to enumerate the social factors which contributed to children being over-age for their grade:

> Some have not been able to attend school regularly on account of illness; others have moved about from place to place so much that they have dropped behind in their lessons; some are of German nationality, and have not had the opportunity of learning the English language; some have not had the chance of attending school previously; and there are a few who need individual attention because of their peculiar disposition.[22]

An article published ten years later adopted a similar view in elaborating on these causes and consequences of 'backwardness', as retarded school progress became commonly known. Drawing together previous characterisations but adding insights from the newly-emergent social sciences, the author described the backward child as usually coming to school past seven years of age and no longer able to dodge the truant officer, handicapped by poor mental ability, often with poor physique and adverse home conditions, to which was added a tendency towards irregular attendance. Echoing educational progressives' criticism of schools' attempts to mould the child to the system rather than accommodate individual differences, he further suggested:

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[21] On the last issue, see: 'The Average Boy (by Homo)', SA Teachers' Journal, 3:3, 18 December 1917, p. 65

[22] Inspector Martin's Report for 1906, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1907, p. 25

> There's a misfit somewhere. .... [The curriculum] looks like an honest attempt to limit the scope, fix the standards, and carefully grade a six year's course for children of average ability. It's possibly just here that the trouble lies ... the course mapped out may prove for the backward child a painful struggle for the unattainable.[23]

Whatever the case, he continued, these 'submerged' children started behind their classmates, were promoted to Class I only because of the age standard imposed at this point, and generally maintained their relative position throughout their school career. They thereby became a "drag on the class", made "excessive demands" and, by their failures, constituted a "perpetual worry" in terms of the efficiency mark awarded to teachers. Of equal concern was the effect on backward children themselves: with "hardened and embittered" hearts due to constant reprimand, they allegedly engaged in self-depreciation because of their inability to do the work, contracted an aversion to books and, finally, fell "easy prey to the attractions of the streets". It was therefore preferable for them to concentrate on the three 3Rs since this would save the teacher's time and energy and "turn the boy out with fewer frills but a better mental equipment for the battle of life".[24]

The major themes of this account found ever-broadening sympathy and underpinned demand for special, indeed separate, treatment of children 'too old' for their class - not least to remove their influence on younger pupils given that backwardness was frequently equated with mental and moral deficiency and, in succession, delinquency and crime.[25] Concurrently, the Medical Inspector argued strongly in favour of using the intelligence tests developed by Binet and Porteous to gain accurate knowledge regarding the number of children in schools who were "really mentally defective, not only retarded by illness, irregular attendance, or other similar causes."[26] Adoption of a scientific approach to the problem, he asserted, would enable the Education Department to distinguish between different types of retardation and make appropriate

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[23] Anon.,'The Backward Child', SA Teachers' Journal , 1:2, 17 September 1915, p. 5

[24] ibid

[25] For examples of such links, see SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1914, p. 29 - Inspector Pavia ; SAPP, vol. 2, no. 24, 1923, p. 37 - Medical Inspector

[26] Report of the Medical Inspector for 1915, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1916, p. 37

arrangements for pupils - either within the ordinary school or in a special institution, depending on their assessed educability.

These concerns about the nature, extent and impact of over-ageness in primary classrooms were articulated in a context of significant reform and expansion in the state education system. With specific implications for the age-grade structure of South Australian primary schools and the phenomenon of retardation, the 1915 Education Act extended the limits of compulsory schooling in requiring children's full-time attendance between the ages of six and fourteen years. It also provided a framework for the state to branch further into secondary education. To accommodate these legislative changes which had been actively sought for some time, the Education Department revised its policies on the admission, classification and promotion of pupils in conjunction with remodelling the primary curriculum and corresponding grades. As a result, by 1921 a new set of age-grade norms was operational.

A uniform procedure of age-based primary school entry, progress and leaving developed out of the rules specifying that children aged between five and six years were to be enrolled only at the beginning and middle of the year; were not to remain in junior grades over the age of eight or for longer than two years except under special circumstances; and assuming "normal strength and ability" should not spend more than a year in each Grade from I to VII into which the schools were reorganised.[27] By design, then, pupils would be able to gain their Qualifying Certificate (which from 1920 marked the completion of primary education) at twelve or thirteen years of age, thus allowing them to receive one or two years of post-primary instruction before reaching the new upper age limit of compulsory attendance.

Standardisation of grade-ages was also a function of accompanying changes to promotion practice. The responsibility for deciding on promotions passed to head teachers in 1905 and subsequently to classroom teachers in 1917, following extensive criticism of inspectors' role and judgements in the process. Nonetheless, freedom in this matter was tightly circumscribed.

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[27] See 'Notes for the guidance of teachers - Promotions', EG (SA), 34:387, 15 October 1918, p. 169; 'Circular to Teachers no. 13. Classification of pupils - adjustment in January 1921', EG (SA) 36:411, 15 October 1920, p. 197

Although exam marks continued to measure children's suitability for promotion, judicious advancement now meant using proficiency in English as the major criterion but giving favourable consideration to children backward in other subjects, exercising discretionary power to promote 'bright' students at any time while not unduly pushing those of 'retarded mental development', and simultaneously heeding dire warnings that both over-rapid and withheld promotion might seriously affect a pupil's whole future career. The official aim with respect to the new scheme was made quite clear:

> The Department is desirous that, while neither teacher nor pupil is in any degree hard pressed, yet the interests of the children shall be thoroughly safeguarded, **and their consistent progress ensured.** [28] [emphasis added]

To this end, it was directed that in large schools 90-95% of the children in Grades II to VI should be promoted, in smaller schools the percentage might vary somewhat, but wherever promotions fell below 80% the Inspector's report should contain some comment.[29]

Lastly, in 1915 the President of the Teachers' Association, Mr Bennett, suggested an "efficient and effective remedy" for the currently overloaded curriculum, which teachers regarded as "the burden of their school lives" and the cause of considerable strain on pupils:

> either that some of the score of subjects be deleted, or that the teaching of these subjects be spread over a longer period. ... [A]s regards the time, number of classes, and ages of the children:- Children under 5, Kindergarten; 5 to 6, Infants; 6 to 7, Lower Juniors; 7 to 8, Upper Juniors; 8 to 9, Class I; 9 to 10, Class II; 10 to 11, Class III; 11 to 12, Class IV; 12 to 13, Class V; 13 to 14, Class VI.[30]

Cognisance having been taken of the fundamental concern here, a notice gazetted in February 1916 ('The revised curriculum and consequent re-arrangement of classes') indicated that "a very real easement in practically all the grades" would be effected the following year when all teachers adopted the set of programs issued for the newly-constituted Grades I to VIII. But no

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[28] 'Notes for the guidance of teachers - Promotions', op cit.

[29] Extracts from the Inspectors' Conference held in February 1933, PRO, GRG 18/2/928

[30] Mr Bennett, Teachers' Association President, cited in debate on the Education Bill, SAPD, House of Assembly, 6 October 1915, p. 1217

reference was made to grade-ages, such as Bennett had proposed.[31] With the next major revision to the primary course of instruction in 1920, however, a standard age for each grade from I to VII was specified. These were intended, like the average ages of the late-1870s, to serve as a general guide for normal children. Summarising this major basis of class organisation henceforth, the Director of Education indicated that a child aged eight years was expected to do Grade III work and that a child of twelve years should be commencing the work of Grade VII.[32]

For several years after the shift away from attainment-based classification and promotion of scholars, primary headmasters sought clarification and assurances with regard to several matters: the sole right of teachers to promote individual children so long as the percentage required by the Department was reached or exceeded; and the procedure devised to enforce the age standard for transferring from an infant department to Grade III such that at least a semblance of 'normal' progress on the part of most children would result.[33] It was soon apparent, though, that the combined instructions outlined above would establish chronological age as the main principle of graded schooling. In consequence of their rigorous application over the next decade or so, the average grade-ages of pupils declined and the percentage of 'normal' children correspondingly increased.[34]

School inspectors hastened to reinforce this satisfying trend by praising teachers for their conscientiousness and generally sound judgement in classifying and promoting pupils in line with the changed regulations. At the same time, cases of 'unjustified' non-promotion were met with the rejoinder derived from contemporary thinking in social psychology:

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31 C. Bronner, 'The revised curriculum and consequent re-arrangement of classes', EG (SA), 32:354, 22 February 1916, p. 83

32 'Backward Children', Report of the Director of Education for 1921, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 44, 1922, p. 21

33 Minutes of the Headmasters' Association (SA) meetings held on 13 May 1920; 8 February and 8 March 1922; 13 October and 11 November 1925, ANU Archives of Business and Labour T42/12, Headmasters' Association Minute Book 1920-1927

34 See appended Tables A.4 and A.5 showing the mean chronological ages and standard deviation of ages of pupils in Grades 1-7 for the period 1921-34, and graphs showing the percentage of pupils at normal grade-age, 1921-90 (Figures A.6, A.7, A.10-13).

> It should be borne in mind that the backward child has need of social experience with pupils of his own age and this need should outweigh in importance his inability to acquire the material of instruction as readily as the normal child.[35]

Further, it was advised, "the whole disposition and physical development of such children should be taken into account before leaving them in a class of younger children".[36] Ever-conscious of their responsibilities, then, teachers were reportedly zealous in their endeavours to compensate for any child's late entry to school, "lack of early facilities", broken schooling or "poverty of endowment" by providing special coaching in order to "push them on to a grade as near as possible to that in which, according to their age, they should be".[37] In country schools, where children were observed to be "often too old for their grades", efforts to overcome these 'handicaps' even included making semi-annual promotions so as "to give scholars twelve or thirteen years old the benefit of higher grade work before they are required on the fruit block or the farm".[38] Hence, by 1927, Inspector Fairweather was able to confidently report that as a rule pupils' grade-ages coincided closely with those set in the Course of Instruction. Such being the norm, instances of over-ageness were more noticeable than ever before.

Phil Cashen's analysis of examination failure and its concomitant of grade repetition in South Australian primary schools during the period 1927-39 points up the symbiotic relationship which developed between various forms of class-based school resistance and retardation within the now predominantly age-graded yet still attainment-oriented state system.[39] But rather than viewing the issues critically, the Education Department focused on quantifying the phenomenon of retarded school progress and seeking more efficient means to deal with the immediate problem as the Director outlined it:

> [T]here are a number of backward children, probably amounting to 10 per cent of the whole, who are 2 or 3 years below the class appropriate to their age, and for

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[35] Inspector Higginbottom, EG (SA), 53:613, 16 August 1937, p. 201

[36] Inspector Pavia, EG (SA), 37:419, 15 June 1921, p. 120

[37] 'Extracts from Inspectors' Reports', EG (SA), 42:476, 13 March 1926, p. 98

[38] Inspector Leach, EG (SA), 45:512, 15 March 1929, p. 111

[39] P. J. Cashen, Without sufficient excuse: A study of truancy in South Australian schools, 1927-1939, M. Ed. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1980

> whom no special provision is made. Our custom is to take cognizance of the average and bright child, and neglect the dull and backward.[40]

Local bureaucratic perceptions and initiatives in regard to retardation were significantly influenced by the school survey movement in North America which incorporated age-grade studies as an important part and, in turn, revealed a need for greater standardisation of child accounting data.[41] It was from the research of Maxwell, Thorndike, Ayres and others that the central administration in South Australia imported the criterion of pupils' year-by-year progress to measure the education system's efficiency, and whose lead it followed in compiling state-wide statistics on the promotion rate and age-grade distribution of scholars to index this. The first move to document 'the retardation problem' came in 1916 when all schools were required to forward with their examination results in December a Return of Promotions, accompanied by the name and reason for non-promotion of every child who had already spent two years in one class. From 1921 onwards the Department also conducted an annual age-grade census, the results of which (as with promotion numbers) became a permanent feature of the Minister of Education's parliamentary report.

These statistical records were supplemented from time to time by detailed surveys of over-ageness in the schools: a preliminary one in 1924 to ascertain the extent to which special provision ought to be made for the education of backward and mentally defective children; those undertaken by the Departmental Psychologist following her appointment that same year; another by Dr. E. G. Malherbe from Pretoria on visiting Australia to address the New Education Fellowship (NEF) Conference in 1937; and the newly-appointed Research Officer's analysis in 1944.[42] Teachers were kept regularly informed on the subject by inspectors and through

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[40] Report by W. T. McCoy, Director of Education, upon observations & inquiries made with regard to education during an official visit to Great Britain and other countries, SAPP, vol. 2, no. 67, 1924, p. 31

[41] For an overview of the child accounting movement in North America from 1900-1930s, see H. J. Otto & D. M. Estes, 'Accelerated and retarded progress' in C. Harris (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Educational Research. Third edition, New York, Macmillan, 1960, pp. 4-11; J. L. Tropea, 'Bureaucratic order and special children: Urban schools, 1890s-1940s', History of Education Quarterly, 27:1, Spring 1987, pp. 29-53; R. E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962

[42] The preliminary survey was made on McCoy's recommendation following his investigation into special education provisions in England and Canada. For Constance Davey's work, see Education Inquiry Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Book 4, pp. 926-47, PRO, GRG 18/172. For a summary of Dr. Malherbe's age-grade survey and NEF address, see the article 'Retardation', EG (SA), 56:644, 15 March 1940, pp. 86-7. Hitchcox's comprehensive analysis was published in two parts. See EG (SA), 60:696, pp. 139-43 and 60:697, pp. 153-7

descriptive articles and discussion of survey results published in the *Education Gazette*. In addition, the considerable amount of evidence on both over-ageness and mental retardation tendered to the Education Inquiry Committee chaired by E. L. Bean, whose investigations began in 1943, illustrates the prominence of these issues in contemporary educational debate.

The very adoption of child accounting measures in South Australia served to indicate that the Department was tackling the problem. Further, once the incidence of backwardness was precisely known, five Opportunity Classes were opened in 1925, growing to thirty-two by 1942, and Psychology Branch staff administered intelligence tests to identify children better managed by placement in a special school. This removal of certain pupils from mainstream classes not only rendered the ordinary teaching more efficient from an official perspective but their numbers were also counted separately in presenting the annual age-grade tables, thus improving the statistical representation of the over-all system's efficiency. Indeed, the age-grade statistics themselves increasingly operated to simultaneously define, highlight and resolve the problem of retardation. How was this the case?

Firstly, to compile the figures, a 'normal grade-age' had to be delineated: in South Australia this was regarded as a two-year spread.[43] Thus, those children whose chronological age was above that considered normal for a grade were automatically 'retarded' while others who by virtue of early school entry and/or double promotions were below this age became known as 'accelerated'. Secondly, from 1921 to 1942, attention in the tables was drawn to the numbers in each category by the use of bold type to signify normal grade-aged pupils. Subsequently, this device was replaced with a separate table showing the percentages of normal, retarded and accelerated children as calculated by age and grade. Thirdly, apart from omitting 'special' children whose often considerable over-ageness would have seriously skewed the results, the statistics were manipulated in 1943 by changing the census date from December to mid-year, for it had become apparent in making overseas comparisons that the ages of South Australian pupils in the various grades were unduly high. Figures A.1, A.6-9 and A.18-25 in Appendix C

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[43] For details of the basis on which the annual age-grade returns from schools were tabulated, see A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - I', EG (SA), 60:696, p. 141

graphically illustrate the impact of the changed census date on official representations of age-in-grade within the primary school system.

So deeply did statistical measurement of age-in-grade pervade official thinking, it appears, that one inspector in 1939 proposed that the number of pupils receiving a double promotion once during the primary school period should approximate that of those spending two years in one grade.[44] But by this time, other inspectors were beginning to express doubts about the effects of 'social promotion', having noted that "instead of over-age cases there is sometimes a piling up of over-graded pupils in higher classes".[45] Or, as another opined:

> I am firmly convinced that some facts must be known and if they are not known the child is not ready for the next step on the educational ladder. To think that the indolent or careless or unduly slow children are progressing by allowing them to advance a grade a year is to deceive ourselves.[46]

These doubts were enhanced in proportion to the growing influence of tests to measure individual differences, contestation of what constituted 'normal' progress and hence the definition of retardation, together with criticism of graded curriculum and classroom organisation. But before considering this shift in the discourse on retardation, it is pertinent to examine the question of who, more precisely, became designated as an over-aged child and what this meant in terms of their experience of schooling.

SIDDY AND DARKY WERE 'OPPOS': CHILDREN TOO OLD FOR THEIR GRADE

In relation to the age and attainment standards then current, the reminiscences of pupils who attended the Hindmarsh Public School in the first two decades of the twentieth century provide valuable insights into children's varied progress through the primary course of instruction. Eileen B.'s recollection that she commenced at school aged five and a half in 1905, "got through" each year, and proceeded to high school for several years before leaving at age fifteen,

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[44] Inspector Rofe, EG (SA), 55:632, 15 March 1939, p. 96. See also Table A.21, Appendix B, and Figures A.14-A.17, Appendix C, for the statistics on accelerated progression through Grades 2 to 7, 1921-1990

[45] Inspector Leach, EG (SA), 55:634, 15 May 1939, p. 147

[46] Inspector Paull, EG (SA), 60:692, 15 March 1944, p. 89

accorded with the recently-emergent Departmental ideal.[47] John K. (b. 1895), on the other hand, did not consider himself "a champion scholar". As he recounted in reference to the annual examination for promotion to the next grade:

> No, it was pretty hard. ... I might have failed once or twice, and if you weren't good enough you had to sit another year in that class and they'd be making fun of you, some of them. ... And of course your mother or father who were talking too when you got home, they'd know if you failed or passed.[48]

Jack M. (b. 1906), who suffered nightmares with every exam yet consistently passed so as "not to have the stigma of failure", recalled somewhat enviously:

> Those that were considered larrikins. They did their own thing anyhow. ...They had the guts to say, well, fail or otherwise, I've done my best you can go to ----.[49]

Self-described as one of those to whom Jack was referring, Les P. (b. 1902) elaborated upon the negative relationship working-class boys like himself had with the school, which contributed to their retarded progress and early leaving:

> I didn't cotton on - I wasn't too bright. Seemed to get stuck in the fourth grade. ... Me Dad wanted to keep me on until I was thirteen, but I hated school that much that he decided there was no good leaving him, you know. ... The teachers wasn't so hot in those days and if you was a bit of a rebel, which I think I always was, they used to get stuck into you. ... I see now the ability, not that I'm blowing my trumpet or anything, to learn how to do a job in no time. But as for school work, it didn't seem to sink in somehow. ... There was a lot of us that hated school so much that we didn't even try I don't think.[50]

In common with the last three interviewees, numerous others had thoroughly internalised at school the distinction between "all those tail-enders that got left behind", thereby losing their old class-mates, and the "brain-storms" or "real bright kids" who were regularly promoted. According to Mr. B., though, apart from "one poor chap, he was sub-normal, Artie C. we called him, there wasn't too many, shall I say, dumb dills" at Hindmarsh.[51] But factors un-

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[47] Transcript of interview with Miss Eileen B. (b. 26 July 1899) by S. Marsden, 12 October 1979, pp. 7, 17, PRO, GRG 18/34/41 - Hindmarsh Oral History Project, OH25/3

[48] Transcript of interview with Mr. John K. by S. Marsden, 11 October 1979, p. 20. ibid - OH25/5

[49] Transcript of interview with Mr. Jack M. by S. Marsden, 18 November 1979, p. 23. ibid - OH25/15

[50] Transcript of interview with Mr. Les P. by S. Marsden & R. Broomhill, 10 December 1979, pp. 11-12. ibid - OH25/31

[51] Trancript of interview with Mr. B. (b. 23 December 1907) by S. Marsden, 1979, p. 15. ibid - OH25/33

related to individual ability or motivation were also acknowledged by former pupils as having been responsible for their experience of grade repetition. For example, when in Class V, Elma S. (b. 1896) "had an awful teacher and none of us passed"[52] - a situation no longer to be countenanced by 1917 when a notice in the *Education Gazette* stated:

> It should be remembered that the failure to promote a fair percentage of the scholars in any school usually points to one of two facts - (1) that the teacher is unduly retarding the promotion of the children, or (2) that his teaching during the year has not been sufficiently satisfactory and effective to enable the children to satisfactorily pass the test.[53]

The otherwise exemplary progress of Eric G. (b. 1910) was marred too, by a different set of circumstances, towards the end of 1920:

> I can remember when I was in Grade 6 they changed the system to what they called the Victorian system ... which cut out the eighth grade, and I stayed in Grade 6 - that year they only promoted about ten [percent of children to the new Grade VII]. ... I'd had rheumatic fever and had been away from school for about two months and I didn't make the top ten - so I did Grade 6 twice.[54]

In Eric's case, a single year's non-promotion did not affect his conformity to the newly-defined age-grade norms. Given that he had started school at five and commenced Grade VII work in his repeat year before being moved up, he was still only twelve on passing the Qualifying Certificate exam. Of growing concern to education officials by this time, however, were instances of retardation as illustrated by the case of George B., who remained at Brompton Primary School until the age of sixteen years: "with some as old as me", he said.[55]

From 1921 onwards, when children's 'consistent' progress was actively sought by the Education Department, special provisions were gradually made available in larger primary schools for the likes of Les, Artie and George. Data from school admission registers and age-

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[52] Transcript of interview with Miss Elma S. by S. Marsden, 27 September 1979, p. 12. ibid - OH25/38

[53] 'Promotions', EG (SA), 33:375, 16 October 1917, p. 178

[54] Transcript of interview with Mr. Eric G. by S. Marsden & I. Davey, 6 December 1979, p. 22, loc. cit - OH25/27. See also 'Circular to Teachers, No. 13. Classification of Pupils - adjustment in January 1921', EG (SA), 36:411, 15 October 1920, pp. 197-98.

[55] Transcript of interview with Mr. George B. by S. Marsden, 11 October 1979, p. 7, op cit. - OH25/16

Table 4.3 Retardation in Primary Schools in different regions of South Australia, 1943

Order.	Region.	No. of pupils in primary schools.	Percentage of pupils retarded.	Average amount of retardation. Years.
1	No. 12 (Saltbush Plains) .	89	47.2	1.21
2	Nos. 1 to 7 (Far North Outback)	194	44.3	1.50
3	No. 18C (Murray Valley, southern section)	279	36.9	1.56
4	No. 8D (Kangaroo Island)	138	36.9	1.24
5	No. 11 (Olary Ridge) . ..	139	36.7	1.32
6	No. 18B (Murray Valley, central section)	1,266	34.5	1.35
7	No. 15 (the South-East) .	2,595	32.9	1.39
8	No. 10B (Broughton-Pirie Plains)	2,221	32.6	1.20
9	No. 13 (Murray Mallee Plains)	1,305	31.9	1.36
10	No. 8C (South Mount Lofty Ranges)	4,832	31.0	1.37
11	No. 8B (North Mount Lofty Ranges)	3,216	30.1	1.34
12	No. 16 (Eyre Peninsula) ..	2,488	29.9	1.42
13	No. 10A (ii.) (Adelaide-Wakefield Plains, country area)	2,020	28.5	1.35
14	No. 18A (Murray Valley, northern section)	1,915	28.1	1.35
	Whole State	55,639	27.5	1.35
15	No. 14 (Ninety-mile Plains)	530	27.5	1.34
16	No. 8A (South Flinders Ranges)	1,982	27.1	1.41
17	No. 9 (Yorke Peninsula) .	2,554	26.1	1.36
18	No. 17 (Gawler Ranges) ..	871	25.7	1.41
19	No. 10A (i.) (metropolitan area)	27,005	24.0	1.25

Source: A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - II', EG (SA), 60:697, 15 August 1944, pp. 154-55

grade returns, together with other documentary evidence on 'the retardation problem', sheds further light on which pupils remaining in ordinary classrooms became 'too old for their grades'. For example, records of the first sixteen enrolments in 1927-28 at the tiny (Class IX) Haslam School on the west coast of South Australia confirm inspectors' remarks that children in the country were frequently over-age. Among the eleven pupils still in attendance after 1928, only two made 'normal' progress (but respectively left in Grade V and VI to take up farm work/fishing and domestic duties). The remainder repeated at least one grade and most commonly two. Especially noteworthy is Leslie H., who spent two years in each of Grades III, IV and VI before gaining his Q.C. aged fifteen and a half, and Doris M., who left Grade V a few months short of her fifteenth birthday.[56]

Moving from the particular to the general on the issue of retardation in relation to school size and location, as the table (4.3) reproduced on the previous page indicates, the Departmental Research Officer calculated from the 1943 age-grade statistics that over-ageness was much more pronounced in outback regions than in the settled parts of the State and was least in the metropolitan area. Unsurprisingly, in accounting for the differing rates and amount of retardation between town and country, commentators focused on the need for children's seasonal labour, together with making a late start to school and absences due to long distances having to be travelled in rural communities. Furthermore, the lack of access to opportunity classes and other forms of 'special' education in sparsely-populated regions meant that 'old' children were not separately counted in the annual age-grade census.

In city schools, again with specific reference to Hindmarsh, the comments on 'special cases' head teachers were encouraged to make on the back of the annual age-grade return form after 1944 illustrate the range of pupils recorded as being "much above the normal age". The following is a sample for 1945-55:

> Violet P. 9.6 Gr.II. Name sent in twice and form filled in for examination for O.C. [Opportunity Class] - child has not yet been examined.
> Florence M. 8.6 Lower I. Excluded [from school] until this year on account of low mental age.

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[56] Extract from Haslam School Admission Register, 1927-28. Donated to the author from the personal files of Miss Gladys E. Ward (deceased), teacher-in-charge at Haslam in 1927.

> The nine year old in U2 is an Aboriginal child.
> One nine year old in U2 is from a Victorian convent - a matter of sheer neglect.
> The other, Marlene T. - rarely at school to have a chance of learning.
> Ronald C. Date of birth 25.1.49 [10.8 in Lower II] was transferred from Morgan on 28 July. As he is over-age for the Infant School he is waiting for a vacancy in O.C.
> LI. Luigi D. 7.1 Language troubles - New Australian.
> UI. Robert H. 7.2 Child from an orphanage - low mentality;
> Graham H. 7.2 Delicate - legs in irons a year or so ago [polio victim];
> Aulenko J. 7.3 New Australian.
> Gr.IV. Boy aged 12 - N.A. (Italian); Boy aged 13 - from Special Class.
> Gr.VI. Several N.A. in the 'aged' groups.[57]

Notably, in the context of post-World War II immigration policy, by 1959 children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) accounted for such a high proportion of retarded pupils at Hindmarsh that, rather than cite individual cases, the Headmaster simply wrote: "The number of children in each class above normal age is in great measure due to the large number of migrant children attending this school".[58] Indeed, between 1956 and 1958 a New Australian Grade was formed to better manage the influx which had added to class sizes already swollen by a significant increase in the State's birth rate over the past decade and in consequence of teacher shortages. Obviously Hindmarsh was not the only school affected by these conditions. Infant School inspectors commented that the 'banking up' in Grade II across the system during 1955-56 could be due, in part at least, to the migrant intake since:

> Many fairly old children are placed in [this] grade in order to learn the language, and in the case of British migrants, to learn to spell. These children would normally have been in Grade III or higher.[59]

As Festina Leste attested in a contemporary article, appropriate classification of NESB pupils "having regard to age, attainment and potential" proved an extremely vexed question for principals in whichever schools these children enrolled - and no less challenged teachers, many of whom were a product of emergency short training courses.[60] Another article, written from the perspective of the School Psychology Branch, similarly illustrates how 'the migrant

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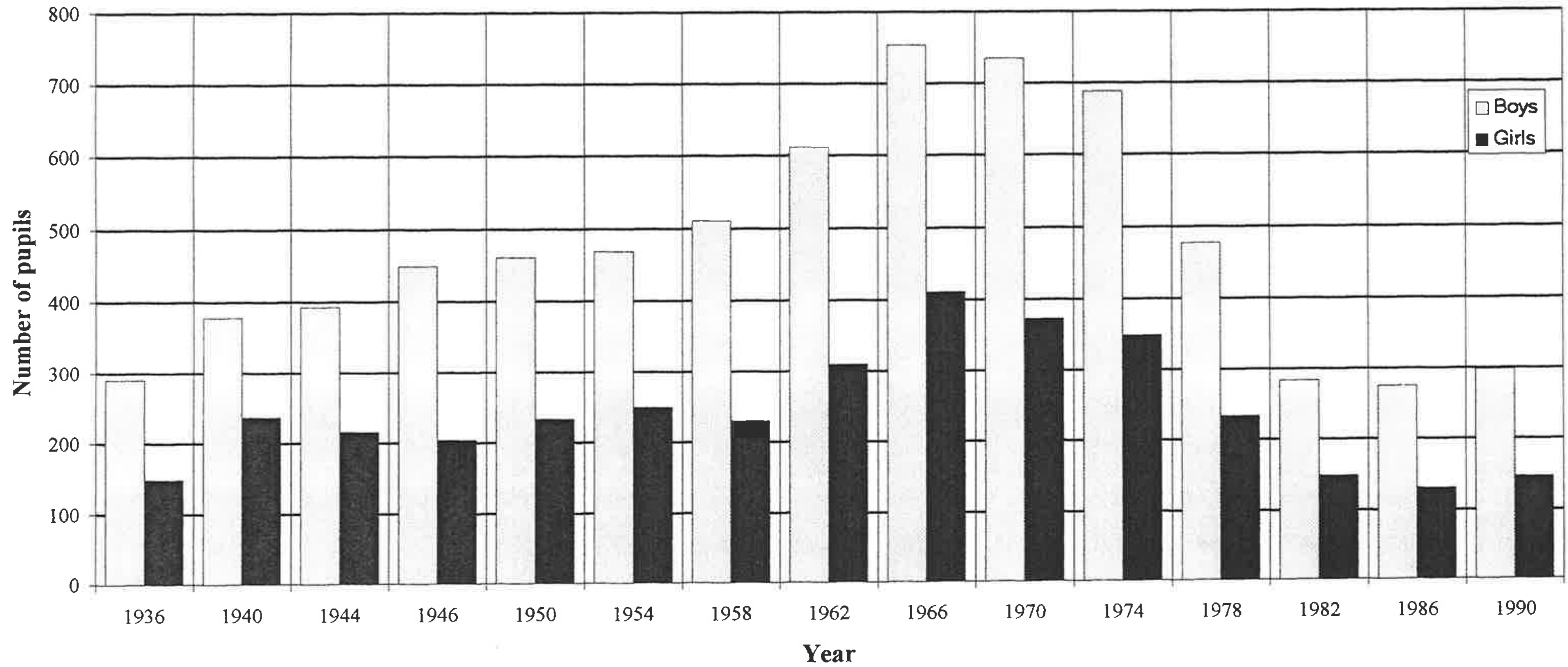
57 Hindmarsh School Annual Return: Ages and Grades of Pupils 1943-1960, PRO, GRG 18/34/25

58 ibid

59 M. Mead (Inspector of Infant Schools), 'Comment on report by Research Officer on time spent in Infant Departments', 16 September 1957, PRO, GRS 809/001/P - E.D. 1/4/5

60 Festina Leste, 'The Migrant and the School', SA Teachers' Journal, 6:1, February 1956, p. 25

Figure 4. Number of boys and girls placed in Opportunity Classes in S A primary schools, 1935-1990



problem' in the 1950s and 60s highlighted the perennial tension between age and attainment standards in the graded primary school and strengthened notions regarding the undesirability of a wide age range in classes:

> With the idea that youngsters from European countries should learn English easily, the Head had tried placing them in junior grades with younger children. The new arrivals often reacted unfavourably to this, as did some English speaking children who were placed in grades corresponding to their apparent level of attainment in a basic formal subject. Behaviour problems resulted, and were magnified in importance by the influence which these older, bigger children established among their classmates. Moreover, the progress of the pupils was commonly disappointing. They seemed to make little progress with the language, in some cases becoming surly and uncommunicative in school; or they tended to adjust themselves to the level of the grade they entered, promising to be established misfits long before they reached the end of compulsory schooling.
> Also, other errors of placement became evident in due course, for some pupils learned English quickly and rose to high standards of achievement for their grade. It was difficult to accelerate their promotion for fear that they should miss important work. ... After some discussion, the Head decided it would generally be best to place non-English speaking new pupils with their age group.[61]

In addition to the over-representation of NESB children in the 'much above normal grade-age' category, it is readily apparent from analysing the statistics published in the Minister of Education's annual reports that there were significant gender differences in retardation rates. As Tables A.14-20 in Appendix B and the bar graph (Figure 4.1) show, the percentage of boys retarded by one or more years in Grades I to VII was consistently higher than that of girls, and in Opportunity Classes the number of male pupils was for the most part approximately double the number of females. My Hindmarsh case study reveals a similar configuration of opportunity class placements according to sex at the individual school level.

Table 4.4. Number of boys and girls placed in Opportunity Classes at Hindmarsh Primary School, 1928-1975

Years	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Total
1928 - 1939	134	72	206
1940 - 1949	121	86	207
1950 - 1960	72	35	107
1968 - 1975	58	14	72

Source of data: Hindmarsh School Opportunity Class Admission Registers (4 volumes), PRO, GRG 18/34/1

61 'An Educational Psychologist's Notebook', SA Teachers' Journal, 17:4, June 1966, p. 30

Max Colwell's account of 'The Oppos' at Hindmarsh during the 1930s amusingly points up the element of larrikinism commonly only associated with boys, which, perhaps, explains the predominance of males among children transferred out of ordinary classes in the interests of orderly teaching. For example, Siddy, the central character in Colwell's account, was essentially consigned to singing songs, reciting nursery rhymes and playing with building blocks in a special room at the end of the corridor because of his truancy, 'inappropriate' choice of words and persistent misbehaviour (especially as directed at his class teacher and other education officials), rather than the fact that he could neither do subtraction sums nor read properly and was poor at spelling.[62] Further, in explicit recognition that the greater number of opportunity class admissions were boys, and presuming that masculine authority would more likely prevail over those of the Siddy variety, the Director of Education gave notice that each class had been attached to the primary department of schools and placed under the supervision of the headmaster - even if the room allocated was located in that part of the building which was an infant mistress's jurisdiction.[63]

This proviso reinforced the social control function of opportunity classes which Joseph Tropea discusses so well in reference to the North American urban school context.[64] As Constance Davey articulated, the aim of these classes in South Australia was "to establish in the child a new attitude to his work by allowing him to proceed at his own rate and **by giving him every means of gaining self-control**".[65] [emphasis added] Such a responsibility on the part of Opportunity Class teachers in primary schools, assisted by the Psychologist to whom cases were compulsorily referred for clinical examination, assumed particular importance under 'abnormal social conditions': during the Depression years and subsequently in war time, when especially among older boys there was reportedly

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[62] Max Colwell, Half Days and Patched Pants, Adelaide, Rigby, 1975, chapter 5

[63] 'Circular to Teachers, no. 115. Opportunity Classes (reprinted for general information)', EG (SA), 55:633, 15 April 1939, p. 108

[64] J. Tropea, 'Bureaucratic Order and Special Children: Urban Schools, 1890s-1940s', History of Education Quarterly, 27:1, Spring 1987, pp. 29-53

[65] Constance M. Davey, 'The Development of Psychological Work in the Education Department', Guild Chronicle [Official organ of the Women Teachers' Guild - SA], 6:1, 26 February 1943, p. 8

> an increase in truancy, in behaviour problems in the school such as the using of undesirable language, both direct stealing and pilfering, the begging for money and sexual misdemeanours.[66]

Alongside the 'Oppos' variously denoted as being the class nuisance, difficult, and socially maladjusted, but also backward in their school work, were those 'educable mentally retarded' children Siddy described as "that stupid they wouldn't know the sun was up". In Colwell's anecdotes these included Darky, the Aboriginal boy whose further misfortune was to be physically handicapped. Lastly, and usually only for the amount of time needed for them to 'catch up' by means of the intensive teaching provided therein, opportunity classes were populated with children categorised as "educationally retarded": of normal intelligence but not working up to their mental level because of external circumstances, or having a specific diagnosed weakness in one of the basic subjects.[67]

From the Hindmarsh files on pupils recommended for Opportunity Class placement, several of the required psychological reports illustrate the reasons why a child in the educationally retarded category might be "very far behind and now too far out of his/her age group".[68] The commentary on Patricia S., aged eleven years two months in Grade III, focused on the effects of several changes in schooling:

> Enrolled at Findon July 1963 on move from South Road, previously about 1 year in Dubbo, NSW. ... Hasn't had much of a chance. Anxious little girl, easily upset.

Notably, two others of the seven children in the S. family were also listed as having been "Recommended for O.C.": Victor, aged ten years in Grade I, and James, aged nine in Grade II. In similar vein, the report on Neil S. indicated: "School progress slow. Change of teachers upset emotional stability and work". By contrast, Suzanne C.'s backwardness was attributed to: "Frequent absences from school for sickness; recent short time at Red Cross Home in Glenelg. Various bronchial difficulties, collapsed lung etc."

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[66] ibid, p. 9

[67] For a listing of Psychology Branch retarded pupil classifications with case study examples, see Miss Shirley Stewart (Assistant Psychologist), 'Opportunity Classes', EG (SA), 63:733, 15 August 1947, pp. 134-35

[68] Psychology Branch Reports 1962-65, Correspondence - Hindmarsh School Special and Opportunity Classes, PRO, GRG 18/34/37

Table 4.5 Number and percentage of retarded pupils in South Australian primary and super-primary schools (excluding Opportunity Classes) according to age and receipt of free books, July 1943-June 1944

Age.	Pupils Not Receiving Free Books.		Free-book Pupils.	
	Total No.	Percentage Retarded.	Total No.	Percentage Retarded.
Under 6 years	4,675	—	134	—
6 years and under 7 .	6,771	—	239	—
7 years and under 8 .	6,559	10·6	270	22·6
8 years and under 9 .	6,162	20·7	319	38·6
9 years and under 10 .	6,424	25·1	360	43·3
10 years and under 11 .	6,524	30·8	384	47.4
11 years and under 12 .	6,336	35·8	272	60·8
12 years and under 13 .	6,749	37·8	451	60·1
13 years and under 14 .	6,311	45·6	456	63·4
14 years and under 15 .	3,752	41·7	165	47·9
15 years and under 16 .	1,814	31·5	75	44·0
16 years and under 17 .	865	45·1	24	52·5
17 years and under 18 .	99	77·1	3	100·0
18 years and over	14	100·0	—	—
Total	62,755	25·1	3,252	44·2

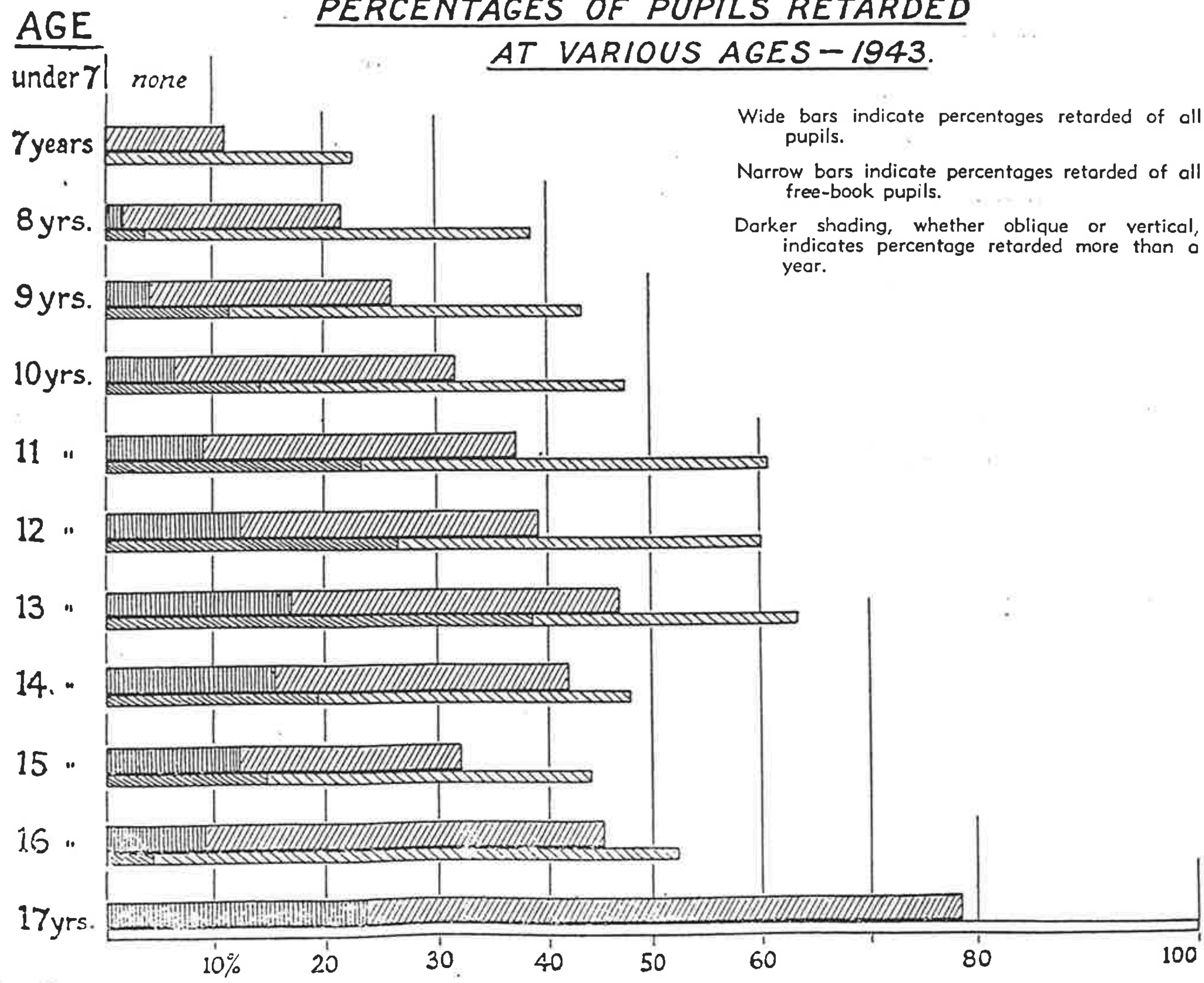
Note: The Research Officer concluded from the significant drop in the number of pupils and the percentage retarded in the age group 14 years & under 15, that a bigger proportion of children from impoverished homes left school on reaching the limit of compulsory attendance (fourteen years) compared to those in better economic circumstances.

Table 4.6 Percentage of retarded pupils in South Australian primary schools (excluding Opportunity Classes) according to grade and receipt of free books, July 1943-June 1944

Primary Schools—	All pupils.	Free-book pupils.
Total enrolment	55,639	2,805
Number retarded	15,288	1,342
Percentage retarded	27.5	47.8
Average amount of retardation (years)	1.35	1.50
Percentage of "non-retarded" pupils at the upper limit of the "non-retarded" age	64.8	72.9
Percentage of pupils retarded in—		
Grade I.	9.2	19.5
Grade II.	18.2	42.4
Grade III.	27.5	46.2
Grade IV.	32.2	54.7
Grade V.	36.8	57.6
Grade VI.	40.8	63.9
Grade VII.	35.6	45.5

Source: A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - II', EG (SA), 60:697, 15 August 1944, pp. 155-56

Figure 4.2
Percentages of pupils retarded at various ages, 1943



Source: A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - II', EG (S.A.), 60:697, 15 August 1944, p. 155

Social class differences in over-ageness are not so readily ascertained from existing sources, although the Research Officer attempted to trace links between retardation and poverty in 1944 by comparing rates among pupils receiving free books and those who were not at the same ages and according to grade. [See Tables 4.5 and 4.6, in addition to the bar graph (Figure 4.2), reproduced on the previous page.] Following this analysis of all government primary schools, Hitchcox examined the extent of retardation in the fifty larger (Class I to IV and Practicing) schools in the metropolitan area according to "the economic circumstances of the districts" which they served. He concluded from the results of the first exercise that "children in poor circumstances go from bad to worse in their primary school careers".[69] With respect to metropolitan primary schools, he calculated a retardation rate of 16.9% in the ten schools located in 'well-to-do' areas (those with less than five percent of pupils receiving free books), compared with 32.9% in the ten schools where up to 10% of children were on the free list (in the least affluent districts in terms of his method of classification). From these statistics he argued:

> [T]here are reasons for believing that there is a fairly strong connection between poverty and retardation. It is not established, however, nor is it claimed, that the connection is an invariable one. In some cases it is doubtless true that poverty causes pupils to live in homes which are lacking in the amenities which make for a sound attitude towards school work. Insufficiency of proper nourishment, lack of privacy for study, domestic upsets, squalid surroundings - all are harmful to a child's progress at school. ... On the other hand, it does not follow that comfortable economic conditions mean an absence of retardation. Every teacher knows that unsuccessful pupils do not all come from poor homes. But it does appear that comfortable homes and plenty of proper nourishment and a pleasant environment make it possible for children to keep up with their school work in many cases where otherwise they would be unsuccessful.[70]

Strengthening Hitchcox's observations, both the School Psychologist and the Mistress of Infant Method at Rose Park noted in 1949 that in places such as Port Adelaide, "where the general educational background isn't very good", it was "to be expected that children stay longer in infant grades" and hence were likely to be over-age for the remainder of their primary schooling.[71] Certainly too, by Max Colwell's account of growing up in Hindmarsh during the

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[69] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some Aspects of the Retardation Problem - II', EG (SA), 60:697, 15 August 1944, p. 156

[70] ibid

[71] L. S. Piddington, 'Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools', 26 September 1949; Miss M. Mead to Superintendent of Primary Education, 'Reasons for

Table 4.7 Hindmarsh Opportunity Class enrolments by occupation group of parent, 1928-1975

Years | Parent Occupation Group

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	Total
1928-39	1	9	29	13	88	28	38	206
1940-49	5	15	41	15	80	46	4	207
1950-60	7	9	42	10	23	12	4	107
1968-75	1	5	14	9	16	20	7	72

Source of data: Hindmarsh Opportunity Class Admission Registers (4 volumes)
PRO, GRG 18/34/1

Parent occupation group code:
1. proprietor, professional, administrative
2. merchant, agent, business /government /institution employee
3. manufacturer, skilled worker
4. transport /communications worker
5. unskilled labourer
6. female head of household
7. other: unemployed, pensioner, not stated

1930s Depression, half the 'Oppos' came to school with no boots and socks and were allowed to go to the soup kitchen run by the church up the road for poor kids in order to obtain a free bowl of soup and a hunk of bread for dinner.[72] My own analysis of this school's Opportunity Class enrolments according to parent occupation reveals that the majority of children's fathers were in the unskilled labourer and transport/communications worker categories, followed by those during the Depression years who were unemployed or in receipt of a pension. [See Table 4.7] Female household heads also figured prominently, especially in the 1930s and 40s when husbands were respectively absent whilst looking for work outside the district and then in war service. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that Hindmarsh is a predominantly working-class suburb and further substantiation of 'the class factor' in relation to over-ageness would require larger-scale quantitative analysis incorporating schools in middle-class areas, which is beyond the scope of my study.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that 'the over-aged child' was produced, not discovered, under a specific set of historical circumstances. In particular, the concept is meaningless without reference to the bureaucratic ideal of efficient schooling as it evolved in policy and practice from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. By the mid 1930s, grade-age as a measure of student progress was firmly entrenched in the South Australian primary school system. This being the case, those pupils defined as 'retarded' by statistical and other measures became a focus of increasing concern with respect to the Education Department's efforts to achieve a perfect age-grade fit.

It is clear from the available evidence that children in certain social groups, locations, and individual situations were more likely than others to experience retarded school progress. Subsequent to classifying these pupils into various categories, and as part of the continuing quest to determine ways by which over-ageness might be remedied, official attention turned to

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suggested amendment to Circular 43 - Promotion of children from the Infant Department', 29 September 1949, PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 179/1949 enclosed in 1/4/5

[72] M. Colwell, op cit., pp. 48-49

the points of primary schooling at which the incidence of retardation was most marked. Concurrently, educational debate about the causes of the problem centred on the nature of graded curricular and classroom organisation as governed by examination requirements.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF OVER-AGENESS: REPRESENTATIONS, RHETORIC AND REFORM IN THE 1940s

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter the over-aged child was seen to be produced in consequence of bureaucratic reforms which regularised school commencing ages and established annual progress through primary grades as the norm. This chapter discusses how a new set of influences in the 1940s re-focused attention on 'retarded' pupils and changed the substance of educational debate regarding their presence in classrooms and in the age-grade statistics that measured the system's overall efficiency. In tracing developments during this decade, it is argued that the themes of New Education and an emphasis on catering for individual differences (about which psychometric studies purportedly furnished exact knowledge) underpinned wide-spread criticism of Departmental policies and practices as being responsible for much of the retardation revealed by a plethora of surveys. Moreover, subsequent initiatives aimed at reshaping primary schooling and improving access to secondary courses ultimately served to de-construct over-ageness. Hence, by the late 1960s, the correspondence between pupils' ages and their grades began to approach the perfect fit sought for so long.

STATISTICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RETARDATION PROBLEM

The address on *Retardation: Its Causes and Prevention* given by E. G. Malherbe at the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference session in Adelaide renewed local concern with respect to over-ageness in government primary schools.[1] Even more so did the Professor's follow-up examination of the South Australian age-grade statistics he derived from the table published in the Minister of Education's parliamentary report: *Number of children under instruction on 31st December, 1936*. Using a two-year age-spread as the norm, he showed that of the 69,956 pupils in Grades I to VII, 7070 or 10.1% were two and a half years older than the 'average' age

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[1] For a transcript of Malherbe's address, see K. S. Cunningham (ed.), Education for Complete Living. The Challenge of Today, Melbourne, ACER, 1938, section XI, pp. 553-70

for their grade, and of these 2720 or 3.8% were three and a half years over-age. On these figures, Malherbe regarded this State as having "one of the most retarded groups he had studied", and stressed that "a big monetary loss was caused by children failing repeatedly and being maintained in the same class".[2] Replicating his method with the equivalent statistics for 1938, Constance Davey (the School Psychologist) found that of the 64,357 pupils on the rolls, 6030 or 9.3% were retarded by two and a half years, while 1457 or 2.2% were three and a half years above 'normal age'. So great was the problem, Davey asserted, it called for immediate investigation.[3]

Confronted by the disturbing implications of these studies for the system's efficiency, and mindful of the fact that Malherbe had deplored the absence in South Australia of "very important" figures on children's age-in-grade, the Director of Education announced in March 1943 that special consideration was being given to the question of over-ageness. Additionally, he indicated, two tables of the numbers under instruction would henceforth be published annually - the second detailing percentages of normal, retarded and accelerated pupils by age, grade and type of school "so that over a period of years the facts concerning retardation might be better known".[4] A spate of age-grade surveys followed, the results of which were often conflicting and their interpretation highly contentious. Notably too, each of the analyses conducted by senior Departmental officers in the early 1940s highlighted where the greatest discrepancies between children's chronological ages and their 'educational ages' occurred: at the beginning and end of primary schooling.

Like Malherbe and Davey, investigators who submitted age-grade statistics in evidence to the (Bean) Education Inquiry Committee during 1943 did so without the benefit of the second set of data from the Minister's Annual Report as referred to above, and they mostly drew on the existing figures for a single year. The Superintendent of Primary Education (W. T. Martin),

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[2] Cited by Constance Davey in: 'Retardation', EG (SA), 60:644, 15 March 1944, p. 87

[3] ibid

[4] Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Minutes of Evidence, 1943 [hereafter referred to as Bean Inquiry Minutes] - Dr C. Fenner, Book 1, p. 24. PRO, GRG 18/171. See also 'Age Grade Tables', EG (S.A.), 60:694, 15 May 1944, p. 114

Table 5.1 Superintendent Martin's table showing the progress of a single cohort of pupils through Grades I to VII in SA government primary schools

Number of children under instruction on 31st December

Year	Gr.I	Gr.II	Gr.III	Gr.IV	Gr.V	Gr.VI	Gr.VII
1936	**11433**	10866 1269	9572	9886	10076	9653	8470
1937	10733	**10164**	9505 1218	9604	9742	9461	8060
1938	10173	9341	**8946**	9357 30	9513	9055	7942
1939	10097	8874	8210	**8916**	9302 163	8963	7756
1940	10042	8880	7714	8232	**8753**	8681 604	7718
1941	10098	8601	7897	7622	8253	**8149**	7336 452
1942	10156	8590	7682	7947	7549	7710	**6997**

Source: Education Inquiry Committee, 1943, Minutes of Evidence - W. T. Martin (Superintendent of Primary Education), Book 1, looseleaf replacement for the table on p. 74, PRO, GRG 18/171

however, prepared a table covering a five year period (1937-1941) on the grounds that it would be unwise and unsafe to generalise from just one Report. On the Committee's suggestion, he then furnished an amended table [reproduced on the preceding page] which traced the progress of a single cohort over a seven year period: from Grade I in 1936 to Grade VII in 1942. Whilst the results confirmed his opinion that there was considerable retardation in the primary schools, Martin was careful to interpret them in light of the Education Regulations governing pupil classification and promotion, the directions in the Course of Instruction which provided that 'ordinary' children would move up a grade each year to complete Grade VII aged 12-13 years, variations in pupils' school commencing ages, and differences in admission times during a year according to school size. He further drew attention to the fact that the figures applied to the number of children under instruction on December 31st - another major consideration in accounting for 'undue' retardation in the first and last few grades of the primary school.

Martin thus argued that the high percentage of children not promoted to Grade II in January was because on December 31st many in Grade I would not have been attending for a full year. Regarding the obvious sharp decline in numbers, also, as pupils advanced from Grade II to Grade III, he stated:

> This is the point at which change from the infant department to the primary school takes place, and the fact that promotions are made half-yearly in the infant department has a bearing on this situation and may even be the complete explanation. The Infant Mistress works her school in five classes, Kindergarten, Lower Grade I, Upper Grade I, Lower Grade II and Upper Grade II. It is not difficult to conceive that with five skimmings preceding entrance to Grade III the skimming may be rather drastic unless the mesh of the sieve is large or the sieve is made of flexible material.[5]

In the Superintendent's view there were far too many children aged eight years and over in infant departments - a product, he continued, not only of the sub-division of Grades I and II with six-monthly promotions but due to

> the fact that our infant teachers are very proud of their schools and in their zeal and their desire to reach high standards, which of course will be of benefit to their pupils, they may be holding them back a little, not appreciating the fact that another six months in one of these sub-divisions may mean the loss of a whole year later on.[6]

[5] Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. T. Martin, Book 1, p. 75.

[6] ibid, pp. 75-76

Hence, while not opposed to the organisation of classes in infant departments per se, Martin considered that an unnecessary number of hurdles were being placed across the educational path of children at this stage of their schooling.

With respect to the second marked falling-off in pupil numbers, from Grade VI to Grade VII, Martin advocated that the age-grade census be taken on June 30th rather than December 31st. This would provide a much better basis of judgement, he contended, since "it is in the Grade VII year that the 'over-fourteens' and the 'not-under-compulsions' leave, and especially so after the qualifying examination in November".[7] Lastly, he attributed the significant rate of retardation in Grade V to the fact that:

> whilst teachers generally are progressive, and in accordance with modern educational tendency are not placing great store on examinations, there are still a minority who foolishly think that they are judged by examination results and that their reputation depends on the success of their pupils in the qualifying examination. We are discouraging this in every possible way and I am confident that before long the few laggards whom I am here criticising will follow the example of the **great body of teachers who are not unduly retarding any child.**[8]
> [original emphasis]

On this practice of 'holding back' children deemed likely to fail in Grade VII, Martin shared the concern expressed by Davey, whose earlier study had similarly revealed that the peak number of over-aged pupils occurred in Grade V. As she indicated:

> [I]n that grade the retarded child 'comes to rest', which is a disturbing fact in an already unsatisfactory situation. It has been suggested that the Q.C. examination is the biggest single factor in retardation, because it acts as a 'stopper' rather than a selector ... for entrance to varying types of education for children over 13 years, and its 'stopper' effect is felt in grades well below Grade VII.[9]

The Acting Employment Officer in 1943, A. E. Whitford, was equally disconcerted by the high proportion of children who, as a result of grade repetition, did not progress beyond Grade VII

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[7] ibid, p. 75

[8] ibid, p. 76

[9] C. M. Davey, 'Retardation', op cit.

by the time they attained the compulsory leaving age of fourteen years. With the aid of tables he compiled of the number and percentage departing school from the various grades and at which ages in the year October 1941-September 1942, plus another illustrating how the cohort aged six years proceeded through the primary school, he demonstrated to the Bean Committee the system's failure to take account of the "great variations in human ability" which he saw as the prime cause of retardation. The former Vocational Guidance Officer further supported his argument regarding "the unsuitability of the existing school curriculum for the psychological needs of the majority of children" by citing the evidence of ACER intelligence tests given in December 1941 to pupils sitting for the Q.C. in Norwood district schools, together with their responses to the question as to whether they had ever repeated a grade.[10]

In following up the extensive evidence on retardation tendered to it, the Bean Committee generated its own set of tables using data abstracted from the Education Department's age-grade and school leaver returns for 1944-47, which were juxtaposed with the results of I.Q. and standardised achievement tests administered in selected South Australian schools. The Final Bean Report in 1949 drew on these figures to argue several key points. First, not only was the number of 'unduly old' children large, in any one grade there was a "seriously wide" range of ages. In the Committee's view, this was most undesirable:

> It is not good for children of 12 and 13 to be put to work alongside 9 and 10 year olds at the same tasks, and to be subject to a discipline necessarily common in many ways when the class is organised as a unit for instruction.[11]

Second, given its endorsement of the need for 'educational extension' beyond the primary stage to meet the urgent challenge of preparing students for 'complete living' in a reconstructed society after the disorders of war, the Report echoed Whitford's consternation over the statistics indicating that a significant proportion of children aged twelve years and older were scattered across Grades III to VII, and that many left from the primary school on ceasing to be under compulsion to attend. Third, and in furtherance of Whitford's line of inquiry and argument, the

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[10] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, Book 4, pp. 813-17, GRG 18/172

[11] Education Inquiry Committee, Final Report [hereafter referred to as Final Bean Report], SAPP, no. 15, 1949, para. 181, p. 4

Table 5.2 The 'spread' of chronological and mental ages and achievement ages in reading and arithmetic, Grade IV-VII, as calculated by the Bean Committee

No. in grade		Chronological ages	'Spread' in months	Mental ages	'Spread' in months
IV	17	8.10-10.5	19	9.2- 12.6	29
V	21	9.6-12.11	41	9.3-12.11	44
VI	26	10.8-13.5	33	9.3-15.9	78
VII	37	11.4-14.11	43	11.9-17.6	72
		Reading ages	'Spread' in months	Arithmetic ages	'Spread'
IV	17	9.2-12.6	40	8.5-10.6	25
V	21	8.9-12.5	44	9.6-11.1	19
VI	26	9.10-16.10	84	9.7-12.10	39
VII	37	9.7-17.0	89	10.5-13.11	42

Source: Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Final Report, SAPP, no. 15, 1949, p. 6

Bean Committee used its *Table showing the 'spread' of chronological and mental ages and achievement ages in reading and arithmetic* [reproduced on the preceding page] to spearhead its critique of long-established practice, which in ignoring "the principle of individual variation and therefore of individual progression" produced retarded youngsters.[12] For, according to the Final Bean Report, the blame and the shame with respect to retardation did not belong to the victims but to the system of dividing school work into annual blocks, teaching by the 'one-pace method' of class instruction, testing by means of a 'catastrophic' final examination, and promotion by attainment.[13]

The main themes and issues raised in relation to the foregoing accounts resounded in educational circles throughout the 1940s, as will presently be shown. Nor did representations of 'the retardation problem' by means of detailed age-grade surveys themselves go unchallenged. For instance, whilst the effect of a December school census in producing 'undue' retardation was promptly resolved by changing the date to mid-year, which in turn radically altered the statistical picture of over-ageness [see discussion of this point in the previous chapter], the Research Officer's comprehensive analysis, published in two parts during 1944, provoked a critical response from at least one reader concerned about the meaning of both the terms used and the statistical results.

In his attack on the content and assumptions of Hitchcox's July and August *Education Gazette* articles, W. T. Westgarth, a primary school headmaster and active teacher unionist, firstly pointed up a discrepancy between the definition of 'normal age for a grade' as signified by heavy type in the official age-grade table for 1943 (which Hitchcox had reproduced) and the one he himself preferred:

> The heavy type figures give the ages on July 1. They indicate, for example, that a child can be 8.0 on July 1 and still be normal age for Grade II. That is, he could be 8.6 on December 31. On the other hand, ... Mr. Hitchcox writes, "... Most children start in Grade I at the age of five or six. The normal child is therefore aged six or seven in Grade II". According to this a child who turns eight years of age while in

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[12] ibid, pp. 5-7

[13] ibid; see also p. 9

> Grade II is above normal age. There is a six months' difference between the two meanings of normal age.[14]

Notably, the basis for calculating the percentage of retarded pupils in Grade II from the annual census returns remained at odds with the age standard of eight years designated in the Regulations for children to transfer from an infant department to the primary department in schools so organised. As will be seen, this anomaly became central to Westgarth's protracted disagreement with Hitchcox regarding the definition of over-ageness at junior primary level.

Second, whilst acknowledging that for his investigative purposes the Research Officer had clearly defined the term 'retarded', viz, "when the child's chronological age is greater than his educational age", Westgarth suggested that any misunderstanding might be avoided by using the word 'over-aged' since the common meaning of retardation among school staff was "when the child's chronological age is greater than his mental age, i.e., when he is mentally sub-normal".[15] That the word currently had yet another meaning, which added to the confusion, is illustrated by Inspector Blake's assertion in reference to over-aged Grade I and II pupils. "In, I expect, 95 cases out of 100", she said, "the child is doing work equal to its mental age, so we are not retarding ['holding back'] children in the infant school".[16]

Comments like Miss Blake's, though, were to assume increasing significance in subsequent debate around another of Westgarth's observations. "In all this retardation", he ventured, "only chronological age is considered. How much notice should be taken of mental age?"[17] In the meantime, there was the further matter of children being listed as retarded when they were only a month above the normal age, which led Westgarth to question whether it was not possible for too much emphasis to be placed on percentages. Moreover, in his view, percentages could be misleading. By way of an example, he cited Hitchcox's findings that retardation in metropolitan

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[14] 'Editorial - Retardation. A comment on the Articles in the July and August *Gazettes* by Mr. W. T. Westgarth', SA Teachers' Journal, 30:8, 15 September 1944, p. 1

[15] ibid

[16] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss F. Blake (Inspector of Infant Schools), Book 2, p. 255

[17] 'Editorial - Retardation', op cit, p. 10

infant departments during 1943 was 9.1%, whereas in other schools the percentage in Grades I and II was 16.2. The statistics may be accurate, Westgarth argued, but no weighting was given, nor probably could be, to differences in children's ages on starting school vis-a-vis the length of time they spent doing the work of junior primary grades according to the type and location (urban/rural) of school attended.

Concern about this last matter was re-fuelled in 1949 following the release of a paper entitled *Examination of Retardation by means of Age-Grade Tables*, which the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Statistician prepared. Hitchcox noted from the conclusion in the draft copy sent to him for comment that there was an "alarming" amount of retardation in South Australian schools, particularly in the lower grades, to the extent of 42% of five-year-olds being failed in their first year. The Research Officer reacted defensively, stating that such a figure seemed to be unjustified. "An educational system could hardly be so inept as that", he contended.[18] In his letter of reply to the Statistician, Hitchcox pointed out that the calculations did not allow for the practice in infant departments of promoting children through five half-yearly grades, but observed with some chagrin the still inadequate account taken of this consideration in the final publication. (The main addendum to the original conclusions reached in the ACER study focused on South Australia's lack of a standard policy with regard to children's maturity. Additionally, the Grade I curriculum was criticised as being too difficult for many of those for whom it was supposedly designed.)[19]

In answer to Hitchcox's further letter expostulating at the continued omission of an explanation regarding the arrangements in infant departments, the Statistician remarked:

> If it is true that a large amount of retardation in Grades I and II could be put down to the 'half-grades' policy, then whether or not a child spends three years in completing the course set out for two years depends much more upon the school he is attending than upon his ability.[20]

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[18] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools', 12 September 1949,. PRO, GRS 809/001/P - E.D. 179/1949 enclosed in 1/4/5 [hereafter referred to as E.D. 179/49]

[19] Information Bulletin No.17. Examination of Retardation by means of Age-Grade Tables, Melbourne, ACER, 1949.

[20] Cited by A. C. Hitchcox in his report: 'Children in Grades I and II', op cit, p. 10

In turn, Hitchcox commented: "it can hardly be denied that the apodosis of the last sentence quoted states the position with some degree of accuracy". But he also queried whether it was correct to speak of retardation in this connection since "the higher proportion of early beginners in Infant Departments does a great deal to counter-balance the large number taking three plus years over Grades I and II in these schools".[21]

Support for Hitchcox's latter point was immediately proffered by the Departmental Psychologist, L. S. Piddington, who argued in relation to the official age-grade norms that when as many as 14% of children entered infant departments before their fifth birthday, one could not consider such pupils staying three years as being in any way retarded or handicapped. Further, Piddington joined the Research Officer in contesting how rates of over-ageness were derived in the ACER investigation. "Here again", he emphasised, "retardation is judged by the time spent in grades and not by the actual age at which they reached certain grades ... which is a much fairer basis".[22] Thus, he continued, where local surveys of retardation in Grades I and II used age-in-grade to calculate percentages, the results not only diverged significantly from those cited in the ACER Information Bulletin but more accurately represented the situation.

The Final Bean Report (submitted in the same year as the ACER study was published) advanced a proposition which potentially had greater significance for altering the statistical picture of over-ageness than the amendment to the school census date had effected in 1943. In conjunction with its other recommendations for solving the retardation problem, the Education Inquiry Committee argued that in designating a 'normal grade-age' a deviation of one year either way should become operational. A three-year age-range in any class, in contrast to the current two-year spread, would thereby constitute the norm for statistical purposes.[23] If adopted, this measure would indeed have drastically reduced the percentages of retarded pupils in each grade. The Education Department, however, remained committed to those definitions of

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[21] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Children in Grades I and II', ibid. For the statistics on the relationship between pupils' commencing ages and retardation in junior grades according to school type, to which the Research Officer was referring, see 'School Commencing Age', EG (SA), 60:700, 15 November 1944, pp. 213-17

[22] L. S. Piddington, 'Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools', 26 September 1949, E.D. 179/49

[23] Final Bean Report, p. 7

'normality' and 'retardation' that Hitchcox elucidated in the first of his two 1944 *Education Gazette* articles on the subject.[24]

Although discussion concerning the basis on which retardation rates should be measured gradually abated, so that in the next decade this subject was no longer an issue, debate about whether the arrangements in separately-established infant departments themselves caused pupils' grade-ages to be above average continued to rage. In this, Westgarth and Hitchcox (with the backing of Piddington) were the main protagonists over the period from 1944 to 1960. Not surprisingly, in terms of the broader politics within the Primary Division of the Education Department, representatives of the infant school tradition were the most vociferous in insisting that the distinctive organisation of junior grades in their schools was not a major factor in retardation.

RETARDATION IN GRADES I AND II - A FUNCTION OF INFANT SCHOOL GRADE ORGANISATION?

As distinct from the evidence on retardation rates in junior primary grades tendered by witnesses appearing before the Education Inquiry Committee, much of which remained 'in-house', publication of the Research Officer's 1944 survey results in the *Education Gazette* generated a good deal of the controversy surrounding this question. On the basis of Superintendent Martin's earlier comments, Hitchcox expected that over-ageness would be more pronounced in schools with infant departments than in those without. As he elaborated upon long-standing arrangements, in the largest schools a child admitted in July would normally take two and a half years to progress through the five sub-grades and reach Grade III; if he/she started in January, the course would occupy three years. ('Bright' children, though, were permitted to do it in one and a half or two years.) By contrast, in smaller schools not organised into separate infant and primary departments, the procedure was for January new entrants to make the transition to Grade III after two years, and for July first-time enrolments to take one and a half years. (Or, in the case of 'slower' pupils, two and a half years.)

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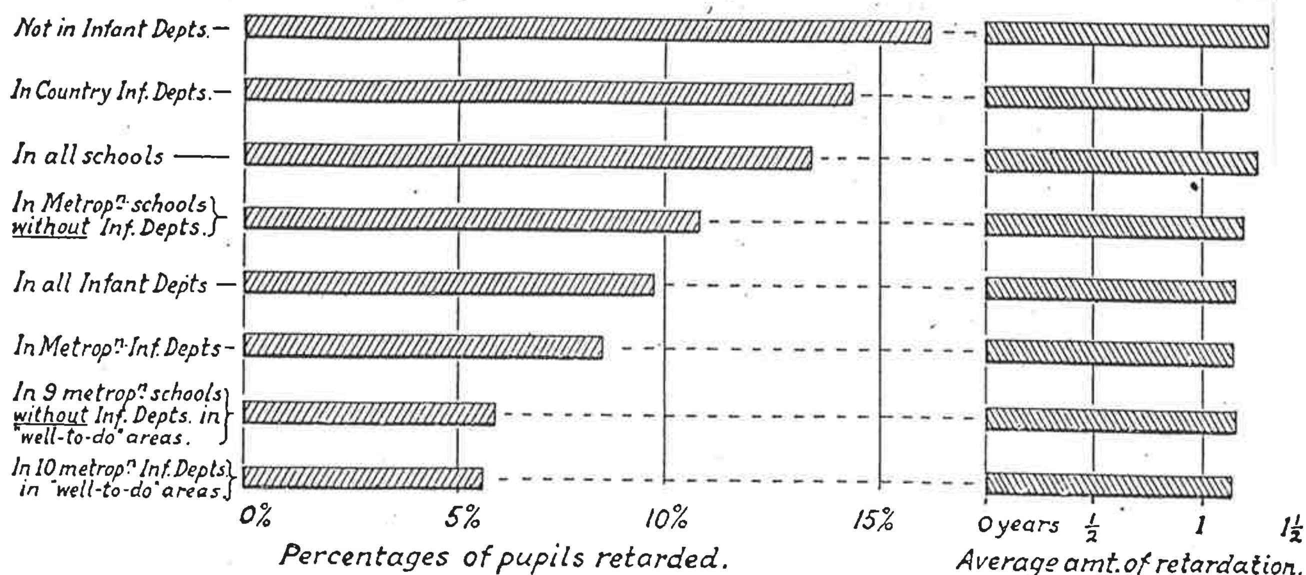
24 A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - I', EG (SA), 60:696, 15 July 1944, p. 141

Table 5.3 Retardation in Grades I and II in schools with and without an Infant Department, 1943

	No. of pupils.	Per- centage of pupils retarded.	Average amount of retardation. Years.
Grades I. and II.—			
(a) *Not* in Inft. Depts. ..	10,594	16.2	1.31
(b) In country Inft. Depts.	998	14.4	1.22
(c) In all schools	18,725	13.4	1.26
(d) In metropolitan schools *without* Inft. Depts.	2,644	10.8	1.19
(e) In all Inft. Depts. ..	8,131	9.7	1.15
(f) In metropolitan Inft. Depts.	7,133	9.1	1.14
Grades III. to VII.—			
(a) In schools without Inft. Depts.	23,065	35.6	1.42
(b) In country schools with Inft. Depts.	1,774	39.2	1.33
(c) In all schools	36,914	34.6	1.36
(d) In metropolitan schools without Inft. Depts.	8,153	32.5	1.37
(e) In all schools with Inft. Depts.	13,849	32.9	1.25
(f) In metropolitan schools with Inft. Depts. ..	12,075	32.1	1.24



Source: A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - II', EG (SA), 60:697, 15 August 1944, pp. 153, 154

Hitchcox's analysis of the age-grade returns for 1943, however, showed that the real state of affairs was opposite to what he anticipated: except in three of the five country schools with infant departments, retardation rates were higher in schools without sub-divided junior grades. [See the Table 5.3 and the bar graph preceding this page.] Moreover, despite the fact that Grade I and II pupils did spend, on average, six to twelve months longer in infant departments than in other schools, both the percentage and amount (in years) of retardation at upper primary level was no worse, indeed a little better, in schools with specialised provision for infants. A likely explanation for this scenario, Hitchcox suggested, lay in the younger ages at which children entered infant departments, and their heightened chances therein of getting an all-important 'good start' to school by virtue of exposure to "a suitable environment and equipment and a teacher of the right personality".[25]

The Research Officer's findings with respect to the percentages of over-aged pupils in junior primary classes according to school type matched those of Mavis Wauchope, a Senior Lecturer at Adelaide Teachers' College, who had examined the figures for 1941 and 1942. Both in her current position and as a former Infant Mistress, Wauchope's direct links with colleagues in the field brought into consideration additional factors influencing the statistics for infant departments. Among the reasons reported to her, retardation was a function of some children's 'unreadiness' to undertake the work of any particular junior class or Grade III on account of wide-ranging circumstances. These included frequent transfers between schools, coming from a poor home, absence on health grounds (infectious diseases were seen to take a higher toll on infants since they had lacked time to build up resistance and immunities), immaturity (being either 'too young' or 'slow starters'), and difficulties in adjustment to school (especially, during the war, on the part of evacuee and refugee children).[26]

Together with those children labelled 'generally slow', the listing continued, other cases of over-ageness in the 'youngest grades' (Kindergarten and the lower and upper divisions of Grade I) were due to the Psychologist's policy of leaving 'slightly mentally retarded' and

[25] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - II', EG (SA), 60:697, 15 August 1944, p. 154

[26] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss M. L. Wauchope, Book 2, p. 270

'definitely below normal' pupils in the infant school until they reached the age of eight years or could no longer profit by the work done there. Apart from such children awaiting admission to an Opportunity Class, there was also the holding back effect of the Departmental policy whereby children were promoted to Grade III only once a year in January, so that large numbers 'ready' to enter the primary department in July, when their ages were below the official norm for promotion (i.e., eight years), were retained in Grade II for an extra six months.[27]

Next, in terms of the broader context of infant schooling, Wauchope pointed out that war-time conditions upset homes and teacher shortages made individual work with children very difficult, consequently more retardation might be expected than in normal years. Furthermore, social practice with respect to the ages at which pupils were enrolled in infant departments was perceived to contribute to retardation in the lowest grades. As one infant mistress indicated:

> some are only enrolled on the day they reach compulsory age [six years] when the class work is already well advanced and therefore the child is retarded. An intelligent child may make the grade, but it requires much additional help from the teacher.[28]

Too early a start at school (i.e., under five years of age, when a child was "not mentally old enough to conform to the life") was likewise observed to often lead to repetition of one or more sub-grades.

Contrary, then, to the suggestion of Superintendent Martin, reiterated by Walter Westgarth in response to Hitchcox's article,[29] it was not the differentiated nature of educational provision for younger children in infant departments that caused retardation in such schools. Nor, in Wauchope's view at least, were the numbers of over-aged pupils attending these schools more than a reasonable proportion if all the factors mentioned were taken into account. Indeed,

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[27] See 'Circular to Teachers, No. 26. Promotion of children from the infant department to the primary department. (reprinted for general information)', EG (SA), 55:633, 15 April 1939, p. 108

[28] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss M. M. Smith (representing the Infant Teachers' Association for the Women Teachers' Guild), Book 3, p. 739

[29] 'Editorial. Retardation ', op cit, p. 10

various contributors to the debate contested the basic assumption that taking longer than two years over Grades I and II was a bad thing. Thus, for example, Nancy Kimber, representing the Infant Teachers' Association at the proceedings of the Education Inquiry, contended that children benefited from the extra six months when taking three years to do the two (or, if including Kindergarten, two and a half) year course.[30] The Inspector of Infant Schools concurred, arguing that:

> It may appear that the child admitted [to an infant department] in January is retarded six months. In reality the children gain a great deal in that time - a wider field of reading, an added confidence in attacking new work, a training in leadership through group activities, a sounder number sense, more advanced art and craft work, and for the most part they will readily adjust themselves to the new regime of Grade III. With six monthly promotions, children who have fallen back have the advantage of further instruction in the work they have either missed or could not assimilate.[31]

To this perspective, the Psychologist added that it was possibly worse for pupils to repeat higher grades than to have to spend longer in an infant department.[32] In so commenting, Piddington doubtless appreciated that, as Inspector Blake implied in the last sentence quoted above, repetition of any grade from III to VII would involve a full year compared with half that time in the Kindergarten class or a sub-division of Grade I or II.

Concomitantly, debate began to turn on the question of what, in fact, constituted a normal period of infant schooling in terms of assessing children's progress and hence the rate of retardation in Grades I and II - an issue constantly revived by Westgarth's refusal to abandon the proposition that pupils spending three years in infant departments were retarded, "not because they are backward but because of the way the classes are organised".[33] The official response to Westgarth's correspondence on the matter during 1949 was unequivocal.

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[30] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss I. N. Kimber, Book 3, p. 731

[31] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss F. Blake, Book 2, p. 255

[32] L. S. Piddington, 'Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools', 26 September 1949, loc cit

[33] Walter J. Westgarth, M.M., to the Director of Education, 'Organisation of Infant Departments', 3 January 1949, E.D. 179/49.
Note: Westgarth not only initiated a round of correspondence on this issue in the *Teachers' Journal* and within the Education Department during 1949 but did so previously in 1945, again in 1956, and then in 1959-60.

Table 5.4 Ages of pupils entering secondary schools in 1949 - Quartile distribution

School for Grades I and II	Total pupils	Average Age year m.	Age at 1st. Quartile year m.	Age at Median year m.	Age at 3rd Quartile year m.	Inter-Quartile Range months
Metro. Infant	1,546	13 0	12 8	13 0	13 5	9
Metro. Primary	619	12 11	12 5	12 10	13 3	10
Country Infant	238	13 1	12 9	13 2	13 6	9
Country Primary	1,179	13 0	12 7	13 0	13 5	10
One-Teacher	497	13 1	12 8	13 0	13 6	10
Correspond-ence	46	13 2	12 9	13 2	13 10	13
Private School	121	13 1	12 5	12 11	13 4	11
Out of the State	138	13 3	12 8	13 3	13 10	14
More than one type	300	13 2	12 9	13 2	13 8	11
Total	4,684	13 1	12 7	13 0	13 5	10

Source: A. C. Hitchcox, Report on children in Grades I and II at Infant Departments and at other schools, 12 September 1949, p. 11, PRO, GRS 809/001/P - E.D. 179/49

Confirming the advice forwarded by the Mistress of Infant Method at Rose Park School that a three year stay in infant departments was usual for February-enrolled children (or at least for the youngest among them and those in poor districts), the Research Officer concluded from his examination of the age distribution of Grade III pupils in various types of schools as given in the 1948 age-grade returns:

> It is clear, therefore, as far as the metropolitan area is concerned, that the 'normal course' for the vast majority of children is to proceed through an Infant Department. It appears that, in accordance with modern educational thought, the trend of departmental policy is to establish Infant Departments in all schools where numbers warrant them, and so the proportion of children who do not pass through Infant Departments is dwindling. Mr. Westgarth's error, it seems to me, is in regarding schools **without** Infant Departments as 'normal', and schools with them as departures from normality, when the reverse is really the case.[34]
> [original emphasis]

But for the Psychologist, this was to ignore the crux of the matter. He argued strongly that the question Hitchcox's subsequent investigation set out to answer, namely, how long should children spend doing the work of Grades I and II, placed a false emphasis on the time factor which ought not to be the criterion of success, nor therefore a measure of retardation, in infant departments:

> As has been pointed out in the Education Enquiry Committee's Report, and at our recent Staff Conference, the important consideration is the general well-being of the pupil. Time spent in an Infant grade, or any grade, is a bad guide unless we know many other facts, particularly the **age and mental development** of the child concerned.[35] [original emphasis]

In the event, Piddington's view that age-in-grade was the most appropriate basis for assessing student progress, both educationally- and statistically-speaking, and that the organisation of infant departments was not significant in either regard but rather the ages at which children entered these schools, was vindicated by the results of Hitchcox's survey. As he summarised in reference to the Research Officer's figures [reproduced as Table 5.4] on the relationship between Grade I and II arrangements according to school type and pupils' ages on transferring

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[34] A. C. Hitchcox to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, 'Ages of children who have passed through infant departments', 17 January 1949, E.D. 179/49

[35] L. S. Piddington, 'Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II', 26 September 1949, op cit

to secondary schools, which was at the nub of Westgarth's concern about the length of time children spent in infant departments, there was

> practically no difference in the ages of children coming from schools with, or without, Infant Departments (actually 1 to 2 months difference). From this table it would appear that one of the main objections to the organisation of Infant Departments falls to the ground. One reason for the ages of entry to Secondary Schools being practically the same, is that children are entering Infant departments, on the whole, at a younger age than other schools.[36]

Whilst Westgarth's 'mistaken' position on retardation in Grades I and II was thus firmly corrected, his underlying concern regarding the period spent in infant departments vis-à-vis the age standard defined for pupils' transfer to secondary courses comprised a major issue in itself - one which the next chapter treats in detail. At this juncture it is instructive to reflect upon other practical considerations and ideologically-driven criticisms of primary schooling, not restricted to junior grades, which were equally prominent in contemporary educational discourse on over-ageness .

'THE SYSTEM' IS TO BLAME

In the 1940s the very bases upon which retarded school progress had historically been constructed and the over-aged child defined were challenged as part of a broader critique of schooling that was significantly influenced by the newly-dominant ideologies of individual difference and educational equality, together with the over-arching theme of preparing students for life in a world without war. Pavla Miller cogently reviews the education reform agenda at this time, noting the impetus provided by the ACER and the 1937 NEF Conference for seeking far-reaching changes to the existing system, and the Bean Committee's often belated endorsement of the measures demanded by various groups.[37] Yet other than indirectly on the part of Denis Grundy,[38] the impact of this reform movement on 'the retardation problem' has

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[36] ibid

[37] P. Miller, Long Division. State schooling in South Australian society, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986, pp. 214-221

[38] See D. Grundy, 'From Bean to Keeves' in The illusion of progress. The Keeves Report and the future of education, Bedford Park, Flinders University of South Australia, 1982; 'Compulsory schooling, age-grading and the problem of standards in respect to post-secondary education', Unpublished paper, Flinders University School of Education seminar series, 1983

hitherto not been examined. The discussion below is intended to go some way towards filling that lacuna.

Improvements in pupil-teacher ratios, staff expertise (in terms of length of training) and material circumstances in schools were central to the reform program during and after World War II, not least in consideration of the extent to which the incidence of over-ageness might thereby be reduced. Thus, for example, Inspector Blake argued in 1943 that if classes were small (i.e., well below the current average of fifty in infant departments) and teaching conditions ideal so as to facilitate individualised instruction, no child who could take his/her place socially with their age group should have to be retained in a grade.[39] To most critics though, retardation was not simply an issue of class size and 'undue teaching strain' associated with a serious shortfall of resources. Rather, the problem was multi-faceted and, according to Inspector Leach, for one, many of its causes and remedies lay firmly within the South Australian Education Department's own ambit.

The Association of Class VI Head Teachers numbered amongst those who extended the focus of concern to include two 'obvious' factors seen as interfering with all education down to Grade III level and a major cause of children's retarded school progress: "the inspectorial system with its skill marks, and the Q.C. examination with its payment by results aspect in the public appreciation of the teacher".[40] In summary of his evidence to the Bean Inquiry on these inter-connected issues, a spokesperson for the Association referred Committee members to:

> (1) Regulation XIII - Skill Marks, paragraph 1(e), "The effectiveness of his teaching, as shown by the results at the inspection and by his success in preparing candidates for departmental examinations" is one of the points upon which the practical skill of a teacher as represented by marks is to be based, and
> (2) Regulation XX, paragraph 1(b), "No children may be withdrawn from inspection."[41]

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[39] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss F. Blake, Book 2, p. 256

[40] Bean Inquiry Minutes - R. T. S. Dent, Book 2, p. 322

[41] ibid

Table 5.5 Age-grade table, 1943 compared with 1945 and 1947, as compiled by the Bean Committee

Grade	Year	At or below 'normal' age	One year above 'normal' age	More than one year
		%	%	%
III	1943	72.0	20.6	7.4
	1945	78.6	16.7	4.6
	1947	83.5	12.7	3.8
V	1943	62.6	24.2	13.2
	1945	68.0	21.6	10.3
	1947	73.7	18.4	7.9
VII	1943	64.0	28.7	7.3
	1945	67.7	28.0	6.4
	1947	70.5	23.9	5.6

"The percentage of children in Grade III one year above the normal age has been reduced by more than one quarter; of those two years or more above the normal age by one half".

Source: Education Inquiry Committee (Chair: E. L. Bean), Final Report, SAPP, no. 15, 1949, p . 23

From here, then, stemmed the continued practice of retaining certain pupils in a lower grade for the purpose of maximising a teacher's Q.C. pass rate, hence earning them a higher efficiency rating, which in turn enhanced their personal classification and appointment prospects. Not to follow suit, in the experience of the same witness, meant: "I fail to get 100% of Q.C.'s. As a result I have to put up with ill-informed local criticism".[42]

Irrespective of their apparently well-founded basis, Inspector Leach agreed with Superintendent Martin that these views were confined to a decreasing minority and proceeded to recite the gains made to date in persuading teachers to toe the official line - one which increasingly favoured advancing pupils through the course of instruction on the basis of chronological age in lieu of promotion by attainment as measured by examinations:

> The Department has been urging that the percentage of promotions should be as high as possible, and teachers have made faithful attempt to meet its wishes. In 46 schools visited this year [1943] the percentage of promotions were - [to Grade] III 93.7%, IV 92.7%, V 91%, VI 90.3%. Average for II - VI, 91.9%.[43]

Albeit not yet consistent with Leach's contention that there should be no such thing as failing a pupil and therefore (by implication) no retardation, these statistics represented sure progress towards this goal. And as the Bean Committee reported, over the next few years continued exhortation in respect of promotion practice secured a further reduction in the number of over-aged children in primary classes. [See the Commitee's figures, reproduced as Table 5.5 on the preceding page.] Additionally, the adverse effect on retardation rates of the externally-examined Qualifying Certificate was to be tempered considerably with its replacement by the internally-assessed Progress Certificate from 1 January 1944.[44]

Referring to the educational grounds on which the examination system had been severely criticised, the Department announced that the prime intention of this reform was to provide "an

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[42] ibid

[43] Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. V. Leach, Book 1, p. 98

[44] For details of this change to the Grade VII qualification for entry to secondary schools, see: 'Education Circular No. 24 (revised). Completion of Primary Education - Progress Certificate', EG (SA), 59:689, 1 December 1943, pp. 223-24

opportunity for more inspirational and interesting teaching in every grade, but particularly Grade VII where cramming for results, it was claimed, had a narrowing influence".[45] Inspectors' comments when reviewing the 'exploratory year' of the new certification process, however, allude to an important corollary - its rapid impact on the numbers failing to qualify for entry to secondary courses and, relatedly, on the amount of grade repetition previously experienced in anticipation of or consequent upon failure in the final Grade VII examination.[46] Indeed, by 1951, it was reportedly the case that since the abolition of the Q.C. the percentage of children gaining the certificate which signified the completion of primary education had risen from around 90% to nearly 98%, so that only the "hopelessly incapable" were now denied entry to high schools.[47]

Vigorous promulgation of the principle of social progression through the primary grades,[48] combined with the softening of Grade VII examination requirements, thus gave realisation to the popular notion that all children (bar the 'markedly sub-normal') should have equal access to a period of secondary schooling before reaching compulsory leaving age. To accomplish the same end, the introduction of an age standard of twelve years for transfer from the primary school was advocated [for details, see Chapter 2], and in finding official favour reinforced the trend towards what a defender of attainment standards later described as "promotion of everyone regardless".[49] For, as the Tasmanian Committee on Educational Extension made clear at the 1944 Australian Council of Education Conference, in order to effect transition at age twelve

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[45] 'The Progress Certificate and its responsibilities', EG (SA), 61:707, 15 June 1945, p. 130

[46] ibid, p. 129

[47] A. W. Jones, Inspector of Schools, 'Transfer from primary to secondary schools', EG (SA), 68:774, 15 February 1951, pp. 66, 67

[48] This principle was much vaunted in special and ordinary editions of the NEF journal, *New Era*, a decade earlier. Local educationalists were informed of the relevant articles through the ACER's *Monthly News and Notes*, which also raised key questions regarding 'The problem of classifying and promoting pupils' and reviewed Australian reports on related issues. See the information reproduced in SA Teachers' Journal, 10:6, June 1934, p. 20; EG (SA), 50:581, 1 December 1934, p. 274

[49] 'Letter from "Standard Bearer" to the Editor', SA Teachers' Journal, 12:3, April 1962, p. 14

> classification by age must be adopted in the primary school, and the practice of retaining pupils in lower grades until they have reached a prescribed standard of scholastic achievement must be superseded.[50]

At the same time, educational debate generally, and the discourse on retardation more particularly, reflected the prominence given to pupils' social and emotional well-being in 'New Psychology' (such consideration being integral to nurturing 'the whole child'). Much of the rhetorical support for abandoning the tradition of grading and promotion by attainment therefore focused upon the importance of the peer group and the character-destroying effects of failing grades. Exemplifying the first line of argument, one headmaster averred:

> A boy of thirteen usually plays with boys of his own age; he should work with them in lessons. Personally I will not countenance the retarding of pupils [for this reason].[51]

Similarly, in response to the Bean Committee's question as to whether pupils should be retained in the infant school until they had mastered the work of Grade II, Mavis Wauchope opined:

> If by "work" is meant the academic or scholastic attainments of Grade II ... the answer is "No". The child should go to the Grade best suited to his general (social, emotional as well as intellectual) development. If a child is placed among children younger and smaller than himself, he tends to lose his self-respect and becomes a real behaviour problem. His attitude towards school work suffers, and he falls further and further behind.[52]

Other witnesses appearing before the Education Inquiry Committee affirmed that being rated as "unfit for promotion" at the end of a year frequently undermined a child's self-respect and confidence. Whitford, for instance, described how:

> In the eyes of his promoted classmates, perhaps his parents', and inevitably his own eyes, he is branded inferior ... and the school, instead of strengthening his ability to face after life, weakened it.[53]

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[50] Department of Education, Tasmania, Report of Committee on Educational Extension, p. 26, PRO, GRG 18/2/1988/1943 - Proceedings of the Australian Education Council Conference, Adelaide, 1944

[51] Bean Inquiry Minutes - R. T. S. Dent, op cit

[52] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss M. L. Wauchope, Book 2, p. 272

[53] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, Book 4, p. 815

Adding to the strongly-worded sentiments on this same theme expressed by the Research Officer and in the conclusion of Dr Malherbe's 1937 NEF conference address, the Final Bean Report drew attention to what it considered an even greater mischief attendant upon 'older practice' in the case of those pupils disheartened by having to repeat the work of one, two or more grades:

> a number of children are, in a sense, cast adrift from the schools. ... Not only do many leave with relief (which is bad), but they carry with them the conviction that learning is a distasteful business (which is worse). ... For these children standards of attainment are not, as they should be, measuring rods; they are insurmountable obstacles.[54]

To remedy these "serious defects of retardation" the Bean Committee embraced the principle of age grading, with the qualification that in the matter of promotions a child's 'all-round maturity' should be the major consideration. Noting, though, that the Education Department had already initiated change in this direction, the Final Bean Report proposed a radical next step: replacing the 'class system' of instruction, whereby pupils were taught collectively at a uniform pace, with a scheme of individual progression through a series of graded assignments in the 'skill' subjects. Adoption of this measure, the Committee signalled, would mean abandoning the attempt to keep backward children moving with the common stream - a practice to be deplored since it hindered the more able student and harassed the less able, but also fruitless given the variation in pupils' mental abilities as revealed by modern forms of testing. In sum, the Report continued:

> The plain fact is that children do not keep together because they cannot, and the school system should no longer be arranged on the assumption that they can. There is but one sound principle - the progressive adaptation of the whole educative process to each growing child.[55]

The Bean Committee's advocacy of a return to individualised teaching methods followed several decades of fitful experimentation along these lines in approved schools,[56] while the

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[54] Final Bean Report, paras. 191 and 194, p. 6. See also A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - II', p. 157; E. G. Malherbe, 'Retardation: Its Causes and Prevention', pp. 558, 560

[55] Final Bean Report, para. 182, p. 4; para. 187, p. 5

[56] For a report of these carefully monitored 'freedom' experiments, see Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. T. Martin, Book 1, pp. 71-72. In his address to the Advisory Council on Education which was published in *The Advertiser* (16 June 1937), Superintendent Martin summarised: "The freedom experiments which have been conducted in this State, commencing some four or five years ago, are mainly in the direction of freedom from strict grade divisions of the curriculum; from the limitations imposed by a strict timetable, and from what might be termed

notion that work in the 'tool' subjects should be suited to the ability rather than the age of pupils had been vigorously promulgated in a number of ACER publications during the 1930s and in the Council's 1943 blue-print for post-war educational development, *A Plan for Australia.* In recommending fundamental changes in classroom practice to allow for individual development and progress, the Bean Committee also tapped into a groundswell of criticism regarding the rigidity of grades - especially as related to the phenomenon of over-ageness. For instance, according to one witness at the Education Inquiry, instead of being "like the Equator, imaginary lines for the sake of organisation and the navigation of a school course", grades themselves retarded children in the sense of confining them within a particular compartment of the primary school for a year at a time.[57] Or, as Whitford extended the argument, the annual basis of graded curricular and class organisation made over-ageness "inevitable" since children who failed to attain the standard of a grade were obliged to go over the whole syllabus for that year again. To avoid this, he posited that the schedule of work be separated from the current delineation of grades.[58]

Further on the issue of tightly-drawn grade lines and the way these constrained pupil progress, the stance of the Australian Association of Pre-School Child Development was articulated by its Federal Officer:

> We would hope that the lock-step system would just disappear. I think we would find that at the beginning of entry into school we would be putting children through a rather coarse sieve and would get various gradations of slower and faster adjustments. We should be able to keep the primary grades much more flexible ... and divide the children up into different groups [on the basis of developmental age] so that they could move along at different rates. There are many approaches ... besides trying to fit the child into the machinery we now have.[59]

In canvassing alternatives to non-promotion of the 'old' child who had not mastered the work of a grade by the end of a year, Mavis Wauchope likewise endorsed 'flexible groupings'

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accepted methods of teaching." For the newspaper clipping, other reports of experiments and a summary of proposals to extend freedom in primary schools, see PRO, GRG 18/2/928/1933

[57] Bean Inquiry Minutes - R. T. S. Dent, op cit

[58] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, Book 4, p. 833

[59] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss C. M. Heinig, Book 1, pp. 220-21

organised on the basis of ability in lieu of whole class methods for teaching core skills and content. Among the accruing benefits, she argued, the retarded pupil would no longer be regarded as "a kind of criminal who keeps down class percentages"; nor would the 'bright' child's progress be impeded.[60]

Nowhere in the local educational discourse of the 1940s, though, was it proposed to abolish the class as the basic unit for instruction. Neither was the use of chronological age as the dominant principle of primary school organisation endangered by suggestions that developmental or mental age form the basis of class groupings. On the contrary, the ACER Director's statement that "[a]s far as possible children should proceed through the school with other children of the same age"[61] reaffirmed the official stance in South Australia which was to be sustained in the face of all countering views. Thus, it was the "dozen recognised ways" of grouping children by ability summarised in Wyndham's influential book, and the "interesting experiments" in cross-classification of pupils described in the Hadow Report, to which Inspector Leach looked in seeking solutions for the retardation problem. [62] These were seized upon more generally as the main device for accommodating individual differences in the classroom whilst preserving intact the age-grade structure of primary schooling so assiduously erected by the Education Department. Indeed, when 'the ideology of the individual' reached its zenith in the 1960s to influence the widespread adoption of 'new' grouping methods, it was commonly assumed that only the worst cases of mental sub-normality could not be catered for in ordinary classes.

Yet it was not just the foregoing reforms in pupil classification and promotion, Grade VII examination requirements and teaching practice that combined to de-construct over-ageness in the post-war education system. As the Final Bean Report noted in retrospect, the new course of instruction for primary grades issued in 1944 comprised another means by which the central

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[60] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Miss M. L. Wauchope, Book 2, p. 281

[61] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Dr K. S. Cunningham, Book 3, p. 611

[62] Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. V. Leach, Book 1, p. 98. For details of the alternative grouping methods to which Leach referred in his evidence, see H. S. Wyndham, Ability Grouping. Recent developments in methods of class grouping in the elementary schools of the United States, ACER Educational Research Series No. 31, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1934; Board of Education (England), Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow Report), London, H.M.S.O., 1926, chapter 5

administration sought to not only "enliven and enrich the school life of children" in accordance with the tenets of New Education, but also to "adapt the kind, amount and level of the work more nearly to the capacities of the bulk of the children in the various classes; in short, to lessen the amount of retardation".[63] In this regard, the Director of Education himself was strongly convinced that if the curriculum was well drawn up and properly graded no child should be required to repeat any school year - a statement he prefaced with a review of the aims, organisation and content of the outmoded syllabus which had been operational for more than twenty years with virtually no revisions.

Having first drawn the Bean Committee's attention to the "progressive movement in the idea of what amount of education was necessary to make a citizen", Fenner criticised the view still prevalent among older members of the teaching service that the whole of a child's education lay in the primary school, in line with which an endeavour had been made to "teach too much" and to introduce certain subject matter prematurely (i.e., when pupils were not of a 'receptive age' to appreciate or understand it). Moreover, he argued, the "swollen condition" of the curriculum in all grades above Grade II, together with the pressure of examinations, had resulted in "hide-bound adherence to formal methods" (such as drill, not to mention the evil of cramming), whereas the modern trend abroad was towards freer and more child-centred approaches. Fenner also contended that arithmetic (the subject most commonly failed) had been over-valued in terms of the marks allocated to it, thereby detracting from the importance of other subjects now seen to be essential in preparing the child for 'full living' in modern society. Further, within the generally over-taxed program as formerly prescribed for upper primary classes, the workload with respect to geometry, mensuration, arithmetic, grammar and the 'systematic aspects' of geography particularly needed to be lightened. Lastly, the Director placed his faith in the newly-established Primary Advisory Curriculum Board and its committees to correct "whatever faults may have existed" by constantly modifying the syllabus for the various grades so they would "better meet the needs of the children and cease to be beyond their capacity".[64]

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[63] Final Bean Report, para. 329, p. 23. For an outline of the principles underlying the syllabus devised by the newly-established Primary Advisory Curriculum Board during 1943-44, see 'The School Curriculum', EG (SA), 60:692, 15 March 1944, pp. 79-80

[64] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Dr C. Fenner, Book 1, pp. 1-2, 23

Other critics who drew heavily on psychometric studies to strengthen the case for a reduced, less difficult and modernised primary course argued that, irrespective of any general changes to the program of study, retardation would continue to be a problem as long as 'average intelligence' rather than the principle of variable mental ability formed the basis of curriculum planning; and that "when in practice the basis becomes plus [i.e., above] average intelligence retardation must thereby be increased".[65] At issue here was the uniformity of grade standards.: This was characterised as "that mass-production system", whereby a whole grade was set the same tasks, premised on unverified subjective notions of what the 'average child' at a given age could do, and all pupils were expected to reach the same level of attainment in a certain time. Officers of the Psychology Branch pointed out that, under this system, failure and consequent over-ageness on the part of the 'slow learner', the 'mentally sub-normal', and children handicapped emotionally, socially (the poor, illegitimate, and Aborigines) or by specific scholastic defects or behaviour problems (truants and delinquents), was a logical outcome. Indeed, according to Whitford's analysis of the 1941 school leaver statistics and the evidence of intelligence tests, the requirements in the old course of instruction were "not suited to the ability of over 50 per cent of the children who start school".[66] Further, it was contended, some of the retardation experienced was a product of the fact that, in the same absence of 'objective knowledge' about children's mental development, curriculum designers in the past had set grade standards too high.

For those armed with insights derived from the work of Australian and overseas psychologists, however, the reform of grade standards in order to remedy over-ageness was not a matter of "so simplifying the courses that even the dullest would be able to cope with them".[67] Taking this step, the Research Officer warned, would merely substitute "a more serious type of retardation" - that of allowing brighter pupils to consistently work below their mental level. Instead, a "far more exact and scientific internal stocktaking" was seen to be necessary. Translating what this meant in practice, Whitford identified two central requirements:

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[65] Bean Inquiry Minutes - Constance M. Davey, Book 4, p. 952

[66] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, Book 4, p. 816

[67] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - II', p . 157

establishing by means of research what were "reasonable tasks in each subject for the different age levels", following which "the amount and difficulty of work within the grade must be adjusted for the various ability levels" among pupils.[68] In endorsing such recommendations, Hitchcox noted that the ACER had already done or sponsored much in the direction of fixing standards of attainment "with some measure of precision" and in relation to local (i.e., Australian) conditions; it remained for schools to make greater use of these resources in the future.[69] Nor did the value of scholastic and I.Q. tests developed and normed by the ACER reside solely in aiding curriculum design according to their advocates. As Inspector Leach advised, their wider adoption for diagnostic purposes (most beneficially at about age seven), combined with early alleviative measures, "would prevent some retardation from becoming chronic".[70] Clearly too, the psychology brigade argued, teachers would have to be trained in the modern test procedures and systematic child study preparation, but also to better appreciate and understand "the difficulties and differences in ages and individuals", whilst separate arrangements should continue for instructing those children "whose difference from the normal is such that they are handicapped if we attempt to fit them into the present system".[71]

None of these prescriptions were new, of course. It had been recognised several decades previously that the organisation of pupils into grades on the basis of chronological age rendered "inequalities in their mental power" obvious, and that mere general knowledge about children was "a sadly feeble weapon with which to do battle against a complex situation".[72] Intelligence tests might have limitations, it was readily conceded, yet they were of "definite service" to teachers in revealing "the greater extent of individual differences" than was discernible from children's school work or classroom behaviour, and in making plain how wasteful was the effort to force the slow and dull to learn what they could not. Moreover, in making possible

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[68] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, Book 4, p. 827A

[69] A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - I', p. 141. For a brief but useful review of the ACER's testing program and its influence on educational thinking and practice in Australia, see M. de Lemos, 'Test development at the ACER: a historical perspective', ACER Newsletter No. 48, July 1983, p. 2

[70] Bean Inquiry Minutes - W. V. Leach, Book 1, p. 98

[71] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. E. Whitford, pp. 827A, 832; Constance M. Davey, p. 953

[72] 'The measuring of minds. From a correspondent', SA Teachers' Journal, 7:2, 30 August 1921, p. 29

"true grading - grading by mind instead of body", the needs of the 'retarded' child, along with the 'average' and the 'gifted', would be accommodated.[73] It followed that if pupil classification and promotion practices were to be re-organised on the basis of ability as measured by attainment and I.Q. tests, over-ageness would simply disappear.

Despite the appeal of this solution to the retardation problem, the Department remained committed to the principle of age grading. Ability grouping within age-graded classes to cater for individual differences was one thing; grading on ability quite another. Nonetheless, the intelligence testing movement which gathered momentum in the South Australian school system during the 1930s and continued apace into the 1950s [74] operated to de-construct over-ageness at a different level: by shifting the focus of educationalists' concern away from children statistically too old for their grade and towards mental retardation. Correspondingly, advocacy of accelerated programs or enriched curricular provision to serve the interests of the 'super-normal' child increasingly featured in educational discourse.

In the course of the Bean Inquiry, then, a range of former impediments to children's 'consistent progress' through the primary grades with their chronological age peers were removed. Albeit the reforms of the early 1940s fell short of some critics' demands for a complete re-structuring of the system which gave rise to over-ageness in the first place, the prospects for eliminating the problem were certainly looking rosy - until demographic changes associated with the post-war baby boom, industrialisation and a high rate of immigration impacted on the 1950s primary school.

FROM STAIRCASE TO CONVEYOR BELT: THE TRIUMPH OF AGE GRADING

Prompted by Westgarth's noting a significant rise in the number of over-aged infant school pupils from the 1956 age-grade table published in the *Education Gazette*, the Research Officer's next major investigation into retardation rates covered the years 1948-1956. This revealed a

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[73] 'The unadjusted child (M.E.H.)', SA Teachers' Journal, 14:1, 28 January 1938, pp. 13-14

[74] For a critical review of developments in mental testing and its uses in the South Australian school context, see P. Miller, Long Division, chapter 9

distinct lowering of the percentages of children above normal age in upper primary grades as a result of the aforementioned changes in departmental policy and practice; but simultaneously confirmed that recent increases in Grade II percentages would likely reverse the situation in the immediate future.[75] As Infant School inspectors pointed out in explanation of the upward statistical trend, [see Figures A.2-5, Appendix C] the period surveyed by Hitchcox corresponded with a "sudden overwhelming increase of enrolments in Infant Departments and, in order to cope with them, the introduction of untrained teachers in ever-larger numbers".[76] Unsurprisingly, the realities of over-crowded classrooms consequent upon a doubling in the numbers admitted to infant grades between 1943 and 1953, and exacerbated by a severe shortage of staff and school buildings, produced an outcry regarding the obstacles posed to individualised instruction and pupil progress. At the same time, these conditions reinforced the trend towards social promotion. As one teacher summarised dominant views expressed at the peak of primary enrolments, promotion by age would not only relieve the congestion in schools but avoid adding to the general cost of education associated with grade repetition[77] - an important consideration at a time when the secondary sector was rapidly expanding and hence competing with the primary sector for budgetary allocations.

Not all were persuaded of the virtue of 'automatic progression', however. In earlier comment on the relationship posited between retardation and the 'rigidity of grades', a representative of the teachers' union indicated:

> That is a matter which at present is being revised to a considerable extent. Children are not now kept down in classes because they are weak in one, or, perhaps, two or three subjects. We feel that the teacher who is trying to help children by pushing them on is penalised under this system because these children will have poor results in the next grade. If they were kept down, they would be better in that grade than in the upper grade.[78]

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[75] A. C. Hitchcox to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, 'Length of time spent in infant departments', 21 May 1957, p. 9, E.D. 1/4/5. See also W. T. Westgarth to the Director of Education - letter requesting that the Research Officer conduct such an investigation on the same lines as in 1949, 29 October 1956.

[76] M. Mead to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, 'Comment on report by the Research Officer on time spent in infant departments', 16 September 1957, E.D. 1/4/5.
For a statistical summary of the spectacular growth in primary school enrolments during the decade 1943-1953, see Report of the Minister of Education for 1953, SAPP, no. 54, 1954, p. 4

[77] Hans Mincham to the Editor, SA Teachers' Journal, 8:1, February 1958, p. 13

[78] Bean Inquiry Minutes - A. Rendell (Headmaster, Goodwood Primary School), Book 2, p. 384

The Senior Psychologist, too, was wary of permitting "an age promotion system to creep in unnoticed" on the grounds that it "usually leads to 'streaming' and 'selection', even at a very young age".[79] Adding to an overseas teacher's observation that "a certain amount of hesitation to have children revise the grade" existed in Australia (this practice apparently being regarded as "somewhat of a humiliation" for the child and "a bad mark for the teacher"), another critic railed against the fact that

> an assembly line system is all too general in schools today. At the beginning of each year the line delivers its overload. The temptation to get rid of embarrassments and cripples of the previous year is consequently very strong. The teacher will have more than enough to do without them. And so the assembly line carries them on with the rest, and it is amazing how far the 'No-hoper' can be taken for a ride along that line.[80]

Further, to the extent that a conveyor-belt model of progression through the primary school had superseded the former pattern, more analogous to ascending a staircase from whose steps some pupils slipped several times, concern mounted about declining grade standards and the noticeably wider range of ability among cohorts transferring to secondary courses. Over-riding all the foregoing objections, however, were arguments regarding the "severe and unfortunate effects" on children's futures should they take too long in doing the work of Grades I and II or be required to repeat upper primary grades, and those advanced by psychologists and sociologists in favour of peer-grouped learning. Moreover, salvation was at hand if extra effort was made to provide "educational experiences appropriate to the development of everyone, no matter how able nor how handicapped".[81]

The strength of this reasoning and the impact of the practical measures adopted in the closing years of World War II was such that, once the crisis of numbers in primary schools passed, the hitherto steady progress made towards the official goal of a perfect age-grade fit was resumed. By the late 1960s, the percentages of pupils retarded by one year or more in Grades 1 to 7 had

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[79] L. S. Piddington to the Director of Education, 're. promotion in Infant Department', 28 May 1959, E.D. 16/2/1

[80] 'Migrant teacher's view of S.A. schools', SA Teachers' Journal, 6:9, October 1956, p.10; 'Echoes of N.E.F.', ibid, 8:1, February 1958, pp. 12-13

[81] E. D. Lasscock (Senior Guidance Officer), 'Changes in the ranges of ability and attainment of students entering departmental secondary schools', EG (SA), 81:945, 1 October 1965, p. 326

Table 5.6 Hindmarsh Opportunity Class pupils, 1928-1975: Remarks on leaving

Years	Remark							No. of
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	Pupils
1928-39	48	8	28	74	42	Nil	6	206
1940-49	64	15	15	52	32	18	11	207
1950-60	1	Nil	8	33	11	49	5	107
1968-75	Nil	Nil	3	31	15	Nil	23	72

Source of data: Hindmarsh School Opportunity Class Admission Registers (4 volumes), PRO, GRG 18/34/1

Remarks code:

1. left : over-age
2. left : exemption to work
3. returned to grade
4. transferred to another school
5. transferred to an Opportunity Class in another school / Special School / institutional care
6. transferred to Hindmarsh Special Class (Senior O.C.) register
7. other : excluded as ineducable; deceased; left district (no record); left - no reason stated / to work / moved interstate; no remark

fallen considerably in comparison with the percentages for the decade 1948-1958. [See Tables A.17-20, Appendix B, and Figures A.11-18, Appendix C.] Coincidentally, there was an uneven but overall rise in the number of children placed in Opportunity Classes [see Table A.14, Appendix B], although, again, the separate counting of these enrolments contributed in part to the improved statistical picture of over-ageness in ordinary classes. Moreover, reflecting the changed economic and educational circumstances of the 1950s and 60s, 'Oppos' who attended at Hindmarsh Primary (by way of an example) were no longer recorded as having left "over age" or with "exemption to work" without partaking of some secondary education first - albeit they were likely to proceed to technical rather than academic high schools, or to the bottom stream in the latter type. [See Table 5.6 on the preceding page, which illustrates this change in such pupils' school careers.] Meanwhile, the growing preoccupation with individual differences between children and their implications for primary school organisation gradually eased the topic of over-ageness out of educational discourse.

CONCLUSION

The 1940s thus proved a significant decade in terms of the accelerated shift away from attainment-based grade standards, in relation to which an unacceptably large proportion of children had failed to measure up and, in therefore not receiving promotion to the next highest class, became statistically-defined as 'over-age'. What most distinguished the war years in particular was the convergence of reformers' attempts to modernise the education system and the Department's own agenda for solving 'the retardation problem', with the Education Inquiry providing a major opportunity for various interest groups to air their grievances concerning the current state of education and to reiterate plans for reshaping the aims, content and organisation of primary schooling that had been in the making for some time. In all of this, the age-grade and psychometric studies undertaken by senior departmental officers and the Bean Committee played a central role. For, in adopting the methodologies and argumentation of New Psychology, they provided both quantitative and ideological support for the assault on the 'mass-production system' which produced over-ageness. Additionally, as Miller rightly identifies, the war-time Director of Education's strong progressive leanings undoubtedly helped

in the process of reform from which the principle of chronological age-based pupil progress emerged victorious.

Initial post-war gains in the quest to eliminate retardation which accrued from the revision of primary curricula, abolition of the Q.C. and inspectors' continued efforts with respect to promotion practice were temporarily reversed by the pressures on schools that accompanied a massive increase in enrolments during the 1950s. Insufficient resources and expertise, together with a shortage of teachers and classroom accommodation, but also strengthening conservative opposition to New Education, all acted to dissipate the potential of war-time radicalism to transform schooling in the direction of individualised instruction adapted to children's differing abilities. In any case the die had been cast and, as the next two chapters explore, developments in the length of infant schooling debate operated in concert with others previously discussed to affirm chronological age as the dominant principle of graded school organisation and pupil progress.

CHAPTER 6

"FACTORS UNRELATED TO HIS POTENTIALITY DETERMINE HIS EARLY PROGRESS": THE LENGTH OF INFANT SCHOOLING DEBATE, 1945-1960

INTRODUCTION

Between the end of the second world war and 1990 (when this study concludes), much of the fine-tuning of the age-grade structure in South Australian government schools was the result of reform efforts focused on the junior primary stage of education - notably in connection with the recurrent issue of how long children spent doing the work of Grades I and II. Although their underlying concerns differed, each of the three major post-war enquiries into the State's education system viewed the existence of wide variations in the length of children's infant school experience as problematic. Relatedly, the lack of uniformity in procedures pertaining to the classification and promotion of pupils in junior primary classes repeatedly incurred parental and intra-institutional criticism. This chapter and the next, then, examine the shifting terms of debate, but also its enduring themes, with respect to the oft-raised question: what constitutes a 'normal' period of infant schooling?

This discourse is only explicable in relation to the ideal of annual peer-grouped progress through the junior/primary course of instruction and in consideration of pupils' actual ages vis-à-vis the age standards defined for school entry, transfer to Grade III from infant departments and from primary to secondary education, as well as that for school leaving. Crucially, too, account needs to be taken of the provisions made for admitting children to school, and of the policy on promotions adopted by individual head teachers - particularly in conjunction with the system of six-monthly grades in infant departments[1] which remained at variance with the annual basis of graded curriculum and classroom organisation in non-departmentalised primary schools until 1964.

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[1] Infant departments were re-named infant schools in 1959, then junior primary schools in 1975

In reviewing the various post-war initiatives designed to regulate more closely the time children took to proceed to Grade III, the most recent of these, the *Early Years of School* policy (1984), is a particularly interesting example of the politics of educational change since it was the first official policy to be developed and implemented in accordance with the Education Department's new style of governance after a century of rule-by-decree. The final chapter thus largely deals with the means by which this latest re-organisation of infant schooling was managed, the interests and purposes served by the policy's provisions, and the ensuing outcomes.

STUDENT PROGRESS THROUGH THE JUNIOR GRADES:

A SIMPLE MATTER OF ADMINISTRATION?

Colonial children's stay in the infant department of large schools was delimited by the regulation, first enacted in 1876, which defined an age standard of seven years for transfer to Class I within boys' and girls' (primary) departments. From 1890 the same ruling applied to pupils in the Junior Division of non-departmentalised elementary schools, although by then provision had been made for inspectors to grant exemptions. Early twentieth century policy and practice with respect to childrens' ages on admission to school and the period spent in junior classes was summarised in a *Register* article:

> The question often arises in the minds of parents regarding what is the most advisable age for their young hopefuls to enter the infant classes and remain in the preparatory division. In South Australia children are admitted to schools by the Education Department after they have attained the age of 5 years, and attendance is delayed in some cases to age 6 years, or even 7, but beyond that only in rare instances. In the Junior Division there are two standards of examination - upper and lower. If children are 6 years and 9 months of age they must be in the upper division. A pupil who is 6 years and 8 months only may therefore stay in the junior class until it is 7 years 8 months of age when the next annual examination comes around. It is understood the Department does not favour children being kept in junior classes after they are 8 years of age, as it is considered inadvisable for the individual pupil concerned as well as the rest of the children. It is provided as a general rule that children may pass through the Junior Division to Class I in about two years of the time when they begin school.[2]

In 1912, the age beyond which pupils were not normally permitted to remain in infant grades was formally amended to eight years, and primary headmasters were advised that those children who had not attained the full Junior Standard at the annual examination could be formed into a

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[2] 'Education Notes: In the Junior Division', The Register, 22 April 1911, p. 8

lower division of Class I wherein certain modifications of the ordinary course of instruction would be accepted.[3] The following year, Central Office issued a directive which signalled that henceforth, and notwithstanding the promotion of "specially promising" pupils at any time, annual progression from one grade to the next was the norm.[4]

Consideration of children's school commencing ages was built into the rules governing the length of time spent in junior classes. Subsequent to the re-organisation of primary schooling into eight grades in 1916, it was therefore specified that unless "very exceptional circumstances" prevailed, no child who started school at the age of 5 years and 6 months or over should remain in classes below Grade III for longer than two years. Since the bureaucracy additionally took cognisance of the system of twice-yearly admission of beginning pupils instituted in 1908, teachers were informed that whereas children who enrolled in January would normally spend a year in each of Grades I and II, those admitted in July should stay two and a half years (preferably spending the first eighteen months in Grade I) if they were younger than five and a half on entry. However, if commencing at school between the ages of 5 years 6 months and six, July entrants could take either one and a half or two and a half years (depending on their "physical strength and mental calibre") before promotion to Grade III.[5] Conformity to these specifications was rendered all the more necessary when, in 1920, a new Course of Instruction providing for the completion of primary education in seven years was published. For, according to an accompanying Departmental Circular, children were now expected to accomplish the work of Grade VII at the age of twelve or thirteen years in order to receive one or two years of post-primary instruction.[6]

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[3] 'Course of Instruction and suggestions to teachers', EG Supplement, 20 February 1912, pp. 4, 8

[4] 'Inspection and examination of schools', EG (SA), 29:315, 21 January 1913, p.41. As an aside here, it is noteworthy that this instruction operated contrary to the hope expressed by Inspector-General Stanton at the 1905 teachers' union conference: that with the move to entrust teachers with the conduct of examinations and promotions they would be emboldened to shift scholars up a class "oftener than once per year and not necessarily at one fixed annual period". See the transcript of his address at the 10th Annual SAPTU Conference, EG (SA), 21:226, August 1905, p. 117.

[5] 'Promotions', EG (SA), 33:375, 16 October 1917, p. 178

[6] 'Circular to teachers, No. 13. Classification of pupils - adjustment in January, 1921', EG (SA), 36:411, 15 October 1920, p. 197

With the concurrent re-establishment of infant departments in large schools, an equivalent pattern of student progress through their six-monthly sub-divisions of Grades I and II was delineated as follows:

> The promotion of children who are enrolled early in the year presents no difficulty. Normally they proceed from Lower I to Upper I, to Lower II, to Upper II, at intervals of six months, and are promoted to Grade III in the Primary School, in January, two years after their enrolment in the Infant Department.
>
> The promotion of children who are enrolled ... later in the year presents some difficulty, e.g., the progress of a child enrolled in July must be either accelerated or retarded, and he is promoted to the Primary school either 18 months or two and a half years after enrolment. As a rule, the following procedure should be adopted: - The whole of Upper II and a judicious selection (after a careful consideration of the age, physique and intellectual ability) of the children of Lower II should be promoted to Grade III in January. The promotion of children from Lower II should be anticipated by the Infant Mistress, who should arrange that they complete the work of that class in, say, four months, and as much of Upper II work as possible in the remaining two months.
>
> Promotion from the Infant Department to the Primary Department should be made in January of each year only.
>
> In dealing with this question it is to be clearly understood that the interests of the children are paramount, and are to rise above any consideration of school organisation.[7]

The notes comprising Appendix II of the revised Primary Course of Instruction clarified the fact that the syllabus for infant departments was the same as prescribed for Grades I and II in other schools, would occupy two years, and was designed for children aged six to eight. Further, though, where circumstances allowed (i.e., in the most populous infant schools), children under six years of age could be formed into special Kindergarten or Montessori classes, with promotion from either class to Lower Grade I occurring in the January or July preceding their sixth birthday.[8] In some infant departments, then, pupil classification and promotion was organised on the basis of a two and a half year course - and it was this deviation from 'normal' primary school practice which critics seized upon when it became evident that certain infant mistresses were requiring many January-enrolled children to spend three years in junior primary classes.

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[7] 'Circular to teachers, No. 26. Promotion of children from the Infant Department to the Primary Department (re-published for general information)', EG (SA), 41:464, 14 March 1925, p. 78

[8] The Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, with notes and appendices, North Terrace (Adelaide): Government Printer, 1920, Appendix II - Infant Schools

As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the debate about the length of infant schooling during the 1940s was conducted in reference to pupils who were statistically over-age for their grade. But increasingly the term 'retardation', as used in this connection, also came to signify the practice of 'holding back' (i.e., impeding student progress by administrative device). It was certainly the latter sense of the word that W. T. Westgarth employed in his constant plea for infant mistresses to allow most, if not all, children of normal ability who began school in January of the year they turned six to complete the work of junior grades in two years - as was the case in non-departmentalised primary schools. Through a series of official letters and articles published in the *Teachers' Journal*, he kept the related issues before the central administration and school staff for almost two decades before his purpose was ultimately achieved.

In his 1945 and subsequent correspondence criticising the impeded progress "forced upon" the majority of January school beginners in infant departments, Westgarth pointed out, firstly, that the revised curriculum issued in 1944 made drastic cuts in the amount of work to be covered, and that throughout the whole primary school children no longer had to cope with "excessive standards". Therefore, he reasoned, a boy or girl of 'ordinary capacity' should be able to do the infant course in two years. Secondly, he argued:

> Most authorities claim that the best time to commence secondary education is at twelve plus. Most scholars begin school at the age of five plus. With normal grade-a-year progress they should pass from Grade VII at the age of twelve plus. But many do not - because they are delayed for three years in the infant department.[9]

If legislators were to raise the school leaving age to fifteen, he continued, a reasonable period of secondary education would be assured for all who did not "lose a year" by the action of infant mistresses. As matters stood, however, the hypothetical child aged five years and three months on enrolment at an infant department in January would turn fourteen (the present upper limit of compulsory attendance) a mere nine months after completing Grade VII. Thirdly, and constituting his main complaint, Westgarth asserted that the organisation of infant departments on a two and a half year basis only suited children admitted to school in June - and they were in the minority. Pursuant to the general assumption that children's ages on entry to school should

[9] W. T. Westgarth, 'Children held for three years in infant departments. Secondary education begins at 13 plus instead of 12 plus', SA Teachers' Journal, 31:5, 12 June 1945, p. 12

determine the period they spent in junior primary classes, he did concede one point in favour of requiring the youngest among the January entrants to take three years over the infant course:

> Infant mistresses contend, with some justice, that the ages set down for doing Grade I work are 6.0 to 7.0, and for Grade II work 7.0 to 8.0, so that the child who has just turned five should not be asked to embark upon Grade I work.[10]

Nevertheless, in his opinion, the weight of the other factors to which he had referred warranted infant mistresses giving further consideration to their policy on pupil classification and promotion.

Mavis Wauchope, responding on behalf of the Infant Mistresses' Association (IMA) to Westgarth's initial foray into a preserve not his own (he being a primary headmaster), was quick to counter the case he advanced. In querying the basic premises of his June 1945 *Teachers' Journal* article, she challenged the logic of regarding 12+ rather than 13+ as the age at which secondary education ought to begin when the statutory age for commencing school was six years and curriculum planning for the seven primary grades was predicated on this fact. Next, she advised, instead of looking down from the secondary stage to the infant department and asserting: "We need more time at this top end - we must make the little ones start a year earlier", it should be asked whether children were progressing at a rate consistent with their respective levels of ability and development.[11] By inappropriately viewing the problem "from above", she concluded, Westgarth had failed to reach the heart of the matter: his insistence on a standard two-year pattern of progress through junior primary classes took no account of 'the doctrine of maturation', the young child's 'natural' way of learning - through play, and infant schools' equal recognition of the need to treat each child as an individual. Moreover, short of major (and highly desirable) reform in the present system of class teaching and mass promotions, Westgarth's main concern with pupils admitted to infant departments in January (as distinct from mid-year enrolments) had no redress, in her opinion, because it could not be arranged for all children to be born in July such that they were positioned to undertake the two and a half year course (to which ideal the Infant Mistresses' Association was wedded).

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[10] ibid

[11] M. Wauchope, 'Children held for three years in infant depts', SA Teachers' Journal, 31:6, 12 July 1945, p. 8

Having thus re-defined the terms of debate, Wauchope drew extensively on contemporary research and writing in child psychology to oppose too early an insistence on the acquisition of formal skills - an outcome she claimed would result from adopting the solution Westgarth offered, viz, "pushing the course planned for six-year-olds to the five-year-old level".[12] In further support of her line of argument, she cited the Departmental Psychologist's expression of satisfaction regarding the fact that infant school pupils were, with very few exceptions, "working at the appropriate level". She also quoted the Research Officer's 1944 findings on retardation rates according to the type of school attended for Grades I and II, which ostensibly confirmed the benefits of providing (as infant departments did) kindergarten activities until the age of six years. By the same token, she averred, children who typically began formal work at the age of five in non-infant schools did not necessarily graduate from Grade VII at an earlier age than those youngest January entrants spending three years in infant departments, since "they may feel the strain [of undue pressure in the early grades] and have to repeat a full twelve months' period higher up the school".[13]

Thus were the battle-lines drawn; and the fact that the protagonists on either side represented the competing interests of (female) infant mistresses and (male) primary school principals did not go unnoticed. The Research Officer, for one, observed that although headmasters were not unanimous, most considered that too many children were required to take three years plus over the work of Grades I and II. Additionally, they felt it was anomalous for infant departments to be organised on the basis of half-yearly grades when the majority of pupils entered school at the beginning of the year.[14] On the other hand, Hitchcox acknowledged, infant mistresses' liberty to formulate their own policy on promotions was at stake. So, too, was the retention of a kindergarten period for under six year olds, together with the preservation of those specialist teaching methods and curriculum foundations which distinguished the infant from the primary

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[12] ibid

[13] ibid

[14] A. C. Hitchcox, Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 12 September 1949. PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 179/49 enclosed in E.D. 1/4/5 - Revision of Circular No. 43 (formerly No.26)

school. But it was L. S. Piddington, the Senior Psychologist, who commented most directly on the gender politics which permeated the length of infant schooling debate:

> the difficult problem of promotion and organisation in the Primary Schools, particularly in the Infant Department ... has been, at times, clouded by emotional thinking. ... [T]he Infant Schools and Primary Schools have a different approach to education, and this fact does colour the thinking on both sides about policy and organisation. The fact that all Infant Departments are run by women does, I regret to say, affect the attitude of some men Head Masters towards Infant Schools. It is therefore of some importance that discussion concerning Infant Departments should be based on objective facts.[15]

In complementary fashion, an anonymous respondent to Westgarth's article and Wauchope's rejoinder railed against all teachers who took a sectional view of the problems of education, but especially in this instance:

> primary teachers who think that infant teachers waste their children's time in pretty but frivolous play; yes, and infant teachers who are sure that Gehenna and the Big School are two names for the same place ... for the problem is common to us all - infant, primary and secondary - and we must view it in as broad a light as we can.[16]

Assuming the mantle of referee, this self-confessed "hard-boiled male" (whom one suspects was affiliated with the secondary school sector) reviewed Westgarth's case to agree with his argument but not his conclusions. Having next paid tribute to the "admirable breadth" of Wauchope's treatment of the problem, he proceeded to outline the underlying difficulties:

> 1. The stork, too little considering the orderly arrangement of school syllabuses into yearly blocks, delivers his goods from January 1 to December 31. And I doubt whether he will consent to bulk delivery. Five-year-old children, then, are not of an age: some have just finished being four; others are nearly six - and a year is a big fraction of their [sic] children's lives and experiences.
> 2. The range of chronological age (one year) is small indeed compared with the range of mental ages. If I thought strong language would enforce attention to the importance of this fact I would say: What the ----'s the use of expecting a child of mental age four to carry the same load of school work at the same speed as a child of mental age seven?
> 3. Our traditional methods of class instruction and annual examination for promotion are based on the assumption that the children in each grade either can or ought to carry the same load, and that those found guilty of not carrying it are 'failures'. ...
> Both Mr. Westgarth's proposal and the intention of a group of infant mistresses to retain about two-thirds (sixty-four per cent) of January beginners in infant departments for three years must be considered in the light of the propositions (1 to

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[15] L. S. Piddington, Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 26 September 1949, E.D. 179/49

[16] 'Children held for three years in infant depts. By an appreciative reader of the two previous articles on the subject', SA Teachers' Journal, 31:7, 9 August 1945, p. 8

> 3) above ... [from which] I conclude that all talk of 'years' and grades and courses is quite unsound.[17]

Although he argued on the basis of the foregoing considerations that the pushing of nearly all children through the infant course in two years and the holding back of two-thirds of January beginners in infant departments for three years were opposite forms of the same error (ignoring individual differences), it is apparent from the tone and substance of his elaborated critique that this commentator's sympathies lay more with the stance of the Infant Mistresses' Association as articulated by its President (Mavis Wauchope). Following his observation that infant departments appeared to have been cast into the role of arch-villain with respect to the production of retardation (in the statistical sense), he pointed out that over-ageness for grade was not a phenomenon confined to Grades I and II - indeed, close scrutiny of the tables published in the Minister of Education's annual reports showed a steady increase in the percentage of retarded children in succeeding grades. Furthermore, he contended, it was "as monstrous a pedagogical sin to deprive five-year-olds of that valuable preparatory period of kindergarten work" as it was to retain children for three years in infant departments.[18] Nor was it these schools' fault, he posited, but the "rigidity of grading" which prevented even the best prepared Grade II pupils from entering Grade III in July (remembering that, in contrast to the system of six-monthly promotions within infant departments, by directive children were promoted to the primary school only in January of each year). The pseudonymous "Appreciative Reader" concurred, too, with Wauchope's concern to "carry our belief in the individuality of the child to its logical conclusion".[19] As he likewise identified, this would entail "a radical change in our ways of thinking about the progress of children, and therefore about our methods of instruction, examination and promotion".[20]

[17] ibid, pp. 8-9

[18] ibid, p. 9

[19] M. Wauchope, op cit

[20] "Appreciative Reader", op cit, p. 9

In his published reply to both Wauchope and the anonymous writer, Westgarth addressed the comment proffered by the latter with respect to retardation rates in upper primary grades by citing the 1944 promotion figures for eleven metropolitan Class I and II schools:

Table 6.1

Grade	Examined	Not promoted	Percentage
III	1020	35	3.4
IV	925	26	2.8
V	979	27	2.7
VI	999	21	2.1
VII	825	6	.7

Source: W. T. Westgarth, 'Children held for three years in infant depts.', SA Teachers' Journal, 31:8, 10 September 1945, p. 8

If infant mistresses limited the number of January entrants taking three years over Grade I and II work to the same proportion, he argued, his June article would not have been necessary, for then most scholars would proceed through the primary course in seven years to enter secondary schools at the age of 12+. Regarding the advocacy of each child being given "every opportunity to develop according to his own bent and at his own pace", Westgarth queried why particular mention was made of it in reference to infant departments. Surely it was just as important at all stages of a child's life? In any event, he countered, the practice of retaining 5.0 to 5.5 year-old January enrolments for six or twelve months longer than those aged from 5.6 to 5.11 was "the negation of individual treatment", since infant mistresses actually classified and promoted pupils on the basis of chronological age - not on the principle of measurable differences in mental/developmental age.[21]

Thus did the 1945 debate as conducted in the pages of the *Teachers' Journal* conclude - without resolution. Similarly, no action was immediately forthcoming on the report of a Departmental committee appointed to enquire into the existing system of promotion from infant to primary schools. Chaired by Florence Blake (the Inspector of Infant Schools), this committee proposed

[21] W. T. Westgarth, 'Children held for three years in infant depts.', SA Teachers' Journal, 31:8, 10 September 1945, p. 8

three alternative schemes which might facilitate the age-graded pattern of student progress as outlined by Westgarth whilst ensuring that children received instruction in each of the five classes that characterised the Infant Mistresses' Association's preferred model of organisation for junior primary grades:

> 1. Children admitted at five years of age to be kept 3 - 3$^{1}/_{2}$ years in infant school and promoted to Grade IV;
> 2. Children to be admitted at 4$^{1}/_{2}$ years of age, a 2$^{1}/_{2}$ - 3 year course and promoted to Grade III;
> 3. Children to be admitted in July of each year, a 2$^{1}/_{2}$ year course.[22]

The Superintendent of Primary Schools, W. T. Martin, agreed with the Director of Education that the problem was "a difficult and complicated one rendered more impracticable by conditions arising from a protracted war period and from the shortage of teachers and accommodation".[23] Martin therefore recommended that the current arrangements, despite their "admitted difficulties", be retained until the question was considered at the next February Staff Conference. Such moves for deferral could not continue indefinitely though - especially once Westgarth pressed for an investigation into the "inefficient" organisation of infant departments in relation to the "excessive" length of time taken by many January-enrolled children to reach Grade III. Nor, in the face of the Research Officer's subsequent findings and parental protest regarding the diversity of practice in schools, could the idiosyncratic nature of infant mistresses' policies on pupil classification and promotion be ignored.

"INFANT MISTRESSES DON'T ALL TAKE THE SAME VIEW OF WHAT CONSTITUTES THE 'NORMAL' PERIOD IN AN INFANT DEPARTMENT FOR FEBRUARY-ENROLLED CHILDREN"

When in January 1949 Westgarth wrote to Head Office reiterating his complaint about the results of dividing the work of infant departments into five half-yearly sections, the Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools, L. G. W. Caust, recommended that the Research Officer be authorised to examine the records of a number of schools in order to quantify differences in

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[22] Florence Blake (Convenor) to the Director of Education, Report of Committee appointed to enquire into present system of promotion from infant to primary schools, 12 March 1945, PRO, GRG 18/2/2211/1945

[23] Superintendent of Primary Schools to the Director of Education, Reply to the Director's Minute of 3 April 1945, PRO, GRG 18/2/1122/1945

Tables from the Research Officer's report: Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 12 September 1949

Source: PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 179/1949 enclosed in E.D.1/4/5

Table 6.2 (1) Time of year at which schooling commenced, 1939-1949 (original admissions)

Schools	At new year		At mid-year	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
With Inf. Depts. (30)	19,034	68.3	8,806	31.7
With Inf. Depts. since 1944 (2)	1,169	77.8	333	22.2
Without Infant Depts. (20)	6,247	75.7	2,007	24.3
Total: 52 schools	26,450	70.3	11,146	29.7

Table 6.3 (2 & 3 combined) Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at the beginning of the year, 1940-1947

Schools		Pupils who completed Gr. I & II in:					1949 Pupils in their:		%
30 Infant Depts.	No. of pupils	1 yr.	2 yrs.	3 yrs.	4 yrs.	5 yrs.	3rd. yr.	4th. yr.	taking 3 or more years
Total	11,051	8	4,931	4,854	268	6	946	38	
%	100	.1	44.6	44.1	2.4	-	8.6	.3	55.4
Infant Dept. A	315	-	167	93	9	-	40	6	47.0
Infant Dept. B	327	1	223	70	5	-	28	-	31.5
Total	642	1	390	163	14	-	68	6	
%	100	.1	60.8	25.4	2.2	-	10.5	.9	39.0
20 Other schools									
Total	3,511	8	2,672	642	52	4	128	5	
%	100	.2	76.1	18.3	1.5	.1	3.7	.1	23.8

NB: Infant Department 'A' (Brompton) and 'B' (Highgate) are listed separately because they were not established until 1944.

Tables from the Research Officer's report: Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools (continued)

Table 6.4 (4 & 5 combined) Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at mid-year, 1939-1946

Schools		Pupils who completed Gr. I & II in:				1949 Pupils in their:		%
30 Infant Depts	No. of Pupils	1½ yrs.	2½ yrs.	3½ yrs.	4½ yrs.	3rd.½ year	4th.½ year	taking 3 or more years
Total	4,895	135	4,198	481	16	62	3	
%	100	2.8	85.7	9.8	.3	1.3	.1	11.5
Infant Dept. A	110	2	95	9	-	4	-	11.8
Infant Dept. B	63	9	51	2	-	1	-	4.8
Total	173	11	146	11	-	5	-	
%	100	6.4	84.4	6.4	-	2.8	-	9.2
20 Other Schools								
Total	966	108	775	71	4	8	-	
%	100	11.2	80.2	7.4	.4	.8	-	8.6

Summary:

Of the 37,596 children admitted to 52 schools in the ten years from July 1939, 7,707 were transferred to different schools before completing Grades I and II, 9,909 were still in Grade I or II in 1949, and 19,984 completed the grades in their original school. Of these 19,984 pupils:

0.1% took 1 year
1.3% took 1½ yrs.
40% took 2 years
25.6% took 2½ yrs.
28.3% took 3 years
2.8% took 3½ yrs.
1.7% took 4 years
0.1% took 4½ yrs.
.05% took 5 years

In 30 Infant Departments:

34.1% took 2 years or less
28.2% took 2½ years
37.7% took 3 years or more

In 22 other schools (including the two with infant departments since 1944):

63.0% took 2 years or less
18.1% took 2½ years
18.9% took 3 years or more

the period children spent in Grades I and II according to school type (with or without an infant department) and date of admission (January/February or June/July).[24] Hitchcox duly submitted a fifteen-page report in September, having visited 52 schools to compile from their Admission Registers the relevant statistics for 37,596 children who commenced their schooling over the ten years from mid-1939 to February 1949. (The sample thus included ten groups enrolled at the beginning of the year and ten at mid-year.) His summary figures, which referred only to the stable element of these schools' population (i.e., those children who remained in the same school for Grades I and II) are reproduced below Table 6.4. But more instructive is his discussion of the discrepancies in administrative practice from school to school, which led him to conclude that a clear pronouncement from departmental headquarters was needed "so that a uniform policy shall be followed".[25]

While Table 1 in Hitchcox's report [Table 6.2 in the thesis] confirmed Westgarth's point regarding the uneven distribution of school beginners across the two official admission dates, the Research Officer's interpretative notes highlighted the fact that the proportion of mid-year entrants was greater in infant departments than in non-infant schools, with June/July enrolments being almost negligible in smaller primary schools. On the figures, therefore, the provision of a two-and-a-half year course for those children comprising the second intake in infant schools was seemingly justified. Irrespective, his Tables 4 and 5 [combined into Table 6.4] vindicated Westgarth's view that the progress of mid-year admissions was not the major concern. As Hitchcox commented, little divergence was apparent in promotion practices at different types of school with regard to these pupils:

> Well over 80% of the children in each group of schools complete the course [for Grades I and II] in $2^1/_2$ years, but the tendency to let the brighter children through in $1^1/_2$ years is not so strong in Infant Departments as in the other schools. However, ... the numbers of children concerned are so small that the percentages for individual schools in many cases have little significance.[26]

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24 Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools to the Director of Education, Organisation of infant departments, 3 February 1949, E.D. 179/49

25 A. C. Hitchcox, Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, p. 15, 12 September 1949, loc cit

26 ibid, p. 5

It was patently clear from Hitchcox's Tables 2 and 3 [reproduced as Table 6.3], though, that in very few schools without infant departments was the proportion of children taking three years to reach Grade III higher than 30%. By comparison, this figure was the lowest percentage for infant schools. Yet it was the range in the percentages (from 30.2% at East Adelaide to 80.8% at Port Adelaide) of January/February-enrolled pupils who remained in infant departments for three or more years that most disturbed the Research Officer and prompted him to investigate the matter more closely.

Taking no account of social variables in focusing, rather, on the influence of individual infant mistresses' viewpoint with respect to beginning-of-the-year entrants' stay in infant departments, Hitchcox examined the records for the cohort admitted in 1947 to find that the proportion spending 3+ years ranged from 18.5% at Challa Gardens and 25.9% at East Adelaide to 92% at Pt. Adelaide and 95.3% at Glenelg. In conjunction with these figures, he reported that the average age of pupils on proceeding from the same four infant departments to Grade III in 1949 was 7 years 6 months, 7.9, 8.2 and 8 years respectively. Lastly, his calculations showed that the total percentage of children promoted to Grade III in 1949 after three or more years in infant departments was 57.2%, compared with 22.9% at non-infant schools.[27]

In tendering the foregoing statistics, Hitchcox provided an accompanying review of the organisation of grades in infant schools and of infant mistresses' responses to his question as to what policy they adopted for children commencing school in January/February. Since ensuing debate and official action was to turn on this evidence, it is worth quoting his commentary at length:

> Infant Departments are usually organised on the basis of five half-yearly grades. ... Some have a sixth, Upper IIA.
>
> Children who commence in mid-year are thus able to proceed through the normal course in five half-yearly steps, although a small percentage of bright children are permitted to skip two steps and complete the course in $1^1/_2$ years. Children who commence at the beginning of the year, however, and these are the large majority, have either to skip one step (so as to complete the course in two years), or else to

[27] ibid, pp. 6-7. For a breakdown of these summary figures, school by school, see Hitchcox's Table 6 - 'Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at the beginning of 1947'.

Tables from the Research Officer's report: Children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools (continued)

Table 6.5 (10) Distribution according to period in Grades I and II and ages of a sample of children who entered (metropolitan) secondary schools in February 1949

Period in Grades I and II

Age at entry to sec. sch.	1 1/2 yrs.	2 years	2 1/2 yrs.	3 years	3 1/2 yrs.	4 years	Total
yrs. m.							
15 0						1	1
14 9			1				1
14 6		1	1	3	2		7
14 3			3	6		3	12
14 0		4	3	13		4	24
13 9		10	18	26	9	3	66
13 6		7	18	67	8		100
13 3		28	27	87	6	1	149
13 0	1	33	31	104	1		170
12 9	2	42	111	32			187
12 6	2	75	83	1			161
12 3	2	93	5	3			103
12 0		52	2	2			56
11 9	3	5					8
11 6		1					1
Total	10	351	303	344	26	12	1046

"On applying the appropriate statistical procedure to the 'scatter-diagram' shown in Table 10, it is found that the coefficient of correlation between the number of years in Grade I and II and the ages of pupils on entering secondary schools is as high as .60, with a probable error of .013, thus indicating a very substantial relationship." (p. 13)

> repeat one step or to continue into Upper IIA or its equivalent so that they take three years. Some Infant Mistresses make a practice of drafting new-year beginners aged 5 years 4 months or over straight into Lower I so that if they have normal capacity they may complete the course in two years; others make a re-distribution at the end of a half-year with the same purpose in view. Others again take the view that three years is the normal period and they require practically all their pupils to take three years. One Infant Mistress stated that it is because primary departments will not take pupils into Grade III in mid-year that she requires her pupils to spend three years in Grades I and II: otherwise she would be satisfied with $2^1/2$ years.
>
> The official pronouncement on the matter is E.D. Circular No. 43, which was first issued in precisely similar form in 1921 as No. 26. ...
>
> It seems that if [this] Circular (Promotion of Children from the Infant Department to the Primary Department) is taken into account in all the schools, the concluding paragraph [see reference 7. on the fourth page of this chapter] is regarded as over-riding the general intention expressed in the circular that children of normal capacity may be expected to go through Grades I and II in two years if they commence at the beginning of the year. ... Each Infant Mistress felt more or less at liberty to formulate her own policy. In many cases the phrase "the welfare of the individual child" was mentioned as the deciding factor when promotions are being considered ... but there is an evident lack of common criteria. ... It seems to be a fact that, although Circular No. 43 contemplates new-year entrants as following the normal course and mid-year entrants as needing special provision, the practice has grown up of taking precisely the opposite view.[28]

Among the remaining tables Hitchcox produced, Table 10 [reproduced as Table 6.5], which furnished evidence of "a very substantial relationship" between the number of years spent in infant grades and pupils' ages on entering secondary schools, also proved central to deliberations upon the re-wording of Circular 43 - notably so that, in the process of standardising administrative practice within infant departments, practical effect would be given to the proposed age standard of twelve years for completion of primary education. For, as the Research Officer commented and the Superintendent of High Schools agreed was desirable:

> It seems clear that a reduction in the proportion of children taking three years or more over Grades I and II would result in a lowering of the average age at starting secondary education, and consequently an increase in the number of children spending a worthwhile period in secondary schools.[29]

The Departmental Psychologist (L. S. Piddington), however, challenged the assumption made here, on the grounds that age of entry to secondary schools was not necessarily a factor determining pupils' length of stay or satisfactory progress in these schools. The important

28 ibid, pp. 2, 15

29 ibid, p. 13. See also the Superintendent of High Schools' handwritten note, dated 19 January 1949, in reference to the Research Officer's report: Ages of children who have passed through infant departments, 17 January 1949, E.D. 179/49

question for him was whether or not children were "ready and suitable" for secondary education, and this, he argued in common with others, involved "a satisfactory early education in infant and primary grades".[30]

Indced Piddington was generally critical of Hitchcox's report because the type of research it contained could not deal with individuals. Some children, he said, might be held back too much, while some may go on too quickly. Moreover, although he thought it likely that certain infant mistresses would review their position in the light of Table 6 in the report ('Period in Grades I and II of children admitted at the beginning of 1947: Infant Departments'), in his opinion a major change in infant school policy was not justified without further information. But the amendment of Circular 43 had already proceeded, and publication of a revised version became more urgent when formal complaints directed at the policies of particular infant mistresses were received from parents.

Westgarth had written a second time to the Director of Education in March 1949, pointing out that there would be no 'difficulty' if children enrolled at infant departments progressed in accordance with the pattern envisaged by Circular 43; but the introduction of a preliminary six-month kindergarten course - which neither the circular nor the current Primary Course of Instruction mentioned - "upset the arrangement".[31] In response, Assistant Superintendent Caust advised the Director that one likely result of the Research Officer's then still-continuing investigation would be to show how closely the circular was being observed in schools. Within the broader context of this alert, the case detailed later that year by 21 parents of children currently in Lower Grade II at Glenelg Infant Department illustrated well the 'deviant' practice of some infant mistresses as objected to by many primary headmasters. In bringing to official notice the considerable and long-standing parental dissatisfaction with this school's administration, particularly in regard to promotion from the infant to the primary department, a

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[30] L. S. Piddington, Comment on report concerning children in Grades I and II at infant departments and at other schools, 26 September 1949, loc cit

[31] W. T. Westgarth to the Director of Education, Circular 26 - Promotion of children from infant departments, 16 March 1949, E.D. 179/49

three-page petition elaborated upon the "inflexible rule" imposed by the Infant Mistress (Miss Eleanor Sowter):

> that all children commencing school in February, between the ages of five and six years, shall
> (1) Spend six months in the Kindergarten Class irrespective of whether the child has attended at a pre-school kindergarten for a year or more, or not;
> (2) Be promoted (only after satisfactory examination results) into Upper I at the end of the child's first year, into Upper II at the end of the second year, and into Grade III at the end of the third year.[32]

The signatories who appealed for the Director "to take such steps as will give our children the same privileges enjoyed by all other children in the State", viz, a two-year period of infant schooling, cited reasons for their concern which were to be reiterated throughout the next decade and until the system of half-grades in infant departments was abolished in 1964.

The Glenelg petitioners argued, firstly, that since the avowed purpose of a Kindergarten Class was to establish the correct relationship of the child to others of the same age and to enable him/her to make any necessary emotional adjustments before embarking upon more formal education, nothing of benefit to the child accrued under a policy which made a further six months in such a class compulsory after s/he had already attended at a pre-school. On the contrary, "positive harm" was done by engendering a stagnation of young minds that were "prepared, ready and eager for formal work", which resulted in children learning to hate school through sheer boredom. Even those who had completed their first primer at the nearby Woodlands Church of England Grammar School were made to "start again" in the Kindergarten Class on transferring to Glenelg Infant Department, they attested. In their view, these instances showed a "deplorable lack of discrimination" on the part of Miss Sowter; and a report by Piddington or his predecessor (Miss Mary Smith, who now consulted privately) on the psychological effect upon children of such "enforced retardment" would surely demonstrate the need for Departmental regulation of similar practice elsewhere.

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32 Petition regarding the policy on promotion from the infant to the primary department at Glenelg School, September 1949, p. 1, E.D. 179/49

Secondly, but far more serious and lasting according to these parents, there were four main consequences of the Infant Mistress's "deliberate flouting of instructions" as laid down in Circular 43:

> (1) All children who spend three years in the Infant Department at Glenelg are at least a year behind others of their age group attending other schools. The full effect of this is felt when for any reason the child is transferred to another school or leaves to attend High School. In effect the child is robbed of a year of his life.
> (2) Children of parents of limited means, forced to leave school soon after their fourteenth birthday, are deprived of a year's education at a level which means most to them, affecting both their future prospects and their value to the community.
> (3) The final six months in their third year after completing Upper II work is spent marking or wasting time. ...That they lose interest, form bad habits, misdirect their energies is inevitable.
> (4) The extra year in the Infant Department affects the child's opportunities of gaining Continuation Scholarships and Bursaries [these having an age qualification], thus unfairly discriminating against children from the Glenelg district.[33]

Needless to say, the petition continued, the foregoing matters had been raised with Miss Sowter, who "on all occasions stubbornly refused to modify her attitude in the slightest". When then confronted with Circular 43, she had contended that it in no way limited her "absolute right to conduct her school as she pleased"; intimating further that if parents did not like her policies they could send their children to St. Leonard's School a mile away.[34]

Beyond signing this petition, one parent wrote independently to recount the example of his daughter, aged seven on the 12th of October 1949, who had been attending Glenelg Infant Department for two years and (he adjudged from her school reports) was a child of "unusual aptitude and exceptional ability". Knowing that Circular 43 provided for a judicious selection of children in Lower II to be promoted to Grade III in January, he had requested that his daughter be included in this category. In response, the Infant Mistress told him that the main criteria were physique and age (not, equally, outlook and intellectual capacity as stated in the circular). It being her view that no child younger than eight years should receive promotion to the primary department, Miss Sowter advised that no selection at all would in fact be made from Lower II -

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[33] ibid, p. 2

[34] ibid, p. 3

hence his letter seeking the Director's consideration of the matter.[35] Asked by the new Superintendent of Primary Schools (former Inspector W. V. Leach) to justify her stance, Miss Sowter did so in terms similarly argued by her infant-trained colleagues at all levels within the education system. In opening her defence, she indicated that she had always placed children aged 5 years and 6 months or more straight into Lower I, thus giving them the chance to go through the infant department in two years. Her reasons for otherwise placing school beginners under this age into Kindergarten, and requiring them to take three years before advancement to Grade III, were then proffered as follows:

> From personal experiences I have found that the forcing of young children by Double Promotions has been detrimental in the long run to even bright children. I have endeavoured to give the children a feeling of confidence in copping [sic] with school work. A solid foundation stands a child in good stead throughout the rest of his school life. I understand that Grade III work is planned for children of eight. Why, then, ask a child of seven to face up to the work, especially as seven is one of the critical ages for children and often produces psychological problems.[36]

By early October, with Hitchcox's report now to hand yet equally conscious of the contentious issues raised in the foregoing correspondence, Superintendent Leach summarised both the diagnosis and the cure with respect to the problem of pupil classification and promotion in infant departments:

> The statistics compiled by the Research Officer in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7... indicate that after allowance is made for various factors there is some justification for the statement that "whether or not a child spends three years in completing the course set out for two years depends much more upon the school he is attending than upon his ability". ... I agree with the Research Officer's concluding remark, which is that a clear pronouncement of policy is needed, and I consider that this could be done without giving the erroneous impression that undue measure of 'tightening up' is intended to the detriment of children's welfare.[37]

Reformulating official policy on the length of children's stay in infant classes and bringing the administrative practice of infant mistresses into line with it, however, proved a more protracted exercise than Leach perhaps anticipated.

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[35] John J. Williams to the Director of Education, Letter re. promotion of children from the (Glenelg) Infant Department, 28 November 1949, E.D. 179/49

[36] E. Sowter (Infant Mistress, Glenelg Infant Department) to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, Letter from Mr J. J. Williams, 30 November 1949, E.D. 179/49

[37] Superintendent of Primary Schools to the Director of Education, E.D. Circular No. 43, 3 October 1949, E.D. 179/49

"WE BELIEVE THERE IS NO ONE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS":

RHETORIC, REMEDIES AND RESPONSES IN THE 1950s

With the express purpose of clarifying the matter of promotions in infant departments (and thereby hopefully eliminating differential practices stemming from infant mistresses' individual notions of 'the child's welfare'), Superintendent Leach indicated that a revised Circular 43 would henceforth comprise the only printed instruction. The notice referring to Kindergarten classes, hitherto reproduced from the 1920-1938 Course of Instruction, was accordingly to be deleted from the inside front cover of the Infant Teacher's Examination Register. No longer thus able to cite this notice in defence of the organisation of infant schools into five half-yearly grades, infant-trained personnel were anxious that the new policy include some reference to children's school commencing ages and accommodate their commitment to a 2½ year course for all. During deliberations on the re-wording of Circular 43, Miss Mead (the Mistress of Infant Method at Rose Park Practising School) had therefore proposed that the amended version read:

> The promotion of children who are enrolled in July should present no difficulty, the majority proceeding through the five classes in 2½ years. In exceptional cases, they may complete the course in 1½ years.
> Children admitted in January should complete the work in 2 years **only if aged 5.6 and over on admission**, when they should be placed in Lower I, and proceed through Upper I, Lower II and Upper II. The youngest children (5.0 to 5.6) should have a period of 6 months in Kindergarten and thus will probably remain 3 years in the Infant Department. (Remaining paragraphs to stand.)[38] [original emphasis]

Mead's accompanying rationale, which Miss Inspector Coombs (Florence Blake's successor) fully endorsed, re-stated earlier arguments about 'pushing' January-enrolled children younger than five and a half to complete the syllabus for Grades I and II in two years. In also highlighting the link between pupils' three-year stay in infant schools and the system of annual promotion to Grade III, she suggested (in common with others) that this problem could be solved by instituting mid-year promotion to the primary department. Inspector Coombs voiced additional concern regarding the existing Circular 43 clause which allowed for the accelerated promotion of children to Grade III in eighteen months - a period she believed was insufficient

[38] M. Mead to the Superintendent of Primary Schools, Suggested version of Circular 43, 29 September 1949, E.D. 179/49. Note: "Exceptional cases", Mead specified, referred to unusually bright children and those much above average age on admission as a result of illness or inability to attend school due to distance from home, etc.

preparation for the "**new and varied work and different type of discipline which characterise the Primary Depts.**" [original emphasis].[39] Without "a good foundation and the right attitude as given by a Kindergarten training", Coombs asserted, the effectiveness of infant departments in assisting children to adjust to the "great change" involved in transferring to Grade III would be impaired. Hence she insisted that a $2^1/_2$ year period be the general rule for pupils admitted to infant schools mid-year.

Assistant Superintendent Caust's "mildly caustic remarks in just reply" (so described by Leach) dismissed most of Mead's and Coombs' points as either unproved, erroneous or prejudiced. He also took the opportunity to criticise the likes of Miss Sowter for their "very rigid" attitude in favour of the youngest January entrants spending three years in infant grades.[40] Not surprisingly, then, Caust's suggestions for revising Circular 43 were substantially at odds with those advanced by members of the Infant Mistresses' Association, and in forming the basis of the new directive gazetted in October 1949 were subject to a decade-long campaign of resistance to their substance and intent.

Significantly, the revised circular governing the length of junior primary schooling omitted any reference to "the interests of the child" (the phrase which gave infant mistresses discretionary power to 'retard' pupils for three years in their schools), but retained the sentence regarding annual promotion to the primary department and the associated procedural details. Further, no mention of a kindergarten period was included, only that:

> Normally children aged 5 years and 6 months on enrolment early in the year will be promoted to Grade III two years after their enrolment in the Infant Department, but this provision is not to be interpreted as preventing children with sufficient capacity who are under 5 years 6 months on admission from completing Grade I and II in two years.
> Children enrolled in mid-year will be promoted to Grade III either eighteen months or two and a half years after enrolment in the Infant Department.[41]

[39] M. M. Coombs to the Director of Education, re. revised Circular 43, 13 October 1949, E.D. 179/49

[40] Mr Caust's notes on Miss Mead's reasons, 1 October 1949, and on Miss Coombs' letter of 13 October 1949, E.D. 179/49

[41] 'E.D. Circular No. 43 (revised). Promotion of children from the Infant Department', EG (S.A.), 65:759, 14 October 1949, pp. 193-94. Note: The words "but this provision ..... two years" in the first paragraph were not printed in the *Gazette*. They were added in the loose-leaf version of the circular distributed to schools in November 1949. For confirmation of this, see A. C. Hitchcox to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Report on the length of time spent in infant departments, p. 10, 31 May 1957, E.D. 1/4/5

Since headmistresses generally perceived these instructions to be inimical to the underlying philosophy and organisation of infant departments, and as perpetuating the administrative difficuties created by a single point of entry to Grade III, their conformity of practice was not immediately secured. Indeed, if some did modify their 'three years of infant school' policy it was for more compelling reasons associated with the 1950s crisis in enrolments. Nor was there any diminution in the intensity of debate over what constituted a 'normal' period of junior primary schooling and how best to solve the problem of marked differences in the time children took to reach Grade III.

For its part, the Bean Committee of Inquiry (whose final report was tabled two months prior to the amended circular being issued) responded to evidence of wide variations in the length of pupils' infant school experience with consternation. In its view, the machinery not merely creaked but jolted when, regardless of these differences, a single date of transfer from Grade II brought children together upon the threshold of 'primary school proper' and thereafter they were expected to uniformly progress through prescribed annual work stages. Having detailed the "curious situation" in infant departments where the policy of January-only promotion to Grade III functioned to hold some children back for three years and to force others along at too rapid a pace, the Committee expressed equal concern that the current preoccupation with effecting pupil transfer to secondary courses at the age of 12+ had unduly pressured infant mistresses to shorten the time children spent in their schools to $1^1/_2$ or two years.[42]

In next reviewing the measures suggested by witnesses to facilitate a two-year stay in infant departments for January beginners (so they might proceed to Grade III at 7+), the Final Bean Report indicated that experimentation with six-monthly removals to the primary department was desirable, but rejected as impracticable the proposed extension of this half-yearly promotion system throughout the primary school. The alternative of annual admission to infant departments was shunned, too, on the grounds that the range in entrants' ages, abilities and developmental levels would be even greater than under the existing twice-yearly school entry

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42 Final Report of the Education Inquiry Committee (Chair, E. L. Bean), SAPP, no.15, 1949, pp. 13-14

arrangements. Neither was hurrying pupils through the infant course by means of double promotion (i.e., 'skipping' sub-grades) considered a viable option. If the work was not done properly at this "foundational" stage of schooling, the Committee warned, the incidence of retardation in upper primary grades would increase.

In response to claims that kindergarten activities were of little educational value, and that 5+ year-olds should be able to master the Grade I syllabus, the Report affirmed that the present curriculum in infant departments prescribed tasks "adapted to the powers of the children." It was necessary that infants should obtain experience of objects and processes as a preparation for the understanding of symbols, the Committee argued. Moreover, it was "unwise to place children at work on the three R's by traditional [i.e., formal] methods immediately upon entry to school".[43] Without specifying a minimum period of junior primary instruction, the Bean Committee concluded there was but one escape from the prevailing impasse: to adopt in all classes from Kindergarten upwards the principles it had already recommended of grading and promotion by age (with a leeway of one year above and below the designated norm), and individual progression through the course. Thus, according to their 'all-round maturity', children aged between 5 and 6 years on commencing school could be moved into Grade III at 7 - $8^{1}/_{2}$ years of age and continue their work from whatever point they had reached beforehand.

To reiterate what the thesis has previously noted, most of the Bean Inquiry's recommendations were not implemented in the 1950s due to the Education Department's concern with more pressing 'bread and butter' issues. Yet the same over-crowded state of classrooms and staffing problems that diverted attention away from progressive educational reform during this decade gave impetus to moves towards an age standard of 7+ years for promotion to Grade III and the corollary this was seen to necessarily entail: restricting the time February enrolments spent in infant departments to two years. For example, as the steadily rising birth-rate in South Australia from 1943 onwards was translated into growing numbers of school beginners, the Department investigated the possibility of limiting admissions to children who turned six during the year, and the date of their entry to the start of first term, in order to reduce the strain on teachers and

[43] ibid, p. 44

accommodation. As the Research Officer pointed out, adoption of this arrangement would likely reduce the percentage of pupils spending three years in infant departments, with the flow-on benefit of lowering their ages on transition to secondary schools to thus extend the period of their post-primary education.[44]

Influenced by the Bean Committee's views on the subject (advice which strengthened the position contemporaneously argued by the IMA), Central Office subsequently decided to explore other ways of alleviating the material conditions in schools instead of altering current admission practice.[45] Temporary respite was therefore afforded to the redoubtable Miss Sowter and her ilk, who strongly opposed any proposals to curtail children's infant school experience because of over-crowding.[46] However, the persistence of such headmistresses in adhering to their three-year policy for the youngest February entrants, despite the pressure of numbers in infant classes and contrary to Departmental instructions, soon provoked wider community debate and renewed effort on the part of Westgarth to see their administrative practice brought into alignment with that of primary headmasters.

A spate of letters to the Editor of the *Advertiser* in December 1954 revealed some difference of opinion amongst parents regarding the length of time children should take to do the infant course. Although most were agreed upon the undesirability of accelerating even bright scholars through the early grades lest they suffer emotionally or perhaps physically, some considered it equally foolish, if not far worse, to deliberately hold back for a third year those pupils "fitted" (by age, ability and maturity) to proceed to Grade III after two years. [47] Of greater concern to others were the "unfortunate" children who turned five after the June intake (i.e., those aged 5¹/₂ on starting school in the next January), because:

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[44] Research Officer's statistical estimates and comments re. the practical effects of modifying existing school entry arrangements, 16 September 1949; A. C. Hitchcox to Director of Education, Admissions to infant grades in 1950, 21 September 1949, E.D. 179/49

[45] For details, see Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Admissions to infant grades in 1950, 19 September & 3 October 1949, E.D. 179/49

[46] See, for example, 'Over-crowding in schools harmful', The Mail, 5 May 1951

[47] See, for example, 'Infant education' by "Former infant teacher", Advertiser (Adelaide), 4 December 1954

> If they are forced to take three years to reach Grade III, by the time they sit for the Intermediate Examination they are ... over 16 years of age. This, of course, precludes them from sitting for the majority of scholarships available.[48]

By contrast, another correspondent opined that the child whom a teacher recognised as needing an extra year would gain not only in terms of scholastic achievement but in emotional maturity, and might still be young enough to qualify for a bursary.[49] This same parent nonetheless joined in the general consensus that a two year stay in junior primary grades was preferable to three in most cases - a view which ran counter to the situation revealed by the Research Officer's 1957 investigation into the classification and promotion of February-enrolled children attending at an infant department.

Hitchcox's examination of the 1955-57 Incidental Visit forms for fifty infant departments in order to record the number of pupils promoted to Grade III after $1\frac{1}{2}$, 2, $2\frac{1}{2}$, 3 or 3+ years was once again undertaken at Westgarth's request.[50] Having first divided the schools into four groups,[51] the Research Officer submitted the following statistical summary:

Table 6.6 Length of time spent by 13,332 children (excluding 3,681 who came from other schools) in 50 infant departments, 1955-1957

Note: Children who commenced school in February comprised 65% of the total.

	$1\frac{1}{2}$ years	2 years	$2\frac{1}{2}$ years	3 years	3+ years	Total
Grand Total	25	4,668	4,131	4,034	474	13,332
Percentage	0.2	35.0	31.0	30.3	3.6	100

Source: A. C. Hitchcox, Report on length of time spent in infant departments, p. 5, 31 May 1957, PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 1/4/5

[48] 'Education of infants. June intake problem' by "T'Other Side", Advertiser, 6 December 1954

[49] 'Education of infants' by "Grateful parent", Advertiser, 3 December 1954

[50] See W. T. Westgarth to Director of Education, An investigation by the Research Officer into the placement and promotion of children enrolling in February, 29 October 1956, E.D. 1/4/5

[51] 1) Those at which considerably more children spent 2 years than 3 years - ratio 2.49:1 (16 schools)
2) Those at which considerably more children spent 3 years than 2 years - ratio 2.22:1 (11 schools)
3) Those at which the 2-year and 3-year groups were roughly equal (6 schools)
4) Those at which the proportions of the 2-yr. & 3-yr. groups varied considerably (17 schools)

Tables from the Research Officer's report: Length of time spent in infant departments, 31 May 1957

Source: PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 1/4/5

Table 6.7 (A) Distribution of children across the 'half-grades', 1948-1956

Year	No. of Infant Depts.	Kinder-garten	Lower I	Upper I	Lower II	Upper II	Total	% of all children below Gr. III
1948	40	1,600	2,092	1,862	1,773	3,492	10,821	45.5
1949	43	1,848	2,469	2,416	2,114	3,793	12,820	48.8
1950	43	1,977	2,521	2,495	2,490	4,083	13,566	47.1
1951	52	2,142	3,165	3,130	2,508	5,181	16,126	52.3
1952	52	2,676	4,103	3,707	2,942	4,881	18,309	52.1
1953	52	2,287	3,759	3,079	3,406	5,225	17,756	46.6
1954	66	2,959	4,767	3,669	4,050	6,788	22,233	56.2
1955	68	3,175	5,135	3,713	4,269	6,530	22,822	56.4
1956	74	3,196	5,309	4,223	4,736	6,917	24,381	58.5

Table 6.8 (B) Percentages of children in Grade III aged 7, 8 and 9+ years on 1 August 1956

Note: "The 'normal' age for this grade is 7 or 8 years."

	7 years	8 years	9 years or over
At all schools	27.2	54.2	18.5
At schools in List I (mostly 2 years in Infant Department)	31.1	54.1	14.8
At schools in List II (mostly 3 years in Infant Department)	13.7	64.8	21.4

Tables from the Research Officer's report: Length of time spent in infant departments, 31 May 1957 (continued)

Table 6.9 (C) Ages of children entering infant departments in February, 1950-1953

"As will be seen from the following table, the percentage of children aged 5 years 6 months or more on enrolment in Infant Departments in February is comparatively small. About three-quarters of the total number are under 5 years 6 months on enrolment." (p. 10)

Year	No. of ch'n. entering Inf. Dept. in Feb.	% aged under 5	% aged 5 years	% aged 5 1/4 years	% aged 5 1/2 years or more
1950	2,929	3.4	41.4	35.4	19.8
1951	4.230	2.8	38.3	32.1	26.7
1952	5,529	5.2	38.0	33.7	23.1
1953	4,317	3.0	37.6	34.7	26.7

Concluding from these figures that infant mistresses remained divided in their views on what constituted a normal period for children starting school at the beginning of the year, he went on to tabulate the 'banking up' of numbers in Upper Grade II each year since 1948 (although this was not typical in every school), the ages of children in Grade III on 1 August 1956, and the school commencing ages of pupils comprising the new-year intake at infant departments in 1950-53. [See Tables 6.7 - 6.9 on the preceding pages.] In closing, Hitchcox remarked that his collective findings pointed to "very considerable differences in the practice governing promotions in different Infant Departments". He further commented that whilst the significant percentages of February admissions taking three years to reach Grade III might well reflect the actual capacity of the children concerned, it was more likely a function of headmistresses' personal views of what constituted "sufficient capacity" (in the words of Circular 43) to warrant promotion from Grade II. Hence he suggested that consideration be given to:

> 1) whether these differences are desirable or not, and if they are desirable,
> 2) whether the reference in Circular 43 to children under 5 years 6 months should be replaced by a more positive statement of what the Department requires to be regarded as the normal period in the Infant Department for children of ordinary capacity.[52]

Asked by the new Superintendent of Primary Schools, A. G. Paull, for their comments on Hitchcox's report, the current triumvirate of infant inspectors (Misses Mead, Rewell and Sando) were agreed on a number of points. Regarding the "interesting and valuable" figures for the four groups of schools, they asserted that a close watch had been kept on promotions - it occasionally being suggested to headmistresses that "some children might have moved faster". In each case, however, they were convinced that "the I.M.'s chief concern is for the child's best welfare and that she has acted accordingly".[53] The apparent variation of policy, they continued, could be partly due to social-demographic variables (for instance, whether pupils were drawn from an industrial or migrant centre). Alternatively, the explanation might lie in the staffing profile of a school: amongst the 46.4% of infant teachers recorded in January 1957 as

52 A. C. Hitchcox to Superintendedent of Primary Schools, Report on the length of time spent in infant departments, p. 11, 31 May 1957, E.D. 1/4/5

53 Marjory Mead to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Comment on report by Research Officer on time spent in infant departments, September 1957, E.D. 1/4/5

being emergency-trained, some were likely to have insufficient skills to help children to progress more rapidly.

Next, while subscribing to the belief that "every child should have his chance to move according to his ability", the inspectorate cited Hitchcox's table indicating that approximately three-quarters of February entrants to infant departments were under $5^1/_2$ years of age (with 40% of these being barely five or younger) . Here was justification for headmistresses' actions in not hurrying most through the course in two years. "The I.M. would naturally want these children to have a period in Kg.", Mead wrote; and since "we feel very strongly that $2^1/_2$ years is the ideal time to be spent in the Infant Department, but promotion to G. III is not possible mid-year", a three-year stay was eminently defensible.[54] Besides, the inspectors asked, assuming that the ages for Grades I and II stated in the 1938 Course of Instruction were still considered the norm, would it be right to require all five-year-olds to complete the work set down for children of six years?[55]

With infant specialists thus remaining intractable on the subject of pupil classification and promotion, but particularly in regard to the retention of an introductory kindergarten class for the youngest children, Westgarth actively pursued the matter through teacher union channels and at meetings of the Primary Schools' Advisory Curriculum Board on which he served as one of the teacher representatives. The practice of dividing the Grade I and II curriculum into five half-yearly sections and whether its continuation was advisable in the case of children admitted in February, together with the variable two- or three-year policy adopted in infant departments, featured prominently in SAIT (South Australian Institute of Teachers) Council debates early in 1957. However, access to Hitchcox's report to inform union deliberations was delayed for some months while the Department considered the desirability of further amending Circular 43, and also of reducing the infant course so that most February entrants could

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[54] ibid

[55] Note: The revised curriculum issued in 1948 no longer gave the ages for Grade I and II as 6 years and 7 years respectively.

complete the work in two years.[56] When by April 1959 neither Curriculum Board nor senior bureaucrats' discussions had produced a solution along these lines, Westgarth revived the issues in a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Teachers' Journal* - a copy of which he sent to the Superintendent of Primary Schools and whose contents were reported in the local press.[57]

In this letter, Westgarth alluded to three of the Primary Curriculum Board's monthly meetings in 1958 at which the Grade I and II syllabus and the problem of promotions in infant schools had dominated the agenda.[58] Agreement was reached early in the piece that the course should suit the majority of children, that is, the 70% admitted in February, most of whom were under 5 years 6 months on entry. But progress beyond this point, he noted, was obstructed by the infant inspectorate who "seemed to wish to cling to the 2½-year plan rather than to offer any specific suggestions as to where the course could be cut".[59] Adding that the figures in the Research Officer's report on the length of time spent in infant schools were "disturbing to many thoughtful teachers and parents", Westgarth concluded the case he presented with the statement:

> **The situation can only be remedied at an administrative level. Infant schools should be organised so that the work of Grades I and II is planned to take two years.** There is no objection to six-monthly periods so long as there are four of them instead of five. The work of Grade I could be divided into Kindergarten and Grade I, with suitable adjustments to the course. Infant mistresses should have no more power to spread the work of their two grades over 2½ years than headmasters have to spread the work of their five grades over 5½ years.[60] [original emphasis]

Infant school principals and teachers immediately organised themselves to counter Westgarth's views through the same medium. The next two issues of the *Teachers' Journal* thus saw

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[56] See L. E. Kiek (SAIT General Secretary) to Director of Education, 31 May 1957, and the Director's reply dated 26 September; Director of Education's handwritten note on the Superintendent of Primary Schools' memorandum of 17 September 1957, E.D. 1/4/5

[57] W. T. Westgarth to Superintendent of Primary Schools, handwritten transcript: Three years in infant schools plus covering letter, 6 April 1959, E.D. 1/4/5; 'Educationist says:- Change infant school timetable', The News, 6 May 1959

[58] For details, see 'Curriculum Board Notes. Infant school questions', SA Teachers' Journal, 8:7, August 1958, p. 33

[59] 'In the Editor's mail bag. Infant schools' - W.T. Westgarth, SA Teachers' Journal, 9:4, May 1959, p. 34. See also Superintendent of Primary Schools, Notes re. next meeting of Curriculum Board, 3 April 1958, E.D. 1/4/5

[60] 'In the Editor's mail bag. Infant schools', loc cit, p. 35

publication of a nine-point reply from IMA President V. J. Eimer, which was supported and elaborated upon by executive members of the Infant Teachers' Association (ITA). Readers' attention was firstly drawn to the fact that headmistresses were "working to the Departmental policy upon which Infant schools were established", as set out on pages 154 and 159 of the 1938 Course of Instruction.[61] Second, none of the correspondents shared Westgarth's optimism that children enrolled at the age of five were ready for secondary education at twelve. The differences in mental ability among any group of five year olds, the widening of the range over the next ten years, and world-wide concern about University failure rates, Eimer argued, "should make us wary of this over-simplified statement".[62] Equally worthy of consideration here, one teacher added, was the need for children to be more mature in order to cope with the increasingly heavy load at high school and tertiary level occasioned by new discoveries. Business firms also were begging for more mature trainees, she claimed, therefore why hurry the child through the "precious growing years"?[63] Nor could others see good reason for accelerating pupil progress in "the basic period of learning life", particularly when a shaky foundation could not be remedied without much extra time later on - if at all.[64]

A vigorous defence of infant department practice in providing a definite preparatory period for the (allegedly) 88.8% of children who commenced at school under the age of 5 years 6 months comprised the third strand of Eimer's response to Westgarth's letter. Indeed the IMA wanted the Curriculum Board to consider making such a period available to the youngest pupils in **all** schools. At the same time, she indicated, the Association had no desire to approach the Board to have the work of Grades I and II further reduced. The existing curriculum and teaching methods were (to echo the Bean Committee's observation) well suited to the needs of infants, and teachers were worried that immature beginners would struggle to do the work in two years. Moreover, according to the ITA spokeswomen, children were individuals and must therefore

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61 'In the Editor's mail bag. Infant schools' - J. V. Eimer, SA Teachers' Journal, 9:5, June 1959, p. 29. See also 'Worry in schools' promotion', Advertiser, 5 June 1959

62 'Infant schools' - J.V. Eimer, loc cit

63 'Two or three years in infant schools? Infant teacher's view' - V. H. Harper, SA Teachers' Journal, 9:6, July 1959, p. 14

64 ibid - C. G. Royal, President, and J. C. Passell, Secretary, Infant Teachers' Association

work at their own pace. Opportunity was provided for the normal child to progress on the basis of his/her age and capacity, Eimer contended; whilst it was surely apparent from the official statistics published on another page of the June issue of the *Journal* that pupils in infant and non-infant schools had equal chances of reaching Grade III at 7+. Of course, she continued, in some schools of both types there was a preponderance of factors which militated against a normal promotion rate (incidence of migrants; interstate and sub-normal children; residential district; epidemics; frequent staff changes; abnormal transfer rates) or, alternatively, where conditions were conducive to an accelerated pattern. As for the level of parental concern about children spending three years in infant schools that Westgarth had described, Eimer claimed that the effects of the reverse scenario - promotion too young to Grade III - were now troubling many who had accepted or even welcomed it previously. These problems, she asserted, had carried on into secondary and tertiary education and were increasing at an alarming rate.[65]

In the IMA's belief, no one solution was to be found at an administrative level. It would be best, the President suggested, for primary headmasters and infant mistresses to confer on the particular 'problem children' in their own schools, "respecting one another's judgement and co-operating for the best interests of the child".[66] Such a procedure might well be appropriate in the case of isolated individuals, Westgarth retorted, but it would not redress the situation whereby the whole organisation of infant schools on a 2½-year basis penalised children who enrolled in February. He took issue, too, with the remaining 'statements' in Eimer's rejoinder to his May letter. Commenting briefly on each, he essentially made the same points he had already argued *ad nauseam*; then cited the 'Forbes incident' as evidence that more parents were dissatisfied with headmistresses' three-year requirement than because their children spent two years doing the work of Grades I and II.[67] This incident notably involved 44 pupils, otherwise destined to spend a full year in Upper II at metropolitan Forbes Infant School, being promoted to Grade III on official orders as a result of parental protest. Yet the views expressed in

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65 J. V. Eimer, op cit, p. 30

66 ibid

67 'Two years or three in infant schools?' - W. T. Westgarth, SA Teachers' Journal, 9:6, July 1959, pp. 15-16. Westgarth again cited the 'Forbes incident' in his December 1959 correspondence with the Director of Education, and in his letter published in the *Teachers' Journal* that same month.

response to newspaper coverage of Westgarth's May exposition, and Eimer's in June, suggested that members of the public were fairly evenly divided in their support for either a two- or three-year stay in infant departments.

The course should occupy three years, commented one parent, because those children who progressed to the primary school after two years did so under pressure. Consequently, many students, particularly the bright ones, entered secondary school and university (or the business world, another added) before they were emotionally ready, and so never fulfilled their early promise.[68] Reinforcing this point, a second correspondent recounted that in her personal experience it was the youngest pupils who "laboured through", often frustrated and discouraged, simply due to immaturity.[69] "Interested Parent" concurred with several others in arguing that the longer period would enable children to receive a solid grounding in every subject - the lack of which was a current complaint of higher grade teachers.[70] "Mother of three" likewise opposed the shorter period of infant schooling, for the additional reason that children making the transition from Grade VII at twelve years of age were "very young to be able to know what career they choose to follow".[71]

Those parents who, conversely, stated their preference for a two year course, focused on the six to twelve month "handicap" (especially in relation to missed scholarship opportunities later) which attendance at an infant school avowedly entailed. Children ought not to be penalised merely through place of abode (i.e., according to what kind of school was accessible to them), asserted one correspondent. Instead, "a uniform standard of primary education" should prevail.[72] Another drew attention to further defects in the education of 'brilliant' children which she considered a three-year course would exacerbate. Given that the curriculum was designed

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68 Letters to the Editor. 'Infant schools. Three-year course urged' by "Parent", Advertiser, 11 May 1959

69 Letters to the Editor. 'Infant school problems' by "Common Sense", Advertiser, 25 July 1959

70 Letters to the Editor. 'Infant school course' by "Interested Parent", Advertiser, 14 May 1959

71 Letters to the Editor. 'Change would be beneficial' by "Mother of three", Advertiser, 18 May 1959

72 Letters to the Editor. 'Infant school' by "Off the mark", Advertiser, 19 August 1959. See also this parent's previous letter: 'Shorter infant school term', Advertiser, 23 July 1959

for the average child, and in the absence of special provision, the needs of exceptionally able students were accommodated largely by means of accelerated promotion, wrote "Sincerely concerned". However, her letter continued:

> There is so much kindergarten activity in our infant schools, and so little formal work, that a highly-qualified teacher told me it is impossible to determine the capabilities of a child for some time, and by then it is too late for adjustments to be made. In cases where promotion is effected, it is often carried out with such resentment and discourtesy that parents are made to feel it is a crime to have a brilliant child.[73]

Implicitly or openly, then, these latter correspondents favoured Westgarth's proposal to "do away with" the system of five half-year grades in infant schools - notably by lessening the work so that the just-turned-five year old was no longer required to spend a six-month preliminary period in a kindergarten class. Accordingly, it was anticipated that only those few January beginners unable to cope with the work would take three years before progressing to the primary school.

Meanwhile, within the Education Department, Psychology Branch officers forwarded their comments on the first of Westgarth's 1959 letters appearing in the *Teachers' Journal*. The Senior Guidance Officer, E. D. Lasscock, advised that the length of time children spent in infant schools could be considered at two levels: 1) the gross statistical level and 2) more analytically, in terms of how the respective promotion procedures adopted by head teachers affected the children concerned. Westgarth, he contended, had referred solely to Level 1, and even then his analysis was incomplete - as the figures supplied by the Research Officer revealed. In particular, when arguing that infant school pupils were frequently retarded one year, he had neglected to address the key question: how was it that, despite variations in headmistresses' policy on promotions, the average age of entry to secondary schools varied by only a few months between the the different types of school under consideration? As Senior Psychologist Piddington summarised in supporting Lasscock's observations here:

> This appears to me to be fundamental to the whole discussion and until we can answer this question, we should not proceed to make a judgement. Part of the answer may well be statistical, for example, there are a greater number of children

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[73] Letters to the Editor. 'Brilliant child problem' by "Sincerely concerned", Advertiser, 7 August 1959

> under $5^1/_2$ on enrolment in infant departments. Another part of the answer may be that there are more children from 2-year promotion schools who have to repeat a grade between III and VII. Infant Mistresses may well ask Mr. Westgarth why it is that in some schools children take 6 years, while in others they take 5 years to pass from Grade II to Grade VII.[74]

Both Lasscock and Piddington submitted, moreover, that to focus merely on Level 1 data meant disregarding many other questions which further research might illuminate. For instance, were there systematic differences in the socio-economic and intelligence levels of pupils attending infant schools with a two-year tradition compared to those with a three-year policy; did children spending a longer period in Grades I and II have a better foundation and attitude to work in later years; does slower promotion lead to better social adjustment; was it preferable for grades to be repeated in the early years of schooling rather that at the primary stage? Answers about the desirability of one procedure or another in infant schools must hinge on the actual educational and social outcomes in children subjected to these procedures, Lasscock maintained, and a Westgarth-style analysis provided no such basis for reform.[75] Psychology staff also expressed concern that much of the current debate on the length of infant schooling , as conducted at either Level 1 or 2, ignored the problem of individual differences - especially in young children's readiness for formal work, which ought not to be commenced before reaching a mental age of approximately 5 years 9 months.

The Senior Guidance Officer lastly identified two main issues which were central to the long-standing debate over the length of infant schooling:

> a. Should I.M.s have the right to define whether the standard procedure in their schools for February entrants is to spend two or three years in the Infant Department? If they have the right, it may lead to anomalies in adjoining districts where a brighter child spends longer than a less able student in passing through infant grades. This argument is very commonly confused with the second -
> b. Should I.M.s have the right to vary for individuals and large groups within schools, the standard procedure. That is, not that there is a standard procedure for all more or less willy nilly, but that wide variations depending on existing conditions may be allowed at the discretion of I.M.s.[76]

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[74] Senior Psychologist to Director of Education, re. Promotion in Infant Departments (Spending 2 or 3 years in Infant Department), p. 1, 28 May 1959, PRO, GRS 809/001/P, E.D. 16/2/1

[75] Senior Guidance Officer to Senior Psychologist, Comments on the letter by Mr. Westgarth appearing in the *Teachers' Journal*, re. time spent in Infant Departments, May 1959, E.D. 16/2/1

[76] ibid, p. 3

Primary school headmasters (including Westgarth), he remarked, almost always talked about the first issue, which at base was a matter of administrative policy. Infant school inspectors, on the other hand, usually spoke in reference to the second issue and the Education Department ought now determine whether it was worthwhile to permit headmistresses to exercise this discretion (for example, to cater for the child experiencing difficulties because of illness, changes of school, low intelligence, etcetera; or when confronted with a "common core of difficulties" in a particular district such as Mansfield Park, where the vast majority of children came to school with a very poor verbal and experiential background).[77] Piddington added here that in the surviving instances of headmistresses applying a three-year promotion system, infant inspectors might investigate more closely and prevent excesses. At the same time, he advised, it would be tragic if flexibility of procedure were to be sacrificed on the basis of current arguments - indeed, no further action should be taken until considerably more knowledge about the whole situation had been obtained.[78]

Frustrated that the Department still had made no decisions by December 1959, so that the same organisation of infant schools with its "unfortunate results" persisted, Westgarth pleaded once again for a firm policy to be laid down - one which provided for February-enrolled children to proceed through four (not five) six-monthly periods. Circular 43 and Appendix II of the Course of Instruction should be amended to this effect, he argued. Only then would the time pupils took to reach Grade III more appropriately depend on their ability - not the type of school they attended.[79] At this juncture Westgarth's entreaty found favour with the Superintendent of Primary Schools, whose opinion that Circular 43 did require changes was no doubt also influenced by the accumulated weight of Curriculum Board and SAIT discussions, the newspaper publicity given to the conflicting views of Westgarth and Eimer, and the Research

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[77] ibid, p. 4

[78] Senior Psychologist to Director of Education, op cit, p. 2

[79] Walter T. Westgarth to Director of Education, Administration - organisation of infant schools, 2 December 1959, E.D. 16/2/1. See also his letter to the Editor, 'Promotion in infant grades', SA Teachers' Journal, 9:11, December 1959, p. 15.
Note: The promotion of children through infant schools was again discussed at the June 1959 meeting of the Primary Schools' Advisory Curriculum Board. Teacher representatives reported that no action was deemed necessary "as it was considered that this was an administration matter in the first instance", and that "it would come before the Board only if the courses needed revising". SA Teachers' Journal, 9:5, June 1959, p. 20

Officer's reports. As Piddington informed the Director of Education, 'two-year or three-year promotion' in infant grades had become a "heated and emotional" subject. By implication, it was timely to defuse the antagonism of infant and primary specialists with respect to this matter, and the revision of Circular 43 provided the least complicated means to do so. The dawn of 1960 thus saw a new set of recommendations on the wording of this directive, promising a final solution to the problems at hand.

CONCLUSION

World War II hostilities may have ceased in 1945, but the internecine relations between junior and upper-primary-trained personnel within the South Australian government school system were just beginning to flare over the issue of how long children spent in Grades I and II at infant schools. The next fifteen years witnessed repeated attempts to standardise administrative procedures in regard to the time pupils took to progress to Grade III - notably by amending the directive governing promotions in infant departments. However, as the prime mechanism for effecting transition to 'primary school proper' at the age of 7+ (and thus to secondary education at 12+), Circular 43 proved a dismal failure, whilst other similarly-intentioned proposals were only briefly considered before being abandoned. At every turn, the efforts of W. T. Westgarth to secure a two-year course for February beginners enrolled in infant schools were successfully resisted by the alliance of headmistresses and inspectors, who staunchly defended these schools' distinctive organisation and practice on the grounds of their superior capacity to meet the needs of young children. The equally vigorous campaign led by Westgarth, together with parental protests at the three-year requirement of many infant mistresses, nonetheless gradually impacted on official thinking.

Much as the Education Department proceeded cautiously, waiting upon hard evidence of the need for policy reform and ever-conscious of the gender politics involved (especially when infant departments out-ranked 'ordinary' primary schools in the number of Grade I and II enrolments), the pressure brought to bear by critics on occasion necessitated the assertion of more senior authority over that of infant mistresses in the matter of promotions. The tardiness of Parliament in legislating for a school leaving age of fifteen added fuel to the arguments for

limiting children's stay in infant departments to two years so they might spend a 'worthwhile period' in secondary schools - even though their ages on entry to Kindergarten or Lower Grade I were demonstrably lower than of those admitted to Grade I in non-infant schools, hence cancelling-out the six or twelve month difference in the length of their early schooling. When ultimately the central administration was persuaded to seek a permanent end to the discrepancies in student promotion rates from school to school, the findings of the Bean Inquiry and the Departmental Research Officer were both influential in reformulating official policy: the first in reinforcing the need to provide sufficient flexibility for children's individual differences to be accommodated; the second by highlighting the need for greater uniformity in organisational practice such that the period children spent in junior primary grades was no longer dependent on which school they attended. It was with all the foregoing considerations in mind, then, that the bureaucracy stood poised at the onset of a new decade to further amend Circular 43 and thereby establish two years as the 'normal' period in infant classes for children starting school in February.

CHAPTER 7

ALL TOGETHER NOW: STANDARDISING THE PATTERN OF STUDENT PROGRESS THROUGH THE JUNIOR PRIMARY GRADES, 1960s-1980s

INTRODUCTION

Policy makers are frequently charged with adopting an a-historical approach to defining current educational problems and to the formulation of solutions. By the same token, as Harold Silver points out, historians of education have generally been reluctant to engage in interpretation of the recent past in order to contribute to informed policy discussion. Whilst similarly conscious of the dangers of 'presentism' in educational history writing, David Tyack has nonetheless argued in support of Silver's views that

> by subjecting the timing and definition of 'problems' to closer analysis and by trying to gauge the trajectory of events against a longer and richer background than is customarily the case in policy analysis ... historians can call attention to underlying structural issues which in turn helps to determine a more effective policy than accepting current terms of debate as controlling.[1]

Such has been a prime intent of the thesis, not least in this final chapter's analysis of the history and politics of post-1960 reforms in Departmental policy and administrative practice governing the length of children's infant school experience.

Whether the 'normal' period of junior primary instruction be two years in accordance with the new directive gazetted in November 1961, or three years as designated by the 1984 *Early Years of School* policy, the result was arguably the same: by so standardising the pattern of student progress through the infant course the use of chronological age as the dominant principle of graded classroom organisation received a decisive boost. Of course the policy changes upon which this chapter focuses did not go uncontested. Nor did they function independently of other developments in social and organisational practice with respect to young children's attendance at South Australian goverment schools. The tightening of the age-grade structure that

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[1] H. Silver, Education as History. Interpreting 19th and 20th century education, London: Methuen, 1983, Foreword by David Tyack, pp. x-xi

was consequent upon the specification of a standard period of infant schooling needs to be considered in conjunction with the progressive narrowing in the range of children's school commencing ages over the twentieth century, and the 1970s' move to more frequent admission times which assisted in this process. Significant, too, are the bureaucratic initiatives which, in response to quantitative and ideological representations of 'the retardation problem' during the 1940s, contributed to the elimination of much 'over-ageness for grade'.

To further understand how the now seemingly indestructible edifice of age-grading was gradually erected, account must be taken of the ways challenges to it (as posed by alternative models of classroom organisation, teaching and pupil advancement) were either accommodated or marginalised. Additionally, within the broader context of separate and differentiated educational provision for infants, but especially the 'organisation-break' at the point of transition from junior to upper-primary schooling, it is salient to note the attempts made to articulate more closely the two stages of elementary instruction so that children's 'orderly' peer-grouped progress from grade to grade would not be impeded. Next, the 1961 amendment to Circular 43, providing for a two-year infant course for the majority of children, is only explicable in relation to previous debates over the time pupils took to reach Grade III. In turn, the replacement of this directive by the *Early Years of School* policy requires cognisance of the different set of underlying concerns which emerged in radically-changed historical circumstances to influence the Department's determination upon a three-year stay in infant grades.

Thus, against the "longer and richer background" of post-war educational discourse and reform in schooling structure and provision detailed in preceding pages of the thesis, this chapter discusses how the South Australian Education Department resolved the 'length of infant schooling' question to thereby consolidate earlier gains in its quest for a perfect age-grade fit. In analysing the associated politics of change during the period 1960-1990, it is noted that the 1970s ushered in a new approach to educational policy formation and implementation - and that the *Early Years of School* policy was the first to be developed in accordance with it. In addition to examining the decision-making, justificatory and administrative processes involved,

consideration is given to the interests and purposes served by this policy's provisions, following which their impact on organisational practice and children's experience of the first years at primary school is reviewed.

"ALL OF THESE SUGGESTIONS FOR TWO YEARS ONLY IN THE INFANT SCHOOL PRACTICALLY MEAN PROMOTION BY AGE": THE 1961 REVISION OF CIRCULAR 43

To allay persistent criticism of the variable length of time children spent in doing the work of Grade I and II, and to avoid any repetition of the 'Forbes incident' (as referred to in the previous chapter), in February 1960 the Superintendent of Primary Schools, A. G. Paull, recommended substantial changes to the circular governing promotions from the infant school to Grade III.[2] Subsequently furnishing the latest statistics on 'retardation' in infant schools[3] to bolster the case for issuing a more positive statement of what the Department required to be regarded as the normal period of junior primary schooling, the Research Officer (A. C. Hitchcox) submitted a draft version whose wording was adopted *in toto* and published as E.D. Circular No. 47 in November 1961. It read:

> The Infant Schools are organised a basis of five 'half-grades' - Kindergarten, Grade Lower I, Grade Upper I, Grade Lower II, Grade Upper II - the whole course thus being designed to take 2½ years. The organisation, however, is not a rigid one. It is suficiently flexible for children who have adequate ability to skip a half-grade, or for groups of children to take less than a half-year for the work of a half-grade.
>
> Children who commence school in July are able to proceed through the whole of the five half-grades and are normally promoted to Grade III after 2½ years at the Infant School. Those who have exceptionally high capacity may be promoted to Grade III after only 1½ years at the Infant School.
>
> Children who commence school in February at the age of 5½ years or more should be put into Grade Lower I and thus should normally be ready for promotion to Grade III two years later. Children less than 5½ years old should be put into Kindergarten, and, **for those who have ordinary capacity - i.e., the majority - the flexibility of the organisation of the half-grades should be invoked to enable them to be promoted to Grade III two years later. It should be clearly understood that only those few children who have less than ordinary capacity and those whose progress has**

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[2] Superintendent of Primary Schools' handwritten note on his draft (for discussion purposes): E.D. Circular No. 43 - Promotion of children from the I. S. to Gr.III, 24 February 1960, PRO, GRS 809/001/P, Box 67 - E.D. 16/2/1

[3] Hitchcox's analysis of the 1959 Infant School returns revealed that a disturbingly high 48% of February-enrolled children and 16% of July entrants had spent 3+ years in K- II classes before promotion to Grade III. See Research Officer to Director of Education, Percentages of children promoted to Grade III, 30 March 1960, E.D. 16/2/1

> **been retarded by poor health, long absence, or some other special cause should be required to spend three years at the Infant School.**[4] [original emphasis]

The Director of Education, E. Mander-Jones, made plain reference to the underlying intent here: "to emphasise more forcibly than has been done already the importance of promoting children after 2 years if they start in January, and 2$^{1}/_{2}$ years if they start in July". He suggested that this might be furthered by requiring headmistresses to submit for approval a schedule showing the names of any pupils not so recommended for promotion.[5] As for the restructuring of grades deemed necessary to align promotion practice in infant schools with that in non-infant schools, he sought advice on several possible courses of action: i) adopting Westgarth's proposal of four 6-monthly periods (i.e., no Kindergarten); ii) providing for two 'normal' grades (i.e., Grade I and II with no sub-divisions, as in 'ordinary' primary schools); iii) instituting five 4-monthly periods; or iv) five periods of unequal length. In addition, Mander-Jones indicated, the mid-year intake could be abolished.[6]

Faced with such evident resolve to "reduce the work of the Infant Schools to a regimented pattern", infant specialists were essentially limited to choosing the least worse of these options and arguing for a delay in gazetting the revised instructions on the grounds that concomitant changes in the Grade I and II syllabus were still under discussion, more time was needed to report on the results of trialling the proposed promotion scheme, 'readiness' work in South Australia remained at the experimental stage, and headmistresses had not yet been given an opportunity to state their case.[7] Moreover, they urged, before moving to reorganise infant schools on the basis of an unfounded belief that existing arrangements were responsible for an

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[4] Research Officer's draft, March 1960, E.D. 16/2/1. See also 'E.D. Circular No.47 (Previously No. 43). Promotion of children from the infant school to Grade III', EG Supplement to vol. 77, November 1961

[5] Memorandum to Superintendent of Primary Schools: Retardation in Infant Departments, 3 May 1960, E.D. 16/2/1

[6] This list of 'possibilities' was recorded in the "For Office Use Only. Action Taken" column on p. 1 of the letter by W. T. Westgarth, Administration - Organisation of Infant Schools, 2 December 1959, E.D. 16/2/1

[7] R. M. Naughton (Inspector of Infant Schools) to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Promotions in infant schools, 6 June 1960; Comments re. Circular 43 - Research Officer's suggested revision, 11 May 1960, E.D. 16/2/1

unacceptably high degree of retardation, steps should be taken to implement the Senior Psychologist's recommendation of further research.

Indeed, Miss Inspector Sando contested the need for a regulatory circular at all, since pupil classification and promotion were matters on which head teachers should continue to use their own initiative. Likewise concerned "to preserve the educational achievements which marked the Infant Schools while Infant Mistresses were entrusted with the organisation and promotions within their own sphere", Miss Inspector Naughton submitted that headmistresses would interpret the proposed amendments to Circular 43 as a vote of no confidence in their judgement or an official censure on the work of infant departments.[8] Did the Department consider the infant school system a failure?, she asked. If so, this was to gainsay not only these schools' historical *raison d'être* and their acclamation by the Bean Committee of Inquiry, but also the untiring and loyal service of infant mistresses which had enabled their aims and ideals to survive thus far.

Support for retention of the *status quo* was adduced, too, from the 1957 ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) investigation, which concluded that current practice in South Australia "best combines the desirability of individual progress with the limitations imposed by school organisation, class grouping and annual promotion out of the infants' grades to the primary school".[9] Further, opposition was expressed to the use of chronological age in combination with time from entry to infant school as the sole criterion for making promotions to Grade III. This system, the recently-appointed Assistant Superintendent - Infant Schools (Marjory Mead) reported, "seems to be causing more than a little difficulty in England at the present time".[10] To take no account of children's readiness for formal work, social maturity or mental ability, added Miss Naughton, was to turn the clock back forty years.

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[8] R. M. Naughton, Promotions in infant schools, p. 2

[9] The Early Years. A summary of an enquiry into age of admission, classification and promotion practices in Australian primary schools, Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1957, p. 14. Quoted by Miss M. Mead (Assistant Superintendent - Infant Schools) in Memorandum to Superintendent of Primary Schools, Comment on Mr Westgarth's letter of 2/12/59, 18 August 1960, E.D. 16/2/1

[10] M. Mead to Superintendendent of Primary Schools, ibid, p. 4

Notwithstanding their attempt to stave off the inevitable by arguing along these lines, Mead and the infant inspectorate gave "the most careful and urgent thought" to the Director's suggestions as to how the flexibility of the half-grades in infant schools could be invoked so that under-$5^1/_2$ year olds might spend only two years before promotion to the primary school. Adamant that this cohort required a preliminary period of "settling in to school life", they firmly rejected the first two possibilities which made no provision for a Kindergarten class. The third alternative (five 4-monthly periods) was considered "rather awkward" to arrange, whilst abolition of the July intake would be "deeply regretted" for reasons outlined in a separate memorandum. It was with "extreme reluctance", then, that Mead endorsed the remaining option (five periods of unequal length) as "the best solution". This, she detailed, meant that the youngest children would proceed through three periods (Kindergarten, Lower and Upper I) in their first year and two periods (Lower and Upper II) in the second. To suit this arrangement, she continued, a new first-year syllabus would need to be devised.[11] In otherwise supporting Mead's recommended promotion scheme, Superintendent Paull thought it inadvisable to plan a special Grade I course for infant schools when the various subject sub-committees currently revising the primary curriculum were well advanced in their work. Rather, minor adjustments could be made to enable most February beginners to cover the Grade I and II content in two years, whilst simultaneously allowing for a brief Kindergarten period.[12]

With the implementation of E. D. Circular No. 47 duly proceeding on this basis, accompanied by a 'request' that infant mistresses and inspectors "supervise very carefully the children's progress in order to ensure that no child spent longer time than necessary in the Infant School", in 1964 the Director of Education happily reported that the numbers staying in excess of 'normal periods' had appreciably decreased to less than ten percent.[13] Parents, however,

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[11] ibid, pp. 3-4. See also the cover note attached to this memorandum.

[12] Superintendent of Primary Schools to Director of Education, Organisation of Infant Schools, 30 August 1960, E.D. 16/2/1

[13] L. Dodd (for the Superintendent of Primary Schools) to Director of Education, Time spent by children in Infant School grades, 19 August 1964; Director of Education to C. W. Reed (Hon. Secretary, SA Public School Committees Association), 4 September 1964, E.D. 32/14/26.
Note: According to the figures supplied to the Director, the proportion of children spending three years in an infant school before promotion to Grade III in December 1960 was 24%, declining to 17% in 1961, 15% in 1962 and 10% in 1963.

displayed mixed reactions to the 1961 instructions. "Indignant Mum" complained that children 'pushed through' in two years would move into Grade III lacking six to twelve months' experience. As "Worried Mum" expanded in reference to her own daughter:

> What can happen? With no help at home, she may go up anyway, and be struggling with her work. She may fail, and be left behind, while all her friends go up. Or, she may worry so much that it finally becomes a fight to get her to school. Very few, with only two years' infant school, are ready for Grade III. Without a good grounding they could fail in Grades III, IV and V, and what a complex that could cause.[14]

In contrast to the signatories "Three R's" and "Keep Moving", who respectively characterised the same additional six to twelve month period as "forcible retardation" by "elderly spinsters" and as "wasted time on play", several others wrote in praise of the former opportunity for children to spend three years under the tuition of "wonderful, devoted women".[15] Infant schools' much wider program compared to that in non-infant schools, use of more progressive methods of educating the whole child, and the attention paid to children's individual development when making promotions were all at risk under the new circular, they contended.

If more of these correspondents than not lamented the curtailment of children's infant school experience which Circular 47 dictated, particularly with regard to February entrants' time in Kindergarten, the abolition of the system of half-grades and associated half-yearly promotions in 1964 reinforced the stricter age-based pattern of student progress that followed. The ACER's 1965 study of primary school organisation and promotion policies confirmed the changed situation in South Australian schools (with and without separate institutional provision for infants):

> Mid-year entrants are placed in preparatory classes [for six months]; and February entrants spend about six weeks in a preparatory class, before proceeding to Grade 1 (and to Grade 2 the next year). Most February entrants spend 2 years, and most mid-year entrants, 2½ years, in infants' classes.
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> Table 1 [extract]: Average age of new-year beginners on entry to Grades 1 - 3, 1965
> Grade 1: 5 yrs.7m. Grade 2: 6 yrs.8 m. Grade 3: 7 yrs. 9 m.[16]

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14 'Letter to the Editor - School worry', News, 8 November 1961

15 Letters to the Editor, Advertiser, 16, 18, 19 and 23 September 1963

16 Report prepared at the request of the Australian College of Education by the Australian Council for Educational Research, Variation in Australian Education [Some interstate differences in practices and organisation

Not surprisingly, warnings about the dangers attendant upon such 'over-acceleration' (notably of the less able or so-called non-academic child) in the crucial first years of primary schooling increased. So did concern that now teachers were "forced by circumstance to promote children virtually by age", it was less possible to obscure the relevance of a wide range of attainment in any one grade - nor to ignore the estimated 30% of pupils entering secondary schools who had "already shown they are incapable of proceeding through the syllabus at the normal tempo".[17] This trend, commented a guest speaker at the 1962 Annual SAIT (South Australian Institute of Teachers) Conference, made some form of grouping or separation on ability essential "if the problem of the primary school poor becoming even poorer in secondary schools is to be halted".[18] Yet as infant specialists and their supporters continued to argue, in a context where promotion by age had resulted in failure and consequent grade repetition occurring more rarely, the 'problem of attainment levels' was equally resolvable by laying the foundations of children's future education soundly - and this meant not unduly hurrying them through the early years of schooling in the way Circular 47 insisted. In the short-term, though, the tension between age and attainment standards that was exacerbated by the recently-imposed norm of 2 - $2^1/_2$ years' junior primary instruction lapsed from official view: from the mid-1960s a more general renovation of state schooling and the teaching force was underway with the aid of increased government funds.

FROM KARMEL TO KEEVES:
FORWARD TO THE PAST, BACKWARDS TO THE FUTURE

The issue of age grading and its concomitant, social progression through the junior/primary course, was re-visited by both the Karmel and Keeves Committees of Enquiry into the State's education system but with markedly different implications for the length and organisation of infant schooling. In the midst of the 'Dunstan decade' of liberal reform in South Australia, the

in Australian education with particular reference to transfer during primary and secondary schooling], Carlton (Victoria), February 1966, p. 11

[17] E. D. Lasscock (Assistant Chief Psychologist), 'Changes in the ranges of ability and attainment of students entering Departmental secondary schools', EG (S A), 81:945, 1 October 1965, p. 326; A. Brown, 'The education of the non-academic child' (Transcript of address to the Annual SAIT Conference), SA Teachers' Journal, 12:15, June 1962, p. 12

[18] A. Brown, ibid

1969-70 Committee chaired by Professor Peter Karmel advocated an approach which ceased to classify children according to grade levels and allowed for continuous progress:

> Class organisation which advances each child in basic skills at his individual rate rather than attempting to teach the whole group at what is regarded as a grade norm is better able to cope with differences, including slight or considerable differences in chronological age. Within broad limits it makes age irrelevant.[19]

Vertical grouping (i.e., where 5 - 8 year olds are taught in the same class) was thus endorsed as a means of encouraging individualised instruction. But a continuing obstacle to further reform of primary education was identified: the single point of entry to Grade 3 and, in schools with separate provision for infants, an 'organisation-break' at the end of Grade 2.

As the Bean Committee had found, a generally-held expectation that all children would have reached a particular standard on completion of Grade 2 conflicted with the fact that any cohort beginning Grade 3 "will vary in their speed of, and capacity for, learning as well as in age and period of school experience".[20] Like its predecessor, the Karmel Committee refrained from any real criticism of the system of annual promotion to Grade 3 - proposing instead that greater integration could be achieved between junior and upper primary grades by a record of pupils' attainment in basic skills accompanying them when transferring to 'primary school proper'. Additionally, members considered that the aforementioned organisation-break in larger schools should gradually be eliminated. Such a move was strongly opposed by witnesses who feared that the benefits of informal methods as appropriate to young children's learning would be lost. For female teachers, a corresponding decrease in opportunities for promotion to the position of headmistress (and, from 1972, that of Deputy Principal), which the establishment of separate infant schools had afforded, was another ground for resistance. Notably, these same interests were to underpin submissions to the Keeves Enquiry a decade later, and also the Education Department's subsequent initiative to provide three years' junior primary schooling for all.

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[19] Committee of Enquiry into Education 1969-70 (Chairman: Professor Peter Karmel, Vice-Chancellor, Flinders University of S.A.), Education in South Australia [Hereafter cited as Karmel Report], Adelaide, February 1971, p. 173

[20] ibid, p. 174

In further reference to the issue of variations in children's infant school experience, the Karmel Committee noted that the majority of pupils were admitted to Grade 3 after two or two and a half years in Preparatory-Grade 2 classes, depending on whether they commenced school in February or July, but argued that since children were not all born on the same day there was no simple way to provide a common period in order for a certain minimum standard to be reached at the point of transition to the primary division.[21] Having conceptualised the basic concern in terms of the 'birthdate effect', the Committee proceeded to focus on more flexible school entry arrangements - a matter on which the Director of Education had recently called for wide discussion among parents and teachers. As Chapter 3 details, the Education Department acted swiftly to adopt the Karmel Report's recommendation that continuous admission of five year olds be phased in, accompanied by support for the individualised teaching methods which such an arrangement was seen to require at all primary levels. The trend towards more frequent times for entry to school, it is pertinent to recall, functioned to reduce the range in children's commencing ages. That school beginners should normally then proceed through the junior primary grades in two years was re-confirmed by the statement on pupil classification and promotion at the end of the directive which replaced Circular 47 in mid-1979:

> Children admitted at age five shall be regarded initially as Reception enrolments, except that such children admitted at the beginning of the year may be regarded as Year 1 enrolments. Only in exceptional circumstances should children admitted at age five spend less than two years in Reception to Year 2. No child, at whatever age admitted, shall spend more than three years in Reception to Year 2 without referral to a guidance officer.[22]

Schooling practice in regard to these provisions, however, was shortly to become a focus of criticism by the Keeves Committee of Enquiry, whose recommendations on junior primary education provided the impetus for the most recent changes in the age-grade structure of South Australian government schools.

The 'quality review' of education in South Australia by the Keeves Committee, which tabled its final report in January 1982, was undertaken in a context of "strong dissatisfaction ...

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[21] ibid, p. 172. Note: Kindergarten was re-named Preparatory in 1968, then Reception in 1975.

[22] 'E. D. 8/2/3. Policy on admission of children aged five years', EG (SA), 7:23, 25 July 1979, p. 525

associated with what is seen to be a failure of educational services to yield benefits that are commensurate with the high level of financial resources that they consume".[23] In responding to allied conservative critiques of academic standards, especially university opinion that low attainment levels in certain subjects (e.g., Physics and Chemistry) were related to the immaturity of students proceeding straight from Year 12 to tertiary institutions, the Committee attributed inadequacies to the conjoint operation of admission, classification and promotion procedures in the first years of schooling:

> There is some evidence to suggest that standards at all levels of schooling are below what they might be because of the policies that have gradually evolved in South Australia of early entry into junior primary classes, accelerated promotion through the Reception Grade, and the elimination or decline of the practice of requiring students to repeat a grade if they are not coping with the work presented.[24]

Comparative statistics presented in the Final Keeves Report revealed that despite the fact that children entered school at about the same age in 1979 as in 1964, the average ages of Year 6 and 7 pupils had gone down by six months over this fifteen year period. Moreover, South Australia had the lowest average age at each year level of any State.[25] The Report also cited a 1981 Departmental survey which indicated that while very few children took less than two years to complete the junior primary course, 39% spent this optimum period as delineated in the 1979 instructions, and a further 14% (who enrolled in third term) spent only one term extra.[26] In relation to these percentages, it was observed that, as a result of "considerable pressure" to promote children to Year 3 after two years, time in Reception had commonly been restricted to no more than a term for those five-year-olds who began at school in Term 1 or Term 3, whilst February entrants could be admitted directly to a Year 1 class.

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[23] Committee of Enquiry into Education (Chairman: Dr J. P. Keeves, Director, Australian Council for Educational Research), Education and Change in South Australia [hereafter cited as Final Keeves Report], Adelaide, January 1982, p. 15

[24] ibid, p. 93

[25] See 'Table 6.1. Average age by year of school in government schools in Australia, 1964 and 1979', ibid, p. 89

[26] See 'Table 6.3. Length of time spent in Junior Primary grades in South Australian government schools', ibid, p. 92

It was acknowledged that with the now very high participation rate of three and four year-olds in early childhood programs in South Australian government schools (33% and 90% respectively in 1979)[27], familiarisation with schooling was of less consequence than formerly when widespread opportunities to attend pre-school did not exist. Irrespective, and having affirmed elsewhere in its report the educational benefits of the more activity-oriented, individualised instruction characteristic of junior primary schools, the Keeves Committee argued that more than half the children were clearly being denied the chance "to experience the less formal learning that can occur in the Reception Grade".[28] These children were therefore more likely to require remedial help in either Year 2 or Year 3 classes, members were informed. When considered in conjunction with the decline of grade-repetition practices, the Committee reasoned, "premature advancement " to the primary section without a thorough preparation for the work surely rendered many in similar need at upper primary and secondary level.[29]

At this point, a quantum leap was made to assert a link between the changes described in the age-grade profile of the primary school and a lowering of standards at every stage of education. According to the Final Report, though, the solution did not lie in the removal of existing 'flexible provision' by re-introducing a lock-step system of rigid grade-based curricula (although arguably this was to prove the effect of implementing its recommendations). Rather, it lay in giving "greater recognition" to the work of the Reception Grade, thereby making it the exception to progress through R-2 classes in less than three years, and in requiring junior primary teachers to provide evidence of a higher level of performance on the curriculum. Subsequently, the Year 3-7 course would have to be re-organised "to permit a gradual raising of standards for all students" and, in the short-term, given the time-scale entailed in these reforms working up through the now-proposed thirteen years of schooling, students not coping adequately with the work of any grade should be encouraged to repeat a year.[30]

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[27] See 'Table 6.2. Participation rates in E.C.E. programs at schools in several Australian states for ages 3 to 5 years in 1979', ibid, p. 90

[28] Final Keeves Report, p. 91

[29] ibid, pp. 92-93

[30] ibid, pp. 93-94

These recommendations were not just intended, as the proffered rationale suggests, to raise standards in each successive grade so that the government school system was not left vulnerable in competition with the private school sector. The definition of Reception as an additional year level in order to increase average grade-ages may also be seen as serving, at least partially, to resolve a range of other 'problems' which the Final Keeves Report highlighted - social, politico-economic and demographic as well as educational. Regarding criticism of students' immaturity on entering tertiary courses, the Keeves proposal would achieve the same purpose as the solution advocated by witnesses from the higher education sector: to add a year to the terminal stage of schooling so South Australia might be brought into line with Victoria and New South Wales where students were approximately eight months older on completion of Year 12. In favouring the alternative of lengthening the period of junior primary schooling, the Keeves Committee was no doubt mindful of previously failed arguments to extend (as opposed to strengthening or diversifying) secondary school provision, whereas the educational benefits of three years in infant classes could be more readily justified by drawing on conventional early childhood rhetoric about the first years of schooling providing a foundation for all future learning.

Any lengthening of the period of school attendance would also assist, albeit indirectly, to redress the problem of a very high unemployment rate among South Australian youth up to the age of nineteen, as identified in the Committee's review of those 'critical issues' which had emerged from the first stage of its enquiry. The Final Keeves Report noted that this problem had become particularly serious with the onset of economic recession in 1975, was apparently continuing to increase, and "could allow divisions to grow that might in the long term lead to a serious breakdown in our society".[31] To add a year to the initial stage of instruction would *de facto* raise the school leaving age and defer for twelve months the impact of school leavers on a depressed youth labour market, while the retention of students for longer in the more disciplined atmosphere of the school would address the social problem of youth law and order associated with high levels of unemployment.

[31] ibid, pp. 12-13

Another 'critical issue' with which the Keeves Committee was confronted at a time of substantially reduced funding for public education was the significant downward trend in primary school enrolments since 1971, and at the secondary school level since 1975, as a consequence of declining fertility rates, changing patterns of internal migration and a slowing down of projected increases in school retention rates. In expectation of this trend continuing, the Committee was concerned about SAIT pressure for funding to maintain staffing levels, but observed that if children were to spend more time in junior primary classes as recommended, which might in turn contribute to a rise in secondary school retention rates and raise educational standards throughout the system, this expenditure would be justifiable.[32] On this issue, it is noteworthy that the employment interests of teachers would be served by the necessity to retain (if not increase) staffing levels to accommodate the extra time in Reception for approximately fifty percent of pupils - a factor which clearly aided in their support for the *Early Years of School* policy that was formulated in response to the Keeves recommendations.

"THE SPENDING OF THREE YEARS AT THE JUNIOR PRIMARY STAGE OF SCHOOLING SHOULD BECOME THE NORMAL PRACTICE": DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES OF THE 1984 EARLY YEARS OF SCHOOL POLICY

The Education Department's decision to act upon the Keeves recommendations on re-structuring the first years of schooling, when it otherwise ignored the Final Report as a basis for its planning in the 1980s, was undoubtedly influenced by continued pressure from the junior primary lobby - notably the Junior Primary Principals' Association (JPPA)[33] and the Professional Association of Childhood Educators (PACE), whose views shaped the policy development paper produced in 1983 by the Early Childhood Section of the Curriculum Directorate. This document, which formed the basis for discussion and implementation of new provisions at junior primary level, drew on a significant body of research evidence (previously submitted to the Keeves Enquiry) that supported an age standard of 8+ years for transition to

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[32] ibid, pp. 13-14

[33] The JPPA succeeded the Infant Mistresses' Association as the main organisation representing the professional interests of currently-employed infant school head teachers. 'The old guard' formed the Retired Infant Mistresses' Club, whose function was predominantly social. Its members' connections within and outside the Education Department were nonetheless drawn upon when occasion arose.

Year 3.[34] In particular, it echoed the link claimed in the Keeves Report between insufficient early school experience and later remediation to argue that:

> Although the relationship between age and school achievement is not a direct one ... [and] the differences are not easily measured, experience indicates that many children who have more than six terms in junior primary education gain from the opportunity to consolidate their early learning and are more likely to have successful school experiences in subsequent years.[35]

Accordingly, *Policy Development Paper No. 1 - The Early Years of School* proposed that in future it be "ordinary practice" in government schools for children to spend between seven and ten terms in junior primary classes instead of the current six (and in some instances, less) to eight. This would not mean an additional year of junior primary education for every child, the Paper stated, but three years' experience would be provided generally for the substantial number enrolling in February at age five, who at present made the transition to Year 3 soon after their seventh birthday. As a consequence, "the great deal of concern for children entering Year 4 at barely age 8 and so on to Year 12 at barely age 16, and the workforce or tertiary institutions at barely age 17" would be alleviated.[36]

To accommodate the continuous admission policy and retain flexibility with respect to individual differences, it was planned that children enrolled at the start of the year would normally spend nine terms (i.e., three calendar years) in junior primary classes; those admitted in second term, eight terms; and third term entrants, seven or ten terms depending on "individual development, competence and maturity". Children with 'exceptional abilities' (taking into account social and emotional development) might proceed to Year 3 after completing six terms; some at the other end of the spectrum should be permitted to spend more than ten terms. Decisions about the progress of particular children, it was envisaged, would result from "regular consultation and negotiation" between parents, teachers and principals.

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[34] See Submission to the Keeves Committee of Enquiry into Education in S.A. by the Professional Association of Childhood Educators, Part II - Research statements, pp. 2-3; Submission by the staff, Belair Junior Primary School: The length of time spent in Junior Primary school, Section 2 - Evidence of children's progress through Belair J. P. S. and Section 3 - Findings from outside this school, JPPA archival files, Forbes J. P. S.

[35] Education Department of SA, Policy Development Paper No.1 - The Early Years of School, 1983, p. 8

[36] Coralie A. Kappe (President, Junior Primary Principals' Association), JPPA response to the Keeves Report: Early Childhood Education, undated, JPPA archival files. Note: The points covered in this paper bear a close relationship to those in the 1983 policy development paper.

Unstated in the document, yet clearly at the basis of these provisions when viewed from an historical perspective, was infant specialists' emphasis on the importance of a kindergarten period which had constituted the main argument in defence of headmistresses' three-year policy during the 1940s and 50s. Lengthening the 'normal' time in junior grades by expanding the preparatory course to occupy a full year for February entrants, and one to four terms for beginners enrolled in Term 2 or 3, would formally (if belatedly) vindicate their stance.

After outlining what the new policy would imply for schools, the Paper addressed a series of "allied issues": the distinguishing characteristics of early childhood education, curriculum development, leadership and support for teachers of young children, and teacher education for the early childhood years (defined as covering the age range from birth to eight). That these issues were in fact central to the interests of junior primary educators struggling to preserve the independent status and distinctive ethos of infant schools within the primary system, not to mention promotion prospects for the overwhelmingly female teaching force in these schools, is most directly apparent in two proposals advanced in this section of the Paper. First, that in developing staffing policies attention should be given to ensuring curriculum leadership for **all** teachers of junior primary classes (i.e., including those in R-7 primary schools and area schools where the background of principals and deputy principals generally lay in upper primary or secondary education). Second, that junior primary schools be retained or established "where enrolments, the complexity of the school's adminstration and community need justify separate administration".[37]

With respect to the politics of the proposed reform, Maurice Kogan makes the point that:

> We cannot consider the ways in which society provides education without involving the perennial issues of political philosophy: who will decide on behalf of society what collective action shall be taken, how the power of the decision-maker is made legitimate, and how far decisions are democratically made.[38]

An examination of these 'perennial issues' with reference to public education in South Australia since the early 1970s reveals that while the Education Department had administratively de-

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[37] Policy Development Paper No.1, p. 16

[38] M. Kogan, The Politics of Educational Change, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1978, p. 12

centralised, adopted 'democratic leadership styles' and introduced 'participatory' structures and procedures, centrally-located decisional authority nonetheless prevailed. The dissemination of the *Early Years of School* policy development paper, the first such to be issued in accordance with a Government undertaking to consult with the wider community on matters of educational policy, illustrates particularly well the Department's move from imposition by administrative fiat to a consensus model of decision-making within a centrally-determined framework in its management of educational change. Moreover, the employment of a 'consensus' model of change in the 1980s proved much more successful in securing compliance to the new norm of three years of junior primary schooling than was the case several decades earlier when infant mistresses ignored strictures that February-enrolled children spend two years in junior grades.

Support for the changes entailed in the Early Years of School policy was gained through the use of four main strategies. First, by adopting consultative procedures but restricting the terms of debate to philosophical issues in early childhood education. Second, by selecting out those views expressed in response to the Development Paper which agreed with the official representation of the issues and acting on those which either coincided with extant plans or involved only minor amendment to the policy. Third, by addressing practical concerns and hence defusing the source of actual or potential opposition through exceptionally thorough guidelines and inservicing at all levels of the education system while simultaneously providing information and counselling for parents. Fourth, by emphasising the themes of 'learning theory, the child and curriculum content' in promoting and implementing the new policy to obscure what in fact was an administrative issue and a case of vested junior primary interests. Each of these strategies will be discussed in turn.

Seeking popular endorsement of the officially-sponsored alterations to schooling structure and provision, and with a view to schools having "a clear and agreed frame of reference on which to base a review of their own policies and practices in the area", the Minister of Education explained in justification of the wide circulation of *Policy Development Paper No. 1*: "there has been such widespread interest in the issues raised that I believe I must give the opportunity for

comment to those who wish to do so".[39] His use of the term "for comment", whilst engendering a sense of participation, nonetheless implies that the decision had already been made regarding the length of junior primary schooling. That this was indeed so, and what was primarily being sought was a common perception of what the change involved, is apparent from the introductory section of the document. Here the question "How long should children spend in junior primary classes?" was listed second among "a series of related questions" addressed in the Paper, to which respondents should presumably confine themselves:

- What are the features of junior primary education which distinguish those years from the later years of primary education?
- What approaches to curriculum development can be taken to ensure that the growth and development of young children are fostered and their subsequent experience in primary and secondary schooling is enhanced?
- What arrangements are needed to ensure that sufficient leadership and support are available for teachers of young children?
- What kinds of preservice and inservice preparation are needed for teachers of young children? [40]

An article in the Departmental publication *Pivot*, timed to coincide with the release of the policy development paper for public comment, confirmed that philosophical considerations were to be paramount in any ensuing debate. For example, teachers were encouraged to conduct their discussions in relation to the document *What do you believe? A challenge to teaching practices in early childhood education* - for this, it was asserted, "is a statement to which teachers of young children aspire".[41] The rhetoric employed in the development paper further served a crucial ideological function in promoting a view of the reformed first years of schooling in educational rather than administrative terms, and as primarily serving the child's interests. For instance, in discussing 'Important Concerns', some characteristics of the early childhood years were listed. These, it was stressed, must be taken into account if young children were to receive an 'appropriate' education. As the proffered rationale for extending the length of time many pupils would spend in junior primary classes elaborated:

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39 Policy Development Paper No. 1 - The Early Years of School, Introduction, p. 5; Minister of Education, 'Foreword', p. 3

40 ibid, p. 5

41 'Ministerial paper proposes major changes in junior primary policy', Pivot, 10:6, 1983, p. 5

> Because the early childhood years are particularly significant in laying the foundations for the child's continuing educational experience, it is important that during that time all children have the opportunity to gain as fully as possible from a learning environment which is appropriate to their stage of development and conducive to the development of a positive image of themselves in relation to their learning. Extra time in the early childhood environment of junior primary classes can allow children to participate more effectively in their own learning, reduce pressure on their teachers to force the pace of skills development and allowing [sic] them to proceed with greater confidence and maturity into the more formal context of the upper primary school.[42]

Copies of *Policy Development Paper No. 1* and accompanying interpretative guidelines[43] were disseminated in November 1983 to all Education Department, Catholic and Independent schools, kindergartens and pre-schools, tertiary institutions involved in teacher education, and relevant professional and parent associations, with an indication that individual or group submissions were to be forwarded to the Director-General by 2 May 1984. Notably, from amongst the 150 or so responses submitted, those issues raised which fell outside the 'official' terms of reference received no attention beyond listing them in a summary which was compiled for internal record-keeping.[44] 'Hard questions' dealt with in this way included whether the additional cost to the community of an extra year of education for 40% of the school population had been calculated, and if so was it acceptable? Where was the evidence (as opposed to anecdotes) of academic difficulties in later grades, and at university, allegedly related to insufficient junior primary experience? Was the critical feature that needed to be examined the total years of schooling or age of entry to school? (On this last issue, several respondents claimed that acceptance of five-year-olds as a matter of general policy had eroded parental responsibility and increased rather than decreased children's problems; hence the regulations should be altered so that no child under the age of six could be admitted.)

In contrast to the joint JPPA/PACE response, which reiterated every article of faith on early childhood education contained in the policy development paper and the Keeves Report before it, a number of penetrating comments centred on whether the proposals were largely advanced to

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[42] Policy Development Paper No. 1, pp. 8-9

[43] New policy on the Early Years of School - Interpreting the policy, First draft, 1983, Early Childhood Section, Curriculum Directorate, E.D. 16/8/11

[44] Concerns raised in response to the proposed policy The Early Years of School, Summary paper, 1984, E.D. 16/8/11

protect the interests of junior primary specialists. For example, in querying why children must spend more time in Reception rather than at any other year level (say, Year 4, 7, 8 or 12), critics opined that "attention focused on the junior primary area as the root cause of the alleged immaturity almost smacks of sleight of hand".[45] Allied criticism was expressed by primary school representatives in their objection to the document's repeated references to "junior primary" and "junior primary years" when the majority of children attended R-7 schools. Needless to say, such perceptions of preserving empire and ethos as an underlying intention of the new policy also received no publicity, but arguably influenced the Early Childhood Section's resolve to strengthen the 'correct view' through its subsequent promotion and implementation strategies.

The implications of increasing average grade-ages in relation to the compulsory leaving age and employment were a focal concern of other submissions. It was pointed out that under the new policy students could legally leave school at fifteen after completing Year 9 (i.e., with just two years of secondary education); that if they remained to Year 10 they might not obtain a job or apprenticeship because they had already turned sixteen; and that Year 12 students would have achieved adult status within the law. The increased ages of pupils at each year level, particularly at the various transition points in the current school structure, was also seen as problematic with respect to forms of discipline and instruction, curriculum content and resource materials.

Another major question raised was what the children spending a full year in Reception would do in the additional time. In this regard, one parent wrote:

> My very real concern is that [my own five year old son] will at some stage in these three years become bored, held back. Although I accept the genuine commitment of his present teacher to individual instruction, it would be naive of me to believe that there will not inevitably be a time at which classroom teaching will be more oriented to the class than to the individual. ...
> I can see no evidence that the curriculum changes that are required along the line as a result of ... this policy have either been initiated or investigated. What changes have been made to the syllabus of Grade II for example to cope with the fact that many children will have spent two years in school before advancing to that grade?[46]

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[45] ibid

[46] Mr P. Simpson to the Minister of Education, Letter re. Reception classes, 2 April 1982, E.D. 8/1/141

Further, he suggested, the "extremely unsettling and regressive effect" of continuous admission to Reception classes (whereby the older children were 'brought back' to some extent whilst teachers attended to new entrants each month) "would seem to diminish any value which the 'extra' year of school could be said to possess". Indeed, this father found the rationalisations advanced in the Keeves Report for reconstituting Reception as a year level to be "most unconvincing, and in some places quite flimsy".[47]

Next, the definition of a term in relation to the total number delineated for children admitted at different times of the year was seen as requiring clarification: "If a school has admission monthly or less, what proportion of a term, particularly in the case of an October or November entrant, constitutes a term? Does such a child normally complete 9.2 terms or 6.2 terms?"[48] Several submissions also directed attention to staffing implications "when 40 per cent of the usual or anticipated enrolment has been withheld at Reception level and created a loss of enrolment in each year level as that group passes through the system" or, conversely, as the 'bulge' of students so withheld subsequently progressed.[49] Yet other operational issues commented upon included the need for state-wide adoption of the policy (rather than phasing it in) to avoid competition between schools as a result of parents favouring the old or the new arrangements, and for reviewing the period during which the policy of early dismissal of five year olds would apply.[50]

Most of the remaining concerns centred on the flexibility or otherwise of the new provisions. The 'exceptional abilities' clause generated questions about the criteria to be used, how to avoid wide variations in interpreting these, who would initiate and make the assessment, at what point in the child's schooling would a decision be reached, and whether the concepts of 'failure' and

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[47] Concerns raised in response to the proposed policy The Early Years of School, Summary paper, 1984, E.D. 16/8/11

[48] ibid

[49] ibid

[50] Note: Regulation XXI (i) of August 1943 included provision for children under the age of six years to be dismissed before the time specified for the whole school (i.e., 4 p.m. or, in small country schools, with the Director of Education's special permission, 3.45 p.m.) Alternatively, extended periods of recess were allowed. See PRO, GRG 18/2/1439 - Regulations re. Primary School days and hours.

'staying down' would be revived by the policy. At a more general level, the proposed policy was challenged as being less flexible than the one it would replace:

> The existing policy has sufficient flexibility to allow both schools and parents to arrive at a mutually convenient admission date for a particular child - recognising that the age of compulsion is six. The new policy takes away some of the flexibility/choice/rights parents now have, forcing them to send children to school earlier than they intended to avoid admission in February and the probability of of an additional 3 terms. Country parents in particular withhold children from school beyond their fifth birthday for a variety of reasons, but did not then want the child to complete 9 terms.[51]

Moreover, as at least one critic argued, it was a contradiction to create a blanket rule of more time for all February-enrolled children if the system was claiming to cater for individual differences and allowing pupils to progress at their own rate. In addition, it was pointed out that under the new provisions a different group of children would be 'disadvantaged', viz, those completing only seven terms, having begun their schooling in third term.

While the more substantive of these concerns were neglected, the 'exceptional abilities' clause was amended to read:

> In exceptional cases the length of time that particular children will spend in junior primary classes may be varied through discussion between parents and teachers with advice from a guidance officer if appropriate.
> This might apply to children who have begun school close to six years of age, or to children with special social, emotional, physical or intellectual needs. Decisions, taking age and maturity into account with reference to departmental guidelines, may favour proceeding to Year 3 after completing only six terms of junior primary education or staying longer than ten terms.[52]

That this comprised the sole amendment accorded with the official summary of responses, which represented them as collectively having indicated "strong support" provided that there was a degree of flexibility in interpreting the policy to meet the needs of individual children. Principals were then instructed to read the new policy (gazetted in November 1984) in relation to the current policy on admission, and were advised that schools would be staffed from the beginning of the year on the basis of estimated enrolments as at 1 October.[53]

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[51] Concerns raised in response to the proposed policy The Early Years of School, Summary paper, 1984, E.D. 16/8/11

[52] 'New policy on the length of junior primary education', EG (SA), 12:34, 23 November 1984, p. 1048

[53] New policy on the Early Years at School - Interpreting the policy, Final draft, 1985, p. 2

In anticipation of the Early Years policy coming into effect on 1 January 1986, extensive Central and Area Office support was provided for its introduction. In the process, attention was again directed away from the structural nature of the reform. For example, a promotional article written for *Pivot* when the policy was announced reiterated the themes of 'learning theory, the child and curriculum content' whilst assuring teachers that the change was "not a dramatic innovation".[54] The Director-General of Education's Annual Report for three years in succession stated that the aim of additional time in junior primary classes was to enable teachers to provide appropriate learning opportunities for all children so they might acquire the skills, understanding and confidence necessary for future successful learning. Accordingly, the Department would furnish increased curriculum and methodology support to ensure effective implementation in 1986.[55] Further, the emphasis in *Policy Development Paper No. 1* on the unique characteristics of young children and their learning in the first years at school was reinforced in every centrally-produced document written in conjunction with the new policy during 1984-86: a brochure for use in enrolment discussions with parents of four and five year-old children, newsletters received by schools (e.g., 'Play and Early Childhood'), and explanatory material distributed to principals and teachers and as part of the resource package superintendents and advisors used in their work with schools. In-service workshops conducted at an Area level in the latter half of 1985 and in 1986 similarly focused on the implications of a developmental view of learning and current early childhood theory for classroom practice and curriculum re-organisation.

Regarding what children would learn during the extra year, teachers were referred to "the wealth of material contained in existing curriculum guidelines" and "a number of management/development models in use in schools which successfully organise content"; but more particularly to the Children's Learning Project, *What do you expect? Attitudes, skills and knowledge in the first year of school*, which the Early Childhood Curriculum Committee had

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[54] S. Sweetman, 'Implications for new Early Years at School policy', Pivot, 12:2, 1985, pp. 7-8

[55] Annual Reports of the Director-General of Education, SAPP, no. 44, 1984-85, p. 19; 1986, p. 10; 1986-87, p. 43

been developing.[56] For, in accordance with the official view that the task was "to restructure curriculum rather than inventing more", the process which this Project outlined would assist teachers to define both content and the means of assessing whether learning had occurred.[57] An introduction to the Project, together with an examination of appropriate learning processes and strategies (from which the question of content was seen to be inseparable), was therefore incorporated into the workshops held for junior and upper primary advisors and for JP teachers.

Practical considerations entailed in implementing the new policy were extensively addressed in the written guidelines issued to schools to assist them in developing their own policies on student admission and progression, and in preparing for the change. In addition to outlining the background to, and provisions of, the Early Years and related policies, these guidelines detailed the expected impact on schools R-12 and the factors to be taken into account in planning for curriculum review, staff development, budgeting for support materials, and with respect to parent communication and involvement. Administrative changes were also dealt with: transition arrangements from pre-school to school and from Year 2 to Year 3, dismissal times for five year olds, the organisation of classes, nomenclature (in referring now to Reception, not Year 1, as the first year of school), and interpretation of the flexibility clauses. Notably, in developing the impact statements and the list of administrative issues, as with their planning for inservice sessions, the co-ordinator and two project officers responsible for implementing the Early Years policy held discussions with Area personnel, schools, the ECE Curriculum Committee, the R-7 and 8-12 teams in the Curriculum Directorate, Colleges of Advanced Education, the Kindergarten Union, and parent and professional associations. The major concerns thereby identified, in common with those most frequently expressed in responses to the Policy Development Paper, were therefore able to be managed in the period leading up to and during the first year of the new policy's operation.

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[56] S. Sweetman, op cit, p. 8

[57] The length of Junior Primary education - Guidelines for schools relating to the policy, First draft for Principal Education Officers, 1984, E.D. 16/8/11

Thus, although implementation of the Early Years policy was mainly a school responsibility, the strategies outlined above secured both acceptance of what the change was about and conformity of practice such that the Director-General of Education was able to claim in his Annual Report for 1986: "The new policy was implemented in all schools, was favourably received, and is working smoothly".[58] Indeed, the evident success (at least from an official viewpoint) of this new style in the Department's management of educational change led to schools and their communities becoming inundated with 'approved documents' for information and critical comment: draft policy and curriculum statements, discussion papers, even administrative instructions and guidelines.[59] The number of these, which sometimes appeared in rapid succession, together with increasingly tight time-lines within which to respond, proved a further effective means of obtaining 'consensus' in decisions already made by central authorities.

The following review of outcomes is necessarily selective since the *Early Years of School* policy had only been operational for four years by 1990, and the changes entailed were yet to work up through the government school system. Much empirical research would need to be done to assess the full impact of the new provisions. Nonetheless, certain effects were immediately apparent and some speculation is possible on the basis of late 1980s' trends and more recent developments.

With respect to the Keeves Committee's aim of bringing the age-grade profile of South Australian students closer to that interstate, the Education Department's Statistical Unit noted in 1988:

> The policy has had a significant effect on retaining students in lower years of primary schooling, leading to a significant increase in the average age [of Year 1-3 pupils, by approximately five months] relative to the years prior to 1984. This phenomenon will have a significant effect on the Year 8 cohorts in 1992 and 1993, reducing them by about 1000 in each case on what they would have been if the

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[58] Annual Report of the Director-General of Education for 1986, SAPP, no. 44, 1986-87, p. 43

[59] For details and an accompanying rationale, see 'Dissemination of Approved Documents and changes to the Administrative Structures and Guidelines', EG (SA), 16:11, 6 May 1988, pp. 408-413

> policy had not been introduced, but the effect on Year 8 will have smoothed out by 1994.[60]

Teacher support for lengthening the period of infant schooling to three years, though, rapidly dissipated when initial gains in the number of full-time junior primary appointments to staff the extra time spent in Reception were eroded by the changed formula for 1990 'human resource allocation'. For, instead of staffing schools from the beginning of the year on the basis of estimated enrolments at 1 October, the new formula provided for the allocation of additional teachers at the beginning of Term 3 and 4 only (i.e., as Reception numbers increased).[61] On a related issue, with the introduction of a four-term school year and in accordance with the policy on admission of five year-olds, the option of enrolment in October had to be offered. However, since entry to school at this point was deemed not to qualify as a satisfactory proportion of the year, the amended Early Years policy of 1986 stated that it would be normal practice for October-enrolled children to spend the maximum of thirteen terms under the newly-interpreted arrangements.[62] Parents who wished to minimise the period their children spent in junior primary classes proved reluctant to embrace this course, and to that extent the need for additional staffing in Term 4 was correspondingly reduced.

The Early Years policy not only influenced parents' selection of a suitable starting date for their progeny but engendered other changes in children's experience of the first years at school. For example, the tradition of early dismissal of Reception classes for a period of time determined by the school ceased from the beginning of 1990 on the grounds that:

> About 90% of children now attend pre-school and many have attended child-care centres after school dismissal. The Early Years of Schooling policy is based on the understanding that teachers will provide an organisation, methods and resources that are flexible enough to cater for the learning needs of young children. It is now

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60 Summary of results of the age year census, June 1988, Information paper compiled by the Statistics Unit, Education Department of SA, November 1988, p. 1, E. D. 16/8/11

61 'New policy on the Early Years. Staffing arrangements', EG (SA), 12:3, 23 November 1984, pp. 1048-9; Education Department of SA, Circular to principals of all schools: Human resource allocation to schools - 1990, 2 October 1989, Appendix 2A, p. 2

62 'The First Years of School Policy - Length of time in junior primary classes in a four term year', EG (SA), 14:3, 6 June 1986, pp. 405-7

> inappropriate for early dismissal of five year olds to be regarded as standard procedure in school organisation.[63]

In addition, accelerated promotion became less common than in earlier times, for schools were warned that:

> With three years in junior primary classes as the norm ... promotion to Year 3 after two years will be seen as 'grade skipping' ... and should be treated with the same caution as it is in upper primary and secondary schooling.[64]

Furthermore, where school budgets did not permit the purchase of extra teaching/learning materials to cater for both the additional time in Reception and the greater maturity of Year 2 students, and to the extent that existing provision was simply stretched over a longer period for children enrolling in first term, many students' needs, abilities and interests were arguably not met. In turn, the question may be posed as to whether in fact academic standards had been raised in line with the Keeves Committee's intention. Finally, the smaller variations in the length of time pupils spent in junior primary classes and the narrowed age-range in each grade which were consequent upon the policy changes described above enhanced the likelihood of teaching to a grade norm - the very practice criticised by the Bean and Karmel Committees for the reason that individual differences are ignored.

Beyond the junior primary grades, the implications of the rise in average grade-ages were soon realised. In recognition of the fact that a greater proportion of the school population would be 13+ in Year 7 and thus "moving more towards adolescence", and that in most other States transfer to secondary education occurred at the end of Year 6, Taperoo High School began experimenting in 1990 with the inclusion of final-year primary students in secondary programs. Although the Adelaide Area Director of Education said in announcing the initiative that it "did not mean South Australian secondary schools were about to start at Year 7 instead of Year 8",[65] less than twelve months later a review of the 'quality of learning' in Years 8, 9 and 10

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[63] 'Early dismissal of five year old students', EG (SA), 17:17, June 1989, p. 719

[64] New policy on the Early Years of School - Interpreting the policy, Final draft, 1985, p. 11

[65] Brian Donaghy (Education writer), 'Revamp of S.A. schools hailed as exciting first', Advertiser, Wednesday 29 August 1990

commenced investigation of this very possibility.[66] The need to accommodate the adult status of a commensurately larger number of pupils who would be 18+ in Year 12 as a result of the Early Years policy no doubt influenced the Junior Secondary Review Committee to discuss a separate middle-school arrangement for Year 6-9 students. The corollary of senior secondary and adult re-entry colleges (so far limited to a few districts) is another potential feature of the restructured government school system if the weight of established primary and secondary traditions can be overcome. On a related point, with Reception having been defined as an additional year level and assuming a continuation of the 1980s trend towards increased retention rates in Years 10-12,[67] students staying on at school beyond the age of compulsion will not only be older than their peers prior to implementation of the Early Years policy, but economically dependent on the family for another twelve months. The impact on low-income families in particular should thus be a major consideration in any subsequent evaluation of the long-term effects of reorganising the first years of schooling.

CONCLUSION

An historical analysis of schooling structure and provision in South Australia since World War II, then, reveals some recurrent themes but also significant shifts in the language and terms of debate regarding the first years of schooling as the social, political and economic context changed. The progressive, child-centred rhetoric of the Bean and Karmel Reports became virtually incidental in the Keeves Report, having given way to the language of accountability with its emphasis on 'efficiency', 'effectiveness' and 'standards'. Criticism of primary schooling commonly focused on policy and practice governing the admission, classification and promotion of pupils in infant/junior primary classes and thence to Grade 3. But whereas the Bean and Karmel Committees viewed these essentially as producing inequities which greater provision for individual differences could redress, for the Keeves Committee their operation was an argument for a more standardised infant school experience. Although flexible arrangements were to some extent implemented, the policy reforms examined in this chapter

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[66] S. Raphael, 'Review to probe Year 6 changes', Advertiser, Tuesday 11 June 1991

[67] See Table 6: Apparent retention rates by year level, 1977-1988 in Summary of results of the age year census, June 1988, op cit

ultimately acted to tighten the age-grade structure in South Australian primary schools rather than rendering the school more responsive to the individual. Consequently, students progressed in more regular fashion through the work at each year level in groups characterised by a narrower range of ages than ever before, while a proportionately greater number of those who undertake a full secondary course will complete thirteen instead of twelve years of schooling.

In paying particular attention to the politics of the most recent policy change affecting children's progress through the junior primary grades, a diversity of underlying purposes and interests are discernible. Within the education bureaucracy, the initiative to adopt the Keeves recommendations on the first years of schooling stemmed from two main sources of pressure. First, adjustment of the age-grade profile by defining Reception as a year level, and subsequent moves to reorganise schooling around the transition point from primary to secondary education, aimed to align South Australia with interstate practice as part of the current push for a unified national system. Second, representatives of the junior primary lobby with personal and professional links to the Department's Early Childhood Section (whose responsibility it was to develop and support implementation of the 'three years of junior primary policy'), were concerned to protect infant school traditions as threatened by the rationalisation of services in response to declining enrolments and reduced funding for public education. The JPPA and PACE, especially, thus took advantage of the Education Department's new consultative procedures to play a significant role in formulating the *Early Years of School* policy as a key mechanism for retaining junior primary influence within the primary system.

Ministerial endorsement of the policy was unequivocal for several reasons. Criticism of declining educational standards in state schools and the immaturity of students upon leaving would be allayed by simultaneously extending the time spent in R-2 classes, restructuring curricula, discouraging the practice of accelerated promotion and encouraging grade repetition in relevant cases. The improvements in academic performance it was assumed would follow were seen to contribute to increasing secondary school retention rates, which in deferring the entry of school leavers to a depressed labour market would then fulfill a major aim of Federal and State youth policies. Indeed, the Government's concern over the prospect of a continuing

rise in in unemployment among 15-19 year-olds was allegedly the prime motive in its support for lengthening the period of school attendance. Moreover, focusing on the initial instead of the final year of schooling to accomplish this meant that the revisions could be justified in educational rather than politico-economic terms. Lastly, the sense of community participation in decision-making engendered by disseminating the Early Years policy development paper served to legitimate the centrally-determined reform of primary schooling. In more ways than one, therefore, 1980s' policy and practice in regard to student progress through the junior primary grades was a case of: "All together now ..."

CONCLUSION

This study of age-graded primary school organisation and its role in structuring and restructuring South Australian childhood between 1875 and 1990 has drawn upon age stratification theory as applied by historical sociologists, the 'new' social history, and the wider body of social theory for its analytical framework and methodology. A further concern has been to locate the history of age grading in South Australian primary schools within the broader history of graded schooling, although this is essentially non-existent in Australian historiography of education and hence would comprise a worthy topic for future researchers.

Among the study's principal findings, and consistent with Hogan's conclusion in reference to Philadelphia, is that the separation of infants from older children constituted the first form of age grading, pre-dating the legislation which established a 'thoroughly national' system of education. Indeed the foundations of an age-graded education system on this vertical dimension can be traced to the colony's earliest schools. Moreover, it was just prior to the passage of the 1875 'free, compulsory and secular' Education Act that children enrolled at the Grote Street Model Infant School were distributed into classes on the basis of chronological age (Hogan's horizontal dimension of graded school organisation), following the tradition in England by 1870 of forming a class for 'babies' and one or two for 'older infants'. Under a reconstructed Education Department from 1878 through to the turn of the century, the youngest pupils in government schools were differentiated even more precisely by age. Distinctions between 'mere babies' (infants under five), 'junior scholars' (children aged 5-7 years) and 'real students' (7+ year olds) were forged by a variety of means: the regulations governing pupils classification on entry to school; the age standard of seven years imposed for compulsory attendance and for transfer from an infant department or junior class to 'primary school proper'; and the naming of the attainment standards comprising the inspector's examination program, with the Junior Division preceding Class I-V. To these were added the 'educational ages' briefly affixed to the syllabus for each grade; the ruling that children over five were subject to examination; the categorisation of children into age groupings when calculating attendance figures; the seating arrangements in small schools; and the building design of large institutions, together with the

use therein of a specialised pedagogy on the English infant school model as supplemented by Froebelian kindergarten method in the 1890s.

It is noted in Chapter 1 that only a minority of colonial youth began their schooling in a separate infant department, and that on the available evidence these few children's experience in junior classes did not substantially vary from the experience of those who enrolled at an 'ordinary' (non-vertically divided) elementary school. However, as late nineteenth century differences of grade organisation and teaching in infant departments were built upon in the 1920s to contrast markedly with the arrangements in 'all-grade' primary schools, and with the specialist provision for infants in these revivified departments attracting a growing proportion of commencing scholars, children's early years of school experiences diverged widely according to size of school attended. Sustained by the very division of large primary schools into separately-administered junior and senior departments, these organisational and pedagogical differences became a focus of criticism - notably on the part of male head teachers ostensibly concerned about the inefficiencies generated at individual school and system level, but at base attempting to assert their authority over that of infant mistresses.

As the evidence cited from the Minutes of the 1882-83 Education Commission indicates, the relative powers of male heads of a boys' department but with overall responsibility for a model or large public school, and of mistresses in charge of an infant (or girls') department, was a major source of dispute. The 'problem' of divided jurisdiction in these schools was temporarily resolved by the virtual demise of infant departments in consequence of the change in official policy on appointing "expensive" female head teachers and the decline in enrolments which accompanied the systematisation of schooling, the priority given to 'compulsory scholars' aged 7-13 years, and economic depression in the 1880s and 90s. But with the revival of separate infant schools and restoration of the position of Infant Mistress in the wake of the 'New Education', the problem resurfaced and was at the root of internecine relations between infant specialists (all female) and primary-trained (predominantly male) personnel with respect to two main issues: what was euphemistically called "this transition business", and apparent rates of retardation in infant departments. Whilst a full history of gender relations within the early

childhood/primary sector of the government school system remains to be written, the analysis in Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 6 especially has afforded some insight into the set of gender politics which underlay not only the reforms directed at easing children's transition from junior to upper primary classes and at ensuring that pupils were not 'held back' in the infant division of large schools, but also the struggle to preserve infant schools as distinct entities. This analysis further makes clear that it was not just women teachers' employment and promotion opportunities, nor the autonomy of infant mistresses, which were bound up in the fortunes of separate infant schools. The whole future of these schools' distinctive pedagogical tradition and system of half grades, commencing with a definite kindergarten period, was at stake.

In tracing the rise of an infant school empire, from its colonial beginnings to its zenith in the mid-twentieth century, the influence of demographic and economic trends and prevailing notions of administrative efficiency on the establishment/disestablishment of separate institutions catering for 5 to 7 or 8 year olds has been pointed up. Rationales for such provision underwent some alteration in response to changed historical circumstances. For example, once full-time regular attendance at school became general, reference to the advantage of specialised infant education in countering "the claims of labour" disappeared from official pronouncements. Twentieth-century child studies and influential theories in early childhood education gave scientific veneer to the six-monthly basis of pupil classification and promotion in infant departments, to the use of informal methods to instruct children below 'the age of reason', and to the design of a curriculum, furniture, apparatus and a timetable adapted to youngsters' physical and mental characteristics. Earlier theories of morality and technical rationality underpinning the separate and differential treatment of younger and older students in primary schools were supplanted as the twentieth century progressed. In particular, during the 1970s and 80s when rationalisation, vertical integration of school structures and continuity of learning became key elements of administrative discourse and educational service delivery, it was developmental psychology that was drawn upon to justify making or retaining distinctive, if not also separate, institutional provision for infants.

One strand of rhetoric remained constant though: the foundations of all future learning were laid in junior classes, and for the education system to work efficiently specialist infant departments, teachers and pedagogy were necessary. This is the argument to which state-employed early childhood educators in the twentieth century always resorted when infant schools' internal arrangements or the sector as a whole came under threat. Such was its power that, in combination with their political actions, women involved in junior primary schooling were frequently successful in averting, delaying or securing changes to policy and practice as consistent with their sectional interests. Their alliances and binding philosophy nonetheless proved insufficient to prevent individual school closures in the face of demographic and economic realities (whether in recent decades or a century ago); nor to resist the weight of other opinion which effected the abolition of infant departments' semi-annual grade organisation in 1964. Yet despite these and other developments (amalgamation of teacher training courses, the adoption of 'new' instructional methods in senior classes, various forms of liaison/co-operation between infant and primary personnel, and R-7 curriculum planning) which helped to breach the infant-primary divide over the twenty years from 1970, defenders of infant school empire and ethos found ways to retain their influence within the education system. Their senior administrative and professional representatives' role in developing and implementing the 1984 *Early Years of School* policy, as detailed in Chapter 7, illustrates this well.

Continued and broad-based support for the notion that R-2 represented a distinctive stage of schooling requiring age/developmentally-appropriate curricula and methods, specialist teacher preparation, and separate administration in schools with high enrolments, acted to protect much of the early childhood educational tradition as it had evolved from its nineteenth century origins. However, towards the end of the period of this study, "restructure" in the form of co-located infant and primary schooling coupled with other initiatives which drew the two sectors closer together meant that five to eight year olds' experience of junior studenthood assumed fairly common proportions. Put differently, the type of school attended (R-2 or R-7) became a less significant differentiator of early childhood life. Besides, there was the universality of children in infant grades being 'the little ones', who on reaching the age of eight would find themselves elevated to the status of 'real scholars' in 'the big school'.

Beyond the analysis of ways in which age was constructed by the organisation of infant schooling, the focus in the thesis on the point of transition from junior to real studenthood thrust into view a pervasive theme in the broader history of graded schooling: the difficulty that teachers experienced in attempting to reconcile bureaucratically-defined age and attainment standards at the level of practice. This 'difficulty' was initially peculiar to large public schools divided into infant, boys' and girls' departments. The evidence presented in Chapter 1 reveals that it took three decades of lobbying by headmasters, teachers and parents before reforms were instituted which helped to remedy the problems posed by 'late' entrants placed in Class I and children promoted from infant classes to this grade "on account of age that was not justified by knowledge". By 1916, this tension between age and attainment at the junction of infant and upper primary schooling had largely been dissolved by reducing the reading and arithmetic requirements for the Junior Division, raising the age for transition to real studenthood from seven to eight years, the permitted formation of an Intermediate First Class, and by securing greater uniformity in school commencing ages such that pupils spent at least a year preparing for the examination standard of Class I. The wider issue, however, did not disappear.

As variously discussed in Chapters 4 to 7, 'the problem of attainment levels' re-emerged in the 1920s and 30s after a remodelling of the primary curriculum and corresponding grades operated in conjunction with revised policies governing the admission, classification and promotion of scholars to establish age as the dominant principle of graded school organisation. "Inequalities of mental power" were thus rendered obvious (something I.Q. and attainment tests 'scientifically' confirmed in ensuing decades); so were instances of "a piling up of over-graded pupils in higher classes". In the 1940s, the age-attainment hiatus was focused upon in connection with 'the retardation problem', preoccupying much of the Bean Committee's attention and that of Departmental officers in response to wide-ranging criticism. This criticism was directed at promotion policy and the 'half-grade system' in infant schools which functioned to hold back pupils 'ready' for Grade III, together with the 'mass production system' whereby a whole grade was set the same tasks, premised on unverified subjective notions of what the 'average' child at a given age could do, and all children were expected to reach the same level of attainment in a certain time. It also extended to the trend towards 'automatic progression' such

that "the no-hoper was carried far along the assembly line", grade standards declined, and there was a noticeably wider range of 'ability' among cohorts transferring to secondary courses. An influx into primary schools of migrant children during the 1950s highlighted the continued dissonance between age and attainment when it came to making decisions about their appropriate grade placement (especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds). Several decades on, the 'quality review' of education in South Australia conducted by the Keeves Committee again attributed a lowering of academic standards to age-based schooling policy and practice.

On this perennial issue, Grundy has rightly observed that once the pre-eminence of attainment as a principle of graded school organisation gave way to chronological age, the latter form of organisation left the former operating as a tacit dimension. In tracing the shifting preference for one form of standardisation over the other across the years from 1875 to 1990, the study has provided critical historical insights not only into 'the standards debate' concomitant upon strict age grading in the second half of the twentieth century, but into the reverse scenario which elicited concern amongst the late-nineteenth century inspectorate: an exceptionally wide range of ages in attainment-grouped classes, especially in lower grades. It was precisely to prevent such an undesirable mixing of ages, Inspector-General Hartley disclosed to the Education Commission in 1882, that an age standard of seven years for entry to the senior division of elementary schooling was instituted. As the rest of his statement revealed, it was also designed to curb both the overly-rapid promotion of children "too young for forward positions" and the non- promotion of children "who ought to go into a higher class" (a practice teachers adopted in the context of payment-by-results so they might secure a higher percentage of examination passes and hence a better efficiency rating as well as increased remuneration).

Whilst at the level of social consciousness and in terms of children's lived experience this age standard came to signify the upper limit of junior studenthood or, alternatively, the onset of 'serious' learning, its original functions assumed new importance in relation to the issue of retarded school progress during the first half of the twentieth century. For, when the Education Department began to use age-in-grade rather than examination results to measure the system's

efficiency, mandatory promotion from infant classes at seven (amended to eight years in 1912) served to keep children moving through the primary curriculum with their chronological age peers. As the state simultaneously expanded into secondary education, it was hoped that this same device in conjunction with social promotion might enable pupils to graduate to a sccondary course at 12+: that is, in accordance with the age standard defined for embarking upon this next stage of education. The work of stage theorists subsequently lent scientific credence to the initial efficiency-motivated division of elementary schooling into junior and upper primary grades, with the age standard of seven/eight years delineating the point of transition between the two stages of school life as they respectively coincided with early and middle childhood and were followed by post-elementary schooling for those moving into adolescence. For all these reasons, the age standard marking the infant-primary divide basically went unquestioned (complaints about its operation notwithstanding).

By contrast, the age at which children should be permitted or compelled to start school was vigorously debated in the years leading up to the 1875 Education Act and beyond the 1915 'consolidating measure' which established age parameters for school entry not since permanently altered, viz, compulsory attendance at six years and a bureaucratically-delineated 'earliest age' of the child's fifth birthday. From the examination of professional, public and parliamentary discourse surrounding the definition of 'school-going age' in Chapter 2, several recurrent themes emerged. Children ought neither be compelled nor permitted to attend school at 'a young age' unless suitable provision was made for them, but enrolment at five was to be encouraged so that pupils might be adequately prepared for formal work. Infants, particularly those in working class communities, were better off at school than left unsupervised at home or in the streets. Yet classrooms were not to become nurseries and teachers mere nannies in the absence of alternative child care. The orderly progress of students and the efficient functioning of the school should be a prime consideration in fixing an age limit for admission, but existing social practice and parental pressure with respect to enrolling children 'early' was an argument for not setting this too high. By the same token, between 1875 and 1960, the focus of debate shifted from the social control function and educational benefits associated with beginning school life before the statutory age, to concern that children came 'on time' so they could

transfer from infant classes to 'primary school proper', and from here to secondary school, in accordance with the age standards affixed to these organisational breaks in the education system. Subsequently, an emphasis on 'readiness' for school and equity considerations with regard to admission procedures became apparent.

Reflecting the conclusion reached in other (mainly British) studies, the analysis in Chapter 2 revealed that the rationale for compulsory or permissible attendance in South Australia had little to do with educational or psychological theories. Again, these furnished *post hoc* justification for decisions which were influenced, rather, by historical precedent, the current aims, organisation and practices of state schooling, contemporary interstate and overseas developments, political expediency, economic conditions, demographic structure, and the availability of specialist infant teachers and schools as well as other forms of child care and education. In also tracing changes in nineteenth and twentieth century school entry patterns, Chapter 2 recorded a gradual narrowing in the range of children's commencing ages after 1875, to ultimately fall within the parameters established by legislation and bureaucratic directive by the late 1960s. The statistics presented show that although the overall social trend from 1892 onwards was to send children to public schools at five, fluctuations occurred in times of demographic, societal and economic crisis. They additionally illustrate that the type of school at which children enrolled (infant/non-infant) and residential area (urban/rural), which accounted for historical differences in pupils' ages at admission, ceased to be significant by 1990 - largely due to the uniformity of junior primary grade organisation after 1967. Gender, all the evidence suggested, never functioned as a differentiator of any consequence in the matter of school entry age.

Such a narrowing of the age-range in beginners' classes was assisted by the move in 1908 to systematise entry to school through the imposition of fixed admission dates; and even more so by the phased introduction of a 'continuous admission' policy in the 1970s and 80s. This second enrolment mode, it should be noted, was no different in principle to the 'inefficient' pre-1908 tradition in large urban schools of accepting beginners each Monday, or on any week day throughout the year in the case of small rural schools. But in practice, the previous two- or

three-year variation in children's commencing ages was now reduced to between a few days and a few months, depending on whether the school attended had adopted individual, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or once-a-term entry of just-turned-five year olds.

Analysis of the first enrolment mode in the broader context of age-graded school organisation highlighted the fact that the device of restricting admission to two times of the year was more convenient, both administratively and from a teaching perspective, and it also helped to accomplish the stated aim of bringing children together in increasingly similar age groups at the start of their school life. This essentially urban model, which suited the semi-annual basis of pupil classification and promotion in infant departments, was constantly challenged, though, when it came to its application in non-infant schools and in country areas especially. Indeed many teachers favoured a single admission period at the start of first term, but only those in charge of 'all-grade' primary schools with very small enrolments were granted permission to adopt this procedure. Infant specialists, on the other hand, being concerned to preserve the six-monthly grade arrangements in their sector, fought off efforts to have the second intake period at mid-year abolished. Consequently, for almost half a century after the Education Department moved to regulate the timing of school entry during a year, significant differences existed with respect to when children actually commenced at school and hence in their relative ages in admission classes, depending on whether they resided in a populous centre served by an infant school or in a sparsely-settled outlying district. However, with more frequent entry times being a requirement from 1980 onwards, and given that by then junior primary grades were organised on a common basis, the point at which children started school and their ages on enrolment diverged much less in relation to the size of the school accessible to them.

It is clear from the evidence in Chapter 3 that the bureaucracy's designation of precise transition points from home to school early in the twentieth century generated as much controversy as did policies regulating age of entry, and that even when the avowedly more flexible and equitable 'fifth-birthday entry' mode supplanted twice-a-year enrolment, its operation was similarly problematic. In the case of both the 'old' and the 'new' admission procedure, parents, teachers and principals agitated successfully for modifications in official policy, and neither policy was

administered uniformly. Equally concerning to Central Office in the 1980s was the frustration, quite often, of its allied intention in introducing continuous admission: reform of classroom organisation and curriculum practice so that individual differences might be accommodated. I conclude that this simply indicates how pervasive chronological age as the fundamental principle of graded schooling had become.

Having thus elucidated the origins, nature and impact of age standards for school entry and transferral to upper primary grades, consideration was given to the way students' progress from one grade to the next also came to be regulated on the basis of chronological age. Chapter 4 examined a key aspect of this process: the construction of the 'normal', 'retarded' and 'accelerated' child in relation to the 'educational ages' affixed to the syllabus for those grades into which elementary schooling was organised. Necessary to an understanding of the historicity of these twentieth-century categories of primary school-aged childhood, is the shift which occurred, from ungraded classrooms in the early colonial period of South Australian schooling, to attainment-based grade organisation with age operating as a tacit dimension of pupil classification and promotion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For, in the course of this shift, key elements of the model of efficient state schooling emerged which produced much of the 'over-ageness' that became a focus of concern after 1900. These elements were the arrangement of pupils into classes according to their attainments, a graded curriculum structured in annual segments, clearly-defined standards of proficiency, simultaneous instruction, examinations, group promotions, and payment-by-results. In this same period, the age standards for school entry and leaving originated. So did the age standard for transition to the senior division and the 'average ages' (age-normed indexes of children's mental capacity used in devising the proficiency standards), in relation to which children were defined as 'backward' (over-aged for grade).

In the several decades after the state intervened to reconstitute childhood through compulsory schooling, late entry into the school system attended by inadequate grounding in the basics prior to enrolment, geographical mobility, irregularity of attendance, the design of the proficiency standards, the operation of payment-by-results, and examination failure were

responsible for the extent of deviation from official grade-ages. The Hindmarsh data illustrates, further, the significance of social class in regard to differential rates of promotion. But as Chapter 4 also documents, there was a growing sense that chronological age should temper attainment as a basis for regulating student progress. In detailing early twentieth century reform of schooling policy and practice which aimed to achieve a closer fit between age and grade, it is noted that the influence of ideas promulgated by child psychologists, psychometricians, child accountants and proponents of the 'New Education' and 'social efficiency' gave form and impetus to this quest. By 1921 a new set of age-grade norms were in place. In consequence of their rigorous application over the next decade or so, accompanied by rhetorical references to the greater importance of character and body over mind and of peer-grouped social experience over academic attainment, the average grade-ages of pupils declined and the percentage of children making 'normal' annual progress through the primary curriculum correspondingly increased. Such being the case, instances of over-ageness were more noticeable than ever before. The phenomenon and rate of 'retardation' were simultaneously defined, highlighted and managed through the State-wide age-grade statistics published in the Minister of Education's annual parliamentary report, and by the formation of opportunity classes and 'special' schools.

On concluding that age-in-grade as a measure of student progress and of the education system's overall efficiency was firmly entrenched in South Australia by the mid-1930s, the research conducted into which children were more likely than others to experience retarded school progress produced similar findings to those for the late nineteenth century - although some reflected social and educational change since. That is to say, apart from characteristics seen to reside in the individual child (mental ability, level of motivation), 'inefficient' instruction, teachers' non-compliance with the new rules on promotion (often in order to maximise Q.C. pass rates), frequent changes of school, irregular attendance or prolonged periods of absence (notably due to illness), socio-economic and ethnic background, and urban/rural place of residence, were significant factors in accounting for 'backwardness'. Gender apparently functioned as a variable in the matter of opportunity class placement, though not with respect to grade-age in mainstream classrooms. At least initially, however, the bureaucracy's over-riding

concern was to quantify over-ageness and to find efficient means for dealing with the worst cases of it.

Such was the influence of survey results which drew official attention to the dimensions of retardation in the late 1930s and early 1940s, combined with increasingly strident calls for modernisation of the education system, that a range of former impediments to children's 'orderly' peer-grouped progress through the primary grades were removed during the latter years of World War II. A reduced and less difficult primary curriculum, the softening of Grade VII examination requirements, and continued vigorous promulgation of the principle and practice of social promotion effected satisfying gains in the Education Department's quest for a perfect age-grade fit - only to be temporarily reversed in the 1950s as a result of demographic change associated with the post-war baby boom, industrialisation and a high rate of immigration. However, as pointed out in Chapter 5, the overcrowded conditions in classrooms both reinforced the trend towards promotion on age and helped to dissipate the potential of war-time radicalism to transform primary schooling in the direction of individualised instruction adapted to children's differing 'needs and abilities'.

With the enrolment crisis over by the late 1950s, the resumption of steady improvement in the percentages of 'normal grade-aged' pupils was attended in the 1960s by a growing pre-occupation with individual differences and their implications for primary school organisation. Whilst this pre-occupation gradually eased the topic of over-ageness out of educational discourse, it was also the case that the challenge to strict age grading arising from advocacy of grading on ability (as measured by standardised tests) was deflected by the adoption of ability grouping within age-graded classes, exhortation of teachers to make extra effort to provide "educational experiences appropriate to the development of everyone", and by constant reiteration of earlier arguments about the "severe and unfortunate effects" on children's social and emotional well-being if they were not learning and playing alongside others of the same chronological age. The ideology of individual difference and that of 'equality' in the 1970s did underpin the introduction of more flexible school entry arrangements. Yet this merely served to accelerate the trend towards a narrower range of ages in admission classes, which operated in

conjunction with post-1960 reforms that regularised the period children spent in Reception-Year 2 to affirm chronological age as the dominant principle of graded school organisation and student progress.

In summary, the reforms which resulted in a progressive tightening of the age-grade structure in South Australian primary schools were aimed at securing order and efficiency: bureaucratic concerns which gave rise to educational policy and practice that privileged class teaching over more individualised methods of instruction, assumed a high degree of uniformity in chronological mental development, and constructed notions of 'a mere baby', 'junior scholars', 'real students', and of the 'normal', 'retarded' and 'accelerated' child, in addition to a very constricted view of desirable peer group. In the long term, irrespective of social differences and the type of school attended (departmentalised/non-departmentalised, urban/rural), children's experience of elementary education became highly regularised with respect to age at admission and their subsequent annual promotion from Reception to Year 7 and thence to a secondary course.

This is not to suggest, however, that the organisation of pupils into classes on the basis of chronological age and a distinction between infant classes and 'primary school proper' were unified and coherent developments. The affixing of 'educational ages' to the syllabus for the various elementary grades, and the imposition of age standards for school entry, for transition from Grade 2 in the junior division to Grade 3 in the upper primary division, and for moving from Grade 7 into secondary schools, were at certain intervals strongly contested and/or dysfunctional in practice. So was the prescribed timing of admission to school during a year and the 'normal' period delineated for spending in infant grades. A child-centred tradition forged most strongly in separately-established infant departments/schools generated a range of 'difficulties'. Indeed, these institutions' very existence was periodically challenged. On a final note, three main things were perpetually in the balance: the relationship of age to attainment standards, infant and primary specialists' respective influence on policy formulation, and that organisational consistency across the state system which bureaucrats equated with efficiency in

contra-distinction to the flexibility advocated as educationally necessary to cater for individual differences.

Whilst the foregoing tensions continue to feature prominently in local educational debate and schooling practice today, it is nonetheless true to say that, in its various institutional forms at primary school level, chronological age has been central for most of the twentieth century to the defining of children's experience in South Australian society. To illustrate the point, it seems fitting to end with an extract from a poem referring to one among a diversity of patterns of school entry and progress in the early 1900s, but which since the 1960s has constituted the norm:

> My school days started when I was five
> Like Christopher Robin I was just alive
> My brother and I would leave hand in hand
> Going to school this way each day.
> Each year we would pass from grade to grade
> With teachers new and friends we'd made.[1]

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[1] Bina Cooley (nee Gooden), Memories of going to school at Hindmarsh - information for the proposed book to commemorate the school's centenary, 1978, PRO, GRG 18/13/41

APPENDIX A

Infant school schemata

The three items comprising this appendix illustrate key aspects of junior primary grade organisation during the period studied.

Diagram: Organisation of classes in the early years of school

- 1879

Public/model schools with an infant department		Other public and provisional schools
1st Class (Babies)		
2nd Class		
3rd Class		
4th Class (highest standard) →	=	Junior Division (lowest standard)
	→	Class I (first standard)
		Class II
		Class III
		Class IV (compulsory standard)
		Class V

- 1890 Junior Division divided into two parts: 1) Lower Junior 2) Upper Junior

- 1912 Junior course to occupy two years; provision for a lower division of Class I

- 1916 Primary Course of Instruction revised; children arranged in eight grades:
  - Lower Junior = Grade 1
  - Upper Junior = Grade 2
  - Class I = Grade 3

- 1920

Infant Departments	'Ordinary' primary schools
Kindergarten/Montessori class	
Lower I	
Upper I	Grade I
Lower II	
Upper II	Grade II

- 1921 Primary Course of Instruction adjusted; children arranged in seven grades.
  In non-infant schools:
  - new Grade I (average age of pupils 6-7 years)
  - new Grade II (average age of pupils 7-8 years)

- 1968 All schools (infant and 'ordinary' primary)
  Preparatory (formerly Kindergarten in infant schools only; re-named Reception in 1975)
  Grade 1
  Grade 2

Regulation 183 of 1879. Programme of Inspector's Examination

Source: South Australian Government Gazette, 29 May 1879, p. 1548

Public and Provisional Schools.

Junior Division.

a. The alphabet and simple combinations of not more than four letters.
b. To copy from print or a blackboard, letters, figures, and simple words
c. To count to 200 and notate to 100; to perform any operation with the numbers from 1 to 20; to know the divisions of the sovereign and shilling, the yard and foot, and the pound avoirdupois.
d. To understand the cardinal points and a plan of the schoolroom and its immediate vicinity; to tell the time by a clock or watch.
e. Simple object lessons.

Note.—No junior division will be allowed in schools with an infant department.

Class 1.

a. Reading.—First Royal Reader or equivalent.
b. Writing.—Letters or short words on slate from blackboard. Darnell's Universal Copy Books, 1 to 3.
c. Arithmetic.—Notate to 1,000; any operation with numbers up to 100, easy sums in addition and subtraction; multiplication tables up to eight times.
d. Geography.—Of the neighbourhood within ten miles, and to understand a map.
e. Poetry.—To learn by heart pieces from the First Royal Reader.
f. Object Lessons.
g. Needlework (for girls only).—Hemming.

Class 2.

a. Reading.—Second Royal Reader or equivalent, and to answer questions on the subject matter.
b. Spelling.—From reading book.
c. Writing.—To copy easy words from reading book. Darnell's Universal Copy Books, 4 to 6.
d. Arithmetic.—Notate to 1,000,000, multiplication and division tables, and simple rules to short division.
e. Geography.—South Australia.
f. Grammar.—To pick out from a page of the reading-book and to define nouns, adjectives, verbs, and pronouns.
g. Poetry.—To learn by heart pieces from the Second Royal Reader.
h. Object Lessons.
i. Needlework (for girls only).—Hemming and seaming.

Class 3.

a. Reading.—To read with ease from the Third Royal Reader, or equivalent.
b. Spelling.—Dictation from reading-book.
c. Writing.—To copy from reading-book. Darnell's Universal Copy Books, 7 to 10.
d. Arithmetic.—Four compound rules: reduction. [Only money tables and avoirdupois weight to be used.]
e. Geography.—Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand.
f. Grammar.—To pick out parts of speech from a page of the reading-book; definitions, inflections of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives.
g. Poetry.—To learn by heart pieces from the Third Royal Reader.
h. Object Lessons.
i. Needlework (for girls only).—Hemming, seaming, gathering, and stitching.

Class 4.

a. Reading.—To read with ease and expression from the Fourth Royal Reader, or equivalent.
b. Spelling.—Dictation from reading-book.
c. Writing.—To copy from reading-book. Darnell's Universal Copy Books, 11 to 13.
d. Composition.—To write a letter.
e. Arithmetic.—Compound rules, proportion, practice.
f. Geography.—Outlines of the world.
g. Grammar.—Etymology, easy syntax, parsing.
h. History.—A subject to be fixed. Until further notice: History of the industrial progress of the nineteenth century.
i. Poetry.—To learn by heart pieces from the Fourth Royal Reader.
j. Object Lessons.
k. Needlework (for girls only).—As before, with darning, making of button holes, and knitting. Cutting out to be taught if practicable

Class 5.

a. Reading.—To read with ease and expression from the Fifth Royal Reader, or equivalent, or a passage from a newspaper.
b. Spelling.—Dictation from above.
c. Writing.—To be able to make entries in a day-book. Darnell's Universal Copy Books, 14 to 16.
d. Composition.—To write a short essay on a given subject.
e. Arithmetic.—Including vulgar and decimal fractions, simple interest, mensuration.
f. Geography.—Elementary physical geography (the subjects treated of in Professor Geikie's Primer).
g. Grammar.—Including the analysis of easy sentences.
h. History.—From the accession of George III. to the present time.
i. Poetry.—To recite pieces from the Fifth Royal Reader.
j. Object Lessons.
k. Needlework as before, with ability to cut out.

N.B.—Children of any class will be expected to know the work of the class or classes below.

Teachers who may not be able to obtain Darnell's Copy Books will be allowed to substitute equivalent books in some other series during 1879.

Infant Schools.

First Class.

a. Reading.—To pick out any letter.
b. Writing.—Letters formed of right lines, hooks, and links.
c. Arithmetic.—To count to 50; to put out balls up to 10.
d. Color.—To know the primary colors.

Second Class

a. Reading.—Words of two or three letters.
b. Writing.—To copy any small letter in script hand.
c. Arithmetic.—To count to 100, make figures, and add to 20 by intervals of 2 and 3 (mentally).
d. Color.—Primary and secondary.

Third Class.

a. Reading.—Cards 1 to 10 (Collins).
b. Writing.—Easy words of three letters.
c. Arithmetic.—To count to 200: to add or subtract to 20 (mentally) by intervals of 2 and 3.
d. Geography.—The cardinal points; plan of the infants' room.
e. Simple object lessons and lessons on form.

Fourth Class.

a. Reading.—Cards 1 to 20 (Collins).
b. Writing.—Easy words.
c. Arithmetic.—To count to 200, and notate to 100: to perform any operation with the numbers from 1 to 20; to know the divisions of the sovereign, shilling, yard, foot, and pound avoirdupois.
d. To understand the cardinal points, and a plan of the school and immediate vicinity; to tell the hour by a clock or watch.
e. Simple object lessons.

Tentative scheme for training kindergarten and sub-primary teachers

Source: Education Gazette (SA), 36:403, February 17, 1921, pp. 57-9

Purpose.—To supply the academic and professional training required for the position of Infant Teacher.

Qualifications for Entrance.—Junior Teachers, and others selected on account of their special fitness and natural aptitude for the work. The minimum educational qualifications shall be a pass at the Senior Public Examination in five subjects, or a IIIB Certificate. Ability to manage effectively a class of 60 infants, and to play simple accompaniments and marches on the piano, and to sing the songs required in infant school work, will also be demanded as preliminary qualifications.

During the visits of the Inspector of Infant Schools to the various Infant Departments, she should attempt to discover likely candidates. In addition to the above-mentioned qualifications, the following should be kept in view:—

(a) Uprightness of character.
(b) Good home background.
(c) Attitude towards little children.
(d) Personality as shown in dress, voice, manner, power, appreciation of atmosphere.
(e) Artistic ability.

Length of Course.—One year. Allowance during the course of training, £40 per annum, together with an allowance at the rate of £20 per annum in cases where it can be shown that the student is obliged to live away from home to attend the Training College.

Agreement.—Students taking this course will be required to enter into an agreement to serve the Department for four years after the completion of their training, under a penalty of £20 for every uncompleted year of service; maximum penalty, £80.

TRAINING.

During the first three months in training the student is to be considered as being on probation. An unsatisfactory attitude towards her work would mean the termination of her course. Half-yearly reports are to be written by the Mistress of Method and forwarded to the Principal of the Training College, who, in turn, will submit them to the Director.

All students will be attached to the Training College, and will take part in the corporate life of the institution, attending socials, picnics, &c., and contributing to the College Magazine. They will receive their allowance, &c., through the Principal. No skill mark will be awarded during their year of training.

On leaving the College they will be sent for at least one year to some Infant Department, if possible in their home district, where they will be under an experienced Mistress.

NUMBER AND LENGTH OF LECTURES.

A. University Subject.—Education.
B. Training College subjects:—

I. *Kindergarten Principles.*—Sixteen one-hour lectures, as follows (to be given by Mistress of Method or Inspector):—

(a) Life of Froebel (in outline).
(b) Influence of Childhood on Educational Principles.
(c) Froebel's Law of Unity.
(d) Practical Aspects of the Law.
(e) Principle of Self-activity in Education.
(f) Practical Aspects of the Principle.
(g) Play.
(h) The Mother Play (its form).
(i) Symbolism of the Mother Play.
(j) Continuity in Education (connection of Kindergarten with home).
(k) Continuity in Education (connection of Kindergarten with later life).
(l) Froebel's Symbolism.
(m) Froebel's Nature Study Scheme.
(n) Religious Training.
(o) Comparison of Montessori and Froebel (Principles).
(p) Comparison of Montessori and Froebel (Method, material, &c.).

Books recommended—
Education of Man—Froebel.
Autobiography of Froebel.
Kindergarten Principles and Practice—K. D. Wiggin.
Symbolic Education (extracts)—Susan Blow.

II. *Psychology and Child Study.*—About 20 one-hour lectures (to be given by the Principal of the Training College).

Books recommended—
Talks to Teachers on Psychology—James.
Principles of Psychology—Dunville.

III. *Gifts and Occupations.*

(a) *Theory.*—Twelve lectures one hour each. (To be given by Mistress of Method or Inspector.)

Books recommended—
Froebel's Gifts—K. D. Wiggin.
Froebel's Occupations—K. D. Wiggin.
Froebel's Building Gifts—Elizabeth Harrison.

(b) *Practical*—(To be given by Kindergartner.)
Course of 30 Handwork periods, including about 100 hours home work. This covers practical work with the gifts and occupations, and includes the making of articles in wool, cane, raffia, etc.

IV. *Method.*

Thirty lectures one hour each. (To be given by Mistress of Method or Inspector.)

To include talks on Schemes of Work, Programme Making, Drawing Up Time Table, Discipline, Aims in Education, Notes of Lessons, English (story, method of telling, origin, etc.), types of Stories, Oral Composition, Picture Talks, Nursery Rhymes, Dramatisation, Poetry, Written Composition, Writing, Reading (including Ellis method), Arithmetic from Kindergarten and Montessori to Upper Second Infants, Geography, Singing, Drawing, Modelling, Games, &c. (Talks on the formal subjects will show how these have been modified by Montessori methods.)

Books recommended—
The Montessori Method—Dr. Montessori.
How to Tell Stories—Sarah Bryant.
Nature Study and the Child—Scott.
Report on Montessori Method—M. M. Simpson.
Lecture Notes.

V. *Art Course.*

Course in Drawing at School of Arts and Crafts.

Art classes for making charts, pictures for poems, and schemes and friezes, should be given in addition. Such classes could be taken by some gifted member of the staff.

VI. *School Hygiene.*—A course of 20 lectures given by Dr. Halley.

VII. *Nature Study.*—A course of 20 lectures given by Mr. Edquist.

VIII. *Elocution.*—A course of 30 lectures given by Miss Carter.

PRACTICAL WORK.

A. *Class Teaching.*

Each student is to be made responsible for a class for six months of the year. The remaining six months should be distributed in the following way:—
4 months in Kindergarten.
1 month in Montessori room.
1 month observing work of senior teachers in each grade.

B. *Demonstration.*

(a) Each student should be free on (say) alternate Tuesdays throughout the year to follow a course of observation in the Demonstration classes in order that they may watch development, and see how method is adapted to growth.

(b) Occasional half-hour demonstration lessons by Mistress of Method, which all students attend, to illustrate teaching of subjects as they occur in the lecture courses.

C. *Criticism.*

(a) Weekly criticism lessons on set subjects during the students' six months' class teaching, taken by Mistress of Method. Occasional half-day criticism periods.

(b) During the remaining half-year, students should be required to take criticism periods in Kindergarten and Montessori. These, conducted by teacher in charge, with occasional supervision by the Mistress of Method.

D. *Staff Meetings.*

(a) Should be held weekly by the Mistress of Method. All students must attend. Business should consist mostly of matters of method, organisation, attention to premises, discipline, and any discussion which will lead to general improvement in any branch of the school work.

(b) After the business, the Staff should be taken for games or singing (Infant School songs) by the Kindergartner or such other member of the Staff as is competent.

E. *Book Work.*

Students should be given practice in:—

(a) Keeping of Registers.
(b) Keeping of Programme of Work (specially printed books).
(c) Drawing up Time Table.
(d) Writing Daily Notes of Lessons during six months' class teaching.
(e) Compiling MSS. Music Books containing selections of songs and games in school musical library.
(f) MSS. Anthology of Verse, consisting of selections of poetry from the library of Mistress of Method or Inspector.
(g) Lists of Games, Stories, etc., suitable for correlation.

APPENDIX B

Tables

Tables A.1 and A.2 in this appendix were produced from the Hindmarsh Infant School data-base.

Table A.3, showing the progress of the government school system in South Australia across the three decades after 1875, has been reproduced from the Director of Education's Report for 1907.

Tables A.4 to A.21 were generated through the application of a SYSTAT software program to the data compiled from the age-grade census returns for 1921-1990, as published in the Minister/Director-General of Education's Annual Report.

Table A.1 Age at admission to Hindmarsh Infant Department by sex of pupil, 1882-1886, 1887-1891, 1892-1899

Age in: years	Male %	no.	Female %	no.	Total %	no.
Two						
1882-86	1.5	(4)	2.4	(5)	**1.9**	**(9)**
1887-91	0.6	(3)	0.5	(2)	**0.6**	**(5)**
1892-95	-		-		-	
Three						
1882-86	10.7	(28)	12.7	(26)	**11.6**	**(54)**
1887-91	10.4	(53)	10.4	(40)	**10.4**	**(93)**
1892-95	-		-		-	
Four						
1882-86	21.8	(57)	22.4	(46)	**22.1**	**(103)**
1887-91	23.6	(120)	21.2	(82)	**22.6**	**(202)**
1892-95	1.4	(5)	3.2	(9)	**2.2**	**(14)**
Five						
1882-86	25.2	(66)	22.4	(46)	**24.0**	**(112)**
1887-91	28.7	(146)	29.8	(115)	**29.2**	**(261)**
1892-95	67.2	(236)	65.5	(186)	**66.5**	**(422)**
Six						
1882-86	19.8	(52)	24.9	(51)	**22.1**	**(103)**
1887-91	29.5	(150)	27.5	(106)	**28.6**	**(256)**
1892-95	28.8	(101)	28.5	(81)	**28.7**	**(182)**
Seven						
1882-86	13.7	(36)	10.2	(21)	**12.2**	**(57)**
1887-91	5.5	(28)	9.3	(36)	**7.2**	**(64)**
1892-95	2.0	(7)	2.5	(7)	**2.2**	**(14)**
Eight or older						
1882-86	7.3	(19)	4.9	(10)	**6.2**	**(29)**
1887-91	1.8	(9)	1.3	(5)	**1.6**	**(14)**
1892-95	0.3	(1)	0.4	(1)	**0.3**	**(2)**
Total percentage and no. of pupils	Male		Female		Total	
1882-86	56.1%	n = 262	43.9%	n = 205	100.0%	n = 467
1887-91	56.9%	n = 509	43.1%	n = 386	100.0%	n = 895
1892-95	55.3%	n = 351	44.7%	n = 284	100.0%	n = 635

Table A.2 Age at admission to Hindmarsh Infant Department by occupation group of parent/guardian, 1882-86, 1887-1891, 1892-99

Age in: years	Proprietor	Petty bourgeois	Skilled worker	Transport worker	unskilled labourer	female household head	other	% of total enrolments
Two								
1882-86	-	11.1	33.3	11.1	44.4	-	-	1.9
1887-91	-	-	60.0	20.0	20.0	-	-	.6
1892-99	-	.2	-	-	-	-	-	.2
Three								
1882-86	19.31	24.1	35.2	1.9	22.2	3.7	3.7	11.6
1887-91	11.8	17.2	44.1	3.2	14.0	5.4	4.3	10.4
1892-99	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Four								
1882-86	5.8	15.5	33.0	6.8	25.2	8.7	4.9	22.1
1887-91	7.9	12.9	43.6	5.4	19.8	2.5	7.9	22.6
1892-99	7.1	14.3	57.1	-	7.1	14.3	-	2.2
Five								
1882-86	6.3	8.0	40.2	5.4	30.4	3.6	6.3	24.0
1887-91	9.2	6.9	41.0	8.0	24.5	3.8	6.5	29.2
1892-99	8.8	11.8	46.2	7.1	13.7	7.1	5.2	66.5
Six								
1882-86	6.8	4.9	34.0	7.8	34.0	6.8	5.8	22.1
1887-91	7.0	9.4	39.8	5.9	28.1	2.9	5.9	28.6
1892-99	7.7	6.6	47.3	10.4	19.8	3.8	4.4	28.7
Seven								
1882-86	3.5	3.5	31.6	12.3	29.8	7.0	12.3	12.2
1887-91	6.3	4.7	39.1	9.4	37.5	3.1	-	7.2
1892-99	14.3	7.1	42.9	-	14.3	14.3	7.1	2.2
Eight +								
1882-86	3.4	3.4	20.7	17.2	31.0	24.1	-	6.2
1887-91	7.1	-	57.1	-	28.6	-	7.1	1.6
1892-99	-	-	50.0	50.0	-	-	-	.3
Total percentage of pupils:								
1882-86	6.0	10.1	34.3	7.5	29.3	7.1	5.8	100.0
1887-91	8.3	9.7	41.8	6.4	24.4	3.6	5.9	100.0
1892-95	8.5	10.4	46.6	7.7	15.4	6.5	4.9	100.0

Table A.3

Statistics showing progress from January 1st, 1876, to December 31st, 1907

Year	No. of schools	No. of teachers	No. ch'n instructed	Average attendcs.	Net cost to State	Cost to parents	Total cost	Cost per child	- in avg. attendance
					£	Fees £	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1876	281	550	25,889	13,622	52,210	12,208	64,418	2 9 9	4 14 6
1877	302	653	27,305	14,406	60,193	13,231	73,424	2 13 9	5 1 11
1878	310	699	34,491	16,755	72,246	16,717	88,963	2 11 7	5 6 2
1879	340	788	35,276	18,523	71,635	17,795	89,430	2 10 8	4 16 7
1880	370	837	36,277	19,658	77,163	18,648	95,811	2 12 9	4 17 7
1881	405	786	36,888	20,653	80,921	19,737	100658	2 14 6	4 17 6
1882	422	900	38,792	21,984	81,410	21,182	102592	2 12 10	4 13 5
1883	431	952	41,437	24,683	84,895	23,304	108199	2 12 2	4 7 9
1884	452	1,000	42,758	25,084	90,799	23,758	114557	2 13 7	4 11 6
1885	472	1,021	44,106	27,005	89,515	24,798	114313	2 11 10	4 4 7
1886	504	1,081	44,405	28,000	90,768	23,736	114504	2 11 6	4 1 9
1887	517	1,092	45,073	28,430	93,317	23,373	116744	2 11 9	4 2 1
1888	536	1,081	45,236	28,329	89,578	24,101	113679	2 10 3	4 0 3
1889	540	1,076	44,576	28,210	91,620	24,343	115963	2 12 0	4 2 2
1890	551	1,067	44,804	27,552	91,479	24,641	116120	2 11 10	4 4 3
1891	552	1,106	47,094	29,801	92,831	26,667	119498	2 10 8	4 0 2
1892	579	1,222	53,457	35,371	125264	593	125857	2 7 1	3 11 1
1893*	606	1,135	56,302	34,038	126725	702	127427	2 5 3	3 14 10
1894	609	1,110	57,986	37,886	123577	1,176	124753	2 3 0	3 5 2
1895	634	1,127	59,003	39,324	127552	1,186	128667	2 3 7	3 5 5
1896	639	1,132	59,944	40,449	130194	1,233	131427	2 3 10	3 4 11
1897	655	1,201	61,643	42,193	135348	1,499	136847	2 4 4	3 4 10
1898*	670	1,229	61,763	39,102	136912	744	137656	2 4 6	3 10 0
1899	677	1,264	62,316	42,228	139682	nil	139682	2 4 9	3 6 1
1900	690	1,259	62,439	43,104	145260	nil	145260	2 6 6	3 7 4
1901	706	1,331	63,183	43,789	149795	nil	149795	2 7 4	3 8 5
1902	716	1,351	62,962	42,690	149393	nil	149393	2 7 5	3 9 11
1903	715	1,320	61,977	42,752	145626	nil	145626	2 7 0	3 8 1
1904	715	1,332	60,879	42,234	146031	nil	146031	2 7 11	3 9 1
1905	722	1,420	59,026	41,807	149183	nil	149183	2 10 6	3 11 4
1906	708	1,426	57,270	40,489	150542	nil	150542	2 12 6	3 14 4
1907*	707	1,389	54,560	37,861	150157	nil	150157	2 15 0	3 19 3

Source: Director of Education's Report for 1907, SAPP, vol. 3, no. 44, 1908, p. 11

* In these years an epidemic of measles caused the average attendance to be very low.

Note: Fees for instruction up to and including Class IV (Compulsory Standard) were abolished in 1891, and for post-primary instruction in 1898.

Table A.4
Mean Chronological Ages of Pupils in Grades 1 to 7, 1921 - 1934

Year	Grade1	Grade2	Grade3	Grade4	Grade5	Grade6	Grade7
1921	6.64	7.95	9.11	10.24	11.35	12.28	13.06
1922	6.59	7.97	9.17	10.31	11.36	12.26	13.04
1923	6.52	7.97	9.25	10.32	11.34	12.20	13.02
1924	6.65	8.01	9.37	10.42	11.40	12.26	13.02
1925	6.53	7.98	9.27	10.40	11.42	12.35	12.99
1926	6.40	7.88	9.18	10.29	11.34	12.24	12.96
1927	6.39	7.82	9.14	10.28	11.30	12.21	13.00
1928	6.38	7.76	9.01	10.23	11.25	12.16	12.96
1929	6.30	7.68	8.99	10.11	11.24	12.18	12.94
1930	6.29	7.65	8.95	10.16	11.10	12.14	12.97
1931	6.23	7.59	8.82	9.95	11.03	11.98	12.91
1932	6.19	7.54	8.79	9.90	11.00	11.96	12.83
1933	6.19	7.54	8.76	9.91	10.96	11.96	12.80
1934	6.18	7.54	8.76	9.87	10.99	11.94	12.79

Table A.5
Standard Deviation of Ages of Pupils in Grade 1-7, 1921 - 1934

Year	Grade1	Grade2	Grade3	Grade4	Grade5	Grade6	Grade7
1921	0.91	0.93	1.02	1.10	1.07	0.94	0.78
1922	0.94	0.93	1.04	1.13	1.09	0.96	0.80
1923	0.93	0.98	1.03	1.10	1.07	0.94	0.78
1924	0.89	1.02	1.17	1.09	1.07	0.95	0.80
1925	0.98	1.02	1.10	1.13	1.06	0.93	0.82
1926	0.94	0.98	1.09	1.12	1.05	0.92	0.78
1927	0.93	0.98	1.07	1.11	1.06	0.94	0.77
1928	0.93	0.93	1.05	1.10	1.04	0.92	0.77
1929	0.87	0.90	1.04	1.10	1.07	0.94	0.76
1930	0.88	0.90	1.01	1.12	1.08	1.01	0.86
1931	0.87	0.88	0.97	1.04	1.04	0.99	0.86
1932	0.83	0.87	0.96	1.02	1.02	0.93	0.73
1933	0.82	0.86	0.95	1.02	1.01	0.94	0.82
1934	0.82	0.86	0.95	1.01	1.01	0.93	0.80

Table A.6
Mean Chronological Ages of Boys and Girls in Grades 1 to 7, 1935 - 1967

Note: excludes classes in separate infant schools from 1948 onwards

Year	Grade1b	Grade1g	Grade2b	Grade2g	Grade3b	Grade3g	Grade4g	Grade4g	Grade5b	Grade5g	Grade6b	Grade6g	Grade7b	Grade7g
1935	6.24	6.18	7.57	7.48	8.77	8.69	9.91	9.81	10.98	10.86	11.92	11.92	12.75	12.73
1936	6.25	6.17	7.56	7.47	8.81	8.70	9.90	9.77	10.95	10.86	11.91	11.83	12.75	12.77
1937	6.24	6.21	7.62	7.48	8.81	8.67	9.88	9.79	10.98	10.84	11.91	11.84	12.71	12.71
1938	6.16	6.15	7.61	7.48	8.86	8.69	9.91	9.76	10.93	10.82	11.88	11.84	12.68	12.66
1939	6.16	6.15	7.54	7.44	8.81	8.65	9.91	9.76	10.93	10.81	11.89	11.80	12.71	12.69
1940	6.14	6.12	7.53	7.43	8.78	8.64	9.90	9.75	10.96	10.80	11.85	11.76	12.72	12.65
1941	6.12	6.08	7.51	7.42	8.72	8.61	9.86	9.72	10.96	10.81	11.87	11.77	12.71	12.65
1942	6.11	6.06	7.42	7.34	8.68	8.55	9.79	9.69	10.91	10.76	11.87	11.75	12.68	12.61
1943	5.67	5.64	6.96	6.88	8.21	8.09	9.33	9.22	10.45	10.31	11.49	11.37	12.36	12.23
1944	5.63	5.61	6.92	6.83	8.17	8.02	9.27	9.12	10.41	10.22	11.39	11.29	12.31	12.16
1945	5.58	5.54	6.84	6.76	8.07	7.95	9.20	9.06	10.29	10.16	11.34	11.21	12.27	12.18
1946	5.54	5.50	6.77	6.71	7.98	7.87	9.11	8.99	10.21	10.10	11.31	11.16	12.23	12.11
1947	5.52	5.48	6.74	6.69	7.95	7.83	9.05	8.95	10.19	10.05	11.22	11.13	12.19	12.04
1948	5.74	5.70	6.87	6.78	7.99	7.89	9.11	9.01	10.19	10.08	11.29	11.15	12.21	12.11
1949	5.74	5.67	6.92	6.83	7.99	7.98	9.11	8.98	10.18	10.06	10.21	10.13	11.22	11.09
1950	5.70	5.66	6.93	6.83	7.99	7.89	9.05	8.94	10.16	10.04	11.20	11.09	12.13	12.06
1951	5.72	5.71	6.93	6.86	8.01	7.86	9.12	8.95	10.13	9.99	11.21	11.08	12.10	12.03
1952	5.63	5.57	6.95	6.84	7.97	7.85	9.08	7.95	10.15	10.00	11.16	11.04	12.12	12.01

Table A.6
Continued

Year	Grade1b	Grade1g	Grade2b	Grade2g	Grade3b	Grade3g	Grade4g	Grade4g	Grade5b	Grade5g	Grade6b	Grade6g	Grade7b	Grade7g
1953	5.70	5.64	6.86	6.74	7.99	7.88	9.09	8.96	10.15	10.02	11.21	11.08	12.09	12.00
1954	5.70	5.67	6.91	6.82	7.93	7.80	9.09	8.96	10.13	10.01	11.18	11.04	12.12	12.02
1955	5.71	5.65	6.92	6.82	8.00	7.87	9.02	8.88	10.15	10.02	11.17	11.03	12.10	11.99
1956	5.70	5.65	6.95	6.83	8.01	7.89	9.08	8.94	10.08	9.92	11.15	11.04	12.09	11.99
1957	5.70	5.65	6.92	6.81	8.07	7.92	9.11	8.97	10.13	9.99	11.10	10.94	12.10	12.01
1958	5.72	5.65	6.93	6.81	8.03	7.91	9.14	8.97	10.18	10.01	11.16	11.02	12.05	11.90
1959	5.70	5.65	6.90	6.78	8.03	7.91	9.11	8.95	10.19	10.01	11.20	11.05	12.09	11.98
1960	5.67	5.63	6.90	6.83	8.01	7.87	9.11	8.97	10.17	10.09	11.23	11.06	12.13	12.01
1961	5.65	5.59	6.89	6.80	7.95	7.85	9.09	8.94	10.16	10.04	11.21	11.03	12.16	12.00
1962	5.62	5.59	6.88	6.76	7.92	7.81	9.03	8.91	10.15	9.97	11.20	11.06	12.15	11.97
1963	5.62	5.58	6.84	6.76	7.90	7.79	9.01	8.87	10.08	9.95	11.18	11.01	12.14	11.99
1964	5.57	5.52	6.79	6.70	7.82	7.72	8.93	8.82	10.04	9.90	11.11	10.96	12.13	11.98
1965	5.55	5.52	6.76	6.67	7.81	7.71	8.90	8.76	9.98	9.85	11.07	10.92	12.08	11.95
1966	5.53	5.48	6.73	6.67	7.78	7.68	8.85	8.74	9.94	9.80	11.02	10.88	12.05	11.92
1967	5.52	5.49	6.72	6.63	7.76	7.68	8.82	8.71	9.89	9.78	10.97	10.83	12.01	11.90

Table A.7
Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in grades 1 to 7, 1935 - 1967

Note: excludes classes in separate infant schools from 1948 onwards

Year	Grade1b	Grade1g	Grade2b	Grade2g	Grade3b	Grade3g	Grade4g	Grade4g	Grade5b	Grade5g	Grade6b	Grade6g	Grade7b	Grade7g
1935	0.89	0.82	0.87	0.84	0.97	0.93	1.06	0.99	1.03	0.97	0.93	0.89	0.83	0.79
1936	0.85	0.83	0.90	0.82	0.94	0.92	1.03	0.97	1.03	0.97	0.94	0.91	0.80	0.78
1937	0.88	0.88	0.93	0.85	0.97	0.88	1.00	0.97	1.03	0.98	0.92	0.90	0.78	0.78
1938	0.84	0.87	0.90	0.81	0.99	0.90	1.02	0.94	0.99	0.95	0.89	0.90	0.78	0.75
1939	0.85	0.83	0.92	0.85	0.99	0.87	1.03	0.96	0.99	0.96	0.93	0.90	0.79	0.78
1940	0.83	0.81	0.87	0.81	0.97	0.88	1.03	0.96	1.01	0.94	0.89	0.87	0.78	0.77
1941	0.83	0.80	0.85	0.80	0.94	0.87	1.00	0.93	1.03	0.96	0.89	0.88	0.78	0.75
1942	0.83	0.79	0.87	0.83	0.94	0.87	1.04	0.97	1.02	1.02	0.92	0.89	0.79	0.79
1943	0.79	0.73	0.85	0.83	0.96	0.89	1.03	0.97	1.08	0.99	1.00	0.95	0.87	0.81
1944	0.73	0.76	0.81	0.76	0.92	0.86	1.00	0.92	1.02	0.93	0.96	0.94	0.86	0.83
1945	0.72	0.68	0.79	0.76	0.84	0.78	0.96	0.89	0.99	0.94	0.94	0.89	0.84	0.81
1946	0.67	0.64	0.77	0.73	0.84	0.77	0.89	0.83	0.93	0.90	0.96	0.92	0.84	0.78
1947	0.72	0.72	0.76	0.76	0.84	0.77	0.88	0.84	0.96	0.88	0.92	0.89	0.88	0.83
1948	0.77	0.76	0.84	0.78	0.82	0.76	0.89	0.86	0.92	0.86	0.91	0.87	0.82	0.78
1949	0.81	0.76	0.86	0.84	0.85	0.85	0.91	0.84	0.95	0.88	0.91	0.86	0.82	0.77
1950	0.75	0.71	0.88	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.90	0.85	0.96	0.89	0.93	0.88	0.84	0.79
1951	0.74	0.71	0.86	0.83	0.87	0.79	0.92	0.83	0.95	0.87	0.95	0.88	0.83	0.79
1952	0.74	0.66	0.82	0.77	0.83	0.74	0.92	0.82	0.92	0.86	0.93	0.87	0.83	0.80

Table A.7
Continued

Year	Grade1b	Grade1g	Grade2b	Grade2g	Grade3b	Grade3g	Grade4g	Grade4g	Grade5b	Grade5g	Grade6b	Grade6g	Grade7b	Grade7g
1953	0.73	0.68	0.82	0.75	0.78	0.73	0.89	0.82	0.93	0.88	0.92	0.86	0.84	0.80
1954	0.76	0.68	0.78	0.72	0.82	0.75	0.87	0.81	0.93	0.88	0.93	0.86	0.80	0.78
1955	0.75	0.72	0.80	0.75	0.82	0.74	0.91	0.83	0.89	0.85	0.93	0.86	0.83	0.78
1956	0.76	0.69	0.84	0.78	0.83	0.76	0.86	0.78	0.93	0.87	0.88	0.84	0.82	0.79
1957	0.74	0.70	0.79	0.76	0.84	0.78	0.89	0.81	0.89	0.83	0.94	0.85	0.81	0.77
1958	0.76	0.71	0.83	0.64	0.81	0.78	0.89	0.83	0.94	0.86	0.89	0.83	0.86	0.79
1959	0.72	0.73	0.80	0.76	0.80	0.77	0.88	0.82	0.93	0.86	0.92	0.84	0.80	0.76
1960	0.72	0.72	0.79	0.77	0.82	0.76	0.88	0.83	0.91	0.88	0.93	0.88	0.84	0.78
1961	0.72	0.69	0.78	0.79	0.79	0.75	0.88	0.83	0.93	0.86	0.92	0.85	0.86	0.81
1962	0.68	0.69	0.81	0.75	0.79	0.76	0.85	0.81	0.92	0.84	0.92	0.86	0.85	0.78
1963	0.70	0.67	0.75	0.72	0.78	0.73	0.86	0.81	0.89	0.84	0.93	0.86	0.85	0.79
1964	0.67	0.65	0.70	0.69	0.75	0.68	0.81	0.76	0.88	0.81	0.89	0.83	0.87	0.81
1965	0.62	0.60	0.69	0.64	0.70	0.67	0.79	0.72	0.83	0.76	0.86	0.81	0.84	0.79
1966	0.60	0.56	0.68	0.63	0.68	0.65	0.73	0.69	0.80	0.73	0.84	0.78	0.83	0.78
1967	0.61	0.57	0.65	0.63	0.67	0.64	0.72	0.67	0.76	0.71	0.81	0.74	0.80	0.78

Table A.8
Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Infant School classes, 1948 - 1963

Year	Recb	Recg	L1b	L1g	U1b	U1g	L2b	L2g	U2b	U2g
1948	5.02	5.04	5.21	5.20	5.85	5.82	6.22	6.19	6.93	6.85
1949	5.03	5.02	5.21	5.17	5.83	5.80	6.27	6.23	6.99	6.93
1950	5.03	5.03	5.24	5.18	5.85	5.83	6.23	6.22	6.93	6.90
1951	5.03	5.03	5.27	5.24	5.97	5.96	6.32	6.24	6.91	6.86
1952	5.04	5.03	5.19	5.18	5.87	5.81	6.34	6.30	7.00	6.96
1953	5.04	5.04	5.26	5.23	6.02	5.95	6.26	6.21	6.94	6.87
1954	5.05	5.04	5.30	5.25	6.02	5.92	6.34	6.27	7.02	6.96
1955	5.07	5.04	5.25	5.22	6.02	5.96	6.37	6.31	7.10	6.99
1956	5.05	5.03	5.28	5.24	6.05	5.97	6.36	6.32	7.09	7.00
1957	5.05	5.05	5.27	5.24	6.03	5.97	6.38	6.33	7.11	7.02
1958	5.04	5.04	5.28	5.26	6.06	6.01	6.33	6.30	7.11	7.04
1959	5.04	5.03	5.29	5.27	5.98	5.96	6.34	6.31	7.08	6.99
1960	5.04	5.04	5.29	5.26	6.01	5.98	6.39	6.34	7.06	7.01
1961	5.04	5.03	5.33	5.27	6.01	5.96	6.36	6.30	7.05	6.97
1962	5.03	5.02	5.31	5.27	5.99	5.94	6.40	6.31	6.96	6.91
1963	5.03	5.03	5.28	5.26	6.01	5.97	6.35	6.29	6.93	6.89

Table A.9
Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Infant School classes, 1948 - 1963

Year	Recb	Recg	L1b	L1g	U1b	U1g	L2b	L2g	U2b	U2g
1948	0.15	0.19	0.44	0.43	0.53	0.55	0.46	0.46	0.60	0.60
1949	0.17	0.15	0.45	0.40	0.50	0.55	0.53	0.50	0.57	0.60
1950	0.19	0.18	0.47	0.43	0.52	0.52	0.49	0.49	0.60	0.56
1951	0.21	0.17	0.51	0.46	0.56	0.58	0.55	0.49	0.58	0.59
1952	0.19	0.18	0.43	0.40	0.51	0.53	0.56	0.53	0.57	0.56
1953	0.22	0.20	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.44	0.50	0.45	0.60	0.60
1954	0.22	0.21	0.50	0.49	0.54	0.52	0.55	0.50	0.58	0.58
1955	0.31	0.24	0.49	0.48	0.52	0.48	0.56	0.56	0.62	0.58
1956	0.22	0.24	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.62	0.59
1957	0.24	0.23	0.50	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.58	0.56	0.62	0.61
1958	0.20	0.21	0.49	0.47	0.45	0.43	0.56	0.53	0.60	0.60
1959	0.21	0.18	0.50	0.50	0.47	0.46	0.54	0.53	0.60	0.59
1960	0.21	0.20	0.50	0.49	0.49	0.47	0.57	0.55	0.60	0.58
1961	0.20	0.17	0.51	0.47	0.48	0.48	0.55	0.51	0.59	0.58
1962	0.16	0.16	0.51	0.48	0.45	0.43	0.57	0.52	0.57	0.58
1963	0.17	0.19	0.48	0.46	0.42	0.39	0.53	0.49	0.57	0.55

Table A.10
Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Reception to Grade 7 in schools without a separate infant department, 1968-1990

Year	Recep boys	Recep girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls	Grade3 boys	Grade3 girls	Grade4 boys	Grade4 girls	Grade5 boys	Grade5 girls	Grade6 boys	Grade6 girls	Grade7 boys	Grade7 girls
1968	5.04	5.04	5.60	5.57	6.71	6.63	7.75	7.66	8.80	8.71	9.84	9.73	10.91	10.79	11.95	11.81
1969	5.03	5.02	5.57	5.54	6.64	6.59	7.72	7.64	8.77	8.68	9.82	9.72	10.87	10.73	11.91	11.79
1970	5.03	5.03	5.54	5.53	6.62	6.56	7.66	7.61	8.75	8.65	9.79	9.69	10.83	10.72	11.86	11.73
1971	5.03	5.02	5.53	5.49	6.61	6.55	7.65	7.59	8.69	8.62	9.75	9.66	10.79	10.69	11.83	11.73
1973	5.03	5.01	5.49	5.47	6.55	6.50	7.63	7.56	8.64	8.56	9.66	9.58	10.69	10.63	11.74	11.64
1974	5.04	5.03	5.52	5.46	6.52	6.49	7.61	7.53	8.64	8.55	9.65	9.58	10.66	10.59	11.68	11.61
1975	5.01	5.02	5.46	5.42	6.53	6.46	7.56	7.51	8.62	8.54	9.64	9.55	10.66	10.57	11.68	11.59
1976	5.02	5.01	5.44	5.42	6.50	6.45	7.57	7.49	8.57	8.51	9.61	9.53	10.64	10.55	11.65	11.58
1977	5.01	5.01	5.46	5.43	6.48	6.44	7.55	7.49	8.58	8.50	9.58	9.52	10.62	10.54	11.65	11.56
1978	5.01	5.01	5.49	5.43	6.50	6.44	7.52	7.47	8.56	8.49	9.58	9.50	10.59	10.51	11.62	11.54
1979	5.02	5.01	5.49	5.45	6.50	6.45	7.55	7.48	8.54	8.48	9.57	9.51	10.59	10.51	11.59	11.53
1980	5.01	5.01	5.42	5.37	6.43	6.37	7.47	7.39	8.47	8.39	9.47	9.40	10.49	10.43	11.51	11.43
1981	5.01	5.01	5.43	5.39	6.44	6.38	7.46	7.40	8.48	8.40	9.48	9.40	10.46	10.40	11.50	11.44
1985	5.03	5.03	5.73	5.69	6.62	6.57	7.58	7.50	8.55	8.47	9.52	9.46	10.51	10.43	11.51	11.44
1986	5.05	5.04	5.85	5.82	6.79	6.73	7.69	7.61	8.60	8.51	9.57	9.50	10.54	10.46	11.52	11.45
1987	5.06	5.05	5.92	5.89	6.89	6.84	7.81	7.75	8.69	8.61	9.59	9.51	10.56	10.48	11.53	11.44
1988	5.06	5.04	5.95	5.93	6.95	6.90	7.93	7.85	8.82	8.77	9.70	9.61	10.60	10.52	11.57	11.48
1989	5.04	5.02	6.01	5.98	7.04	7.00	8.01	7.97	8.97	8.91	9.88	9.83	10.76	10.67	11.66	11.58
1990	5.05	5.03	6.02	5.99	7.02	6.98	8.05	8.00	9.02	8.96	9.98	9.90	10.86	10.81	11.76	11.68

Table A.11

Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Reception to Grade 7 in schools without a separate infant department, 1968-1990

Year	Recep boys	Recep girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls	Grade3 boys	Grade3 girls	Grade4 boys	Grade4 girls	Grade5 boys	Grade5 girls	Grade6 boys	Grade6 girls	Grade7 boys	Grade7 girls
1968	0.22	0.26	0.64	0.62	0.64	0.60	0.65	0.61	0.68	0.65	0.74	0.69	0.76	0.73	0.79	0.73
1969	0.19	0.16	0.58	0.57	0.63	0.59	0.64	0.59	0.66	0.62	0.70	0.66	0.73	0.67	0.75	0.71
1970	0.19	0.17	0.58	0.57	0.62	0.60	0.63	0.61	0.66	0.62	0.68	0.64	0.69	0.66	0.72	0.67
1971	0.18	0.14	0.58	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.58	0.64	0.61	0.65	0.62	0.68	0.63	0.69	0.65
1973	0.19	0.11	0.55	0.54	0.60	0.60	0.68	0.68	0.62	0.59	0.64	0.62	0.64	0.61	0.66	0.62
1974	0.20	0.18	0.55	0.53	0.58	0.55	0.60	0.58	0.62	0.60	0.62	0.60	0.64	0.62	0.63	0.60
1975	0.19	0.19	0.54	0.52	0.56	0.54	0.58	0.56	0.59	0.57	0.61	0.58	0.60	0.59	0.62	0.59
1976	0.16	0.13	0.53	0.52	0.57	0.54	0.57	0.55	0.59	0.56	0.59	0.58	0.61	0.58	0.60	0.59
1977	0.13	0.13	0.55	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.57	0.54	0.58	0.56	0.60	0.58	0.61	0.58	0.61	0.58
1978	0.14	0.16	0.55	0.53	0.56	0.53	0.56	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.57	0.54	0.59	0.56	0.59	0.56
1979	0.14	0.11	0.54	0.52	0.55	0.53	0.57	0.54	0.58	0.56	0.59	0.56	0.58	0.55	0.58	0.56
1980	0.13	0.10	0.52	0.50	0.55	0.52	0.56	0.52	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.54	0.58	0.55	0.56	0.54
1981	0.11	0.10	0.53	0.51	0.53	0.52	0.56	0.54	0.58	0.53	0.57	0.53	0.56	0.54	0.57	0.54
1985	0.18	0.16	0.52	0.52	0.54	0.54	0.56	0.55	0.56	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.57	0.54
1986	0.22	0.19	0.46	0.47	0.52	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.57	0.55	0.57	0.56	0.57	0.54	0.57	0.55
1987	0.24	0.22	0.42	0.43	0.46	0.46	0.53	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.57	0.56	0.57	0.55	0.57	0.54
1988	0.24	0.21	0.43	0.44	0.44	0.43	0.47	0.46	0.52	0.51	0.56	0.56	0.57	0.54	0.57	0.54
1989	0.28	0.26	0.37	0.34	0.41	0.38	0.42	0.41	0.46	0.45	0.50	0.51	0.56	0.54	0.57	0.56
1990	0.30	0.27	0.36	0.35	0.39	0.37	0.42	0.40	0.43	0.42	0.47	0.46	0.51	0.51	0.57	0.55

Table A.12

Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in Reception-Grade 2 in Primary (R-7) schools compared with Infant (R-2) schools, 1968-1981

	Reception-Primary		Reception-Infant		Primary		Infant		Primary		Infant	
Year	Reception boys	Reception girls	Reception boys	Reception girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls
1968	5.04	5.04	5.02	5.01	5.60	5.57	5.55	5.54	6.71	6.63	6.66	6.58
1969	5.03	5.02	5.03	5.02	5.57	5.54	5.54	5.51	6.64	6.59	6.59	6.57
1970	5.03	5.03	5.02	5.01	5.54	5.53	5.55	5.49	6.62	6.56	6.59	6.53
1971	5.03	5.02	5.02	5.01	5.53	5.49	5.52	5.50	6.61	6.55	6.58	6.51
1973	5.03	5.01	5.02	5.01	5.49	5.47	5.49	5.48	6.55	6.50	6.55	6.49
1974	5.04	5.03	5.01	5.01	5.52	5.46	5.49	5.47	6.52	6.49	6.54	6.49
1975	5.01	5.02	5.01	5.01	5.46	5.42	5.45	5.42	6.53	6.46	6.50	6.46
1976	5.02	5.01	5.01	5.01	5.44	5.42	5.44	5.44	6.50	6.45	6.49	6.46
1977	5.01	5.01	5.00	5.01	5.46	5.43	5.48	5.43	6.48	6.44	6.49	6.46
1978	5.01	5.01	5.00	5.00	5.49	5.43	5.46	5.44	6.50	6.44	6.54	6.46
1979	5.02	5.01	5.00	5.00	5.49	5.45	5.46	5.44	6.50	6.45	6.50	6.45
1980	5.01	5.01	5.00	5.00	5.42	5.37	5.42	5.39	6.43	6.37	6.43	6.38
1981	5.01	5.01	5.00	5.00	5.43	5.39	5.40	5.40	6.44	6.38	6.43	6.39

Table A.13
Standard deviation of ages of boys and girls in Reception-Grade 2 in Primary (R-7) schools compared with Infant (R-2) schools, 1968-1981

	Reception-Primary		Reception-Infant		Primary		Infant		Primary		Infant	
Year	Reception boys	Reception girls	Reception boys	Reception girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade1 boys	Grade1 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls	Grade2 boys	Grade2 girls
1968	0.22	0.26	0.17	0.12	0.64	0.62	0.56	0.54	0.64	0.60	0.57	0.55
1969	0.19	0.16	0.17	0.13	0.58	0.57	0.56	0.53	0.63	0.59	0.59	0.57
1970	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.11	0.58	0.57	0.56	0.54	0.62	0.60	0.57	0.55
1971	0.18	0.14	0.15	0.11	0.58	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.60	0.60	0.57	0.54
1973	0.19	0.11	0.17	0.13	0.55	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.60	0.60	0.56	0.55
1974	0.20	0.18	0.13	0.09	0.55	0.53	0.55	0.53	0.58	0.55	0.55	0.55
1975	0.19	0.19	0.12	0.12	0.54	0.52	0.53	0.51	0.56	0.54	0.55	0.53
1976	0.16	0.13	0.07	0.09	0.53	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.57	0.54	0.54	0.54
1977	0.13	0.13	0.07	0.14	0.55	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.56	0.55	0.53	0.52
1978	0.14	0.16	0.05	0.09	0.55	0.53	0.52	0.51	0.56	0.53	0.54	0.53
1979	0.14	0.11	0.09	0.12	0.54	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.55	0.53	0.54	0.54
1980	0.13	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.52	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.55	0.52	0.52	0.51
1981	0.11	0.10	0.06	0.03	0.53	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.53	0.52	0.53	0.50

Table A.14
Number of pupils placed in Opportunity Classes, S A government primary schools, 1926-1990

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1926			169
1927			231
1928			282
1929			317
1930			318
1931			332
1932			324
1933			355
1934			342
1935	281	138	419
1936	290	149	439
1937	302	158	460
1938	341	200	541
1939	329	202	531
1940	378	237	615
1941	408	240	648
1942	387	241	628
1943	392	221	613
1944	393	216	609
1945	403	199	602
1946	449	204	653
1947	455	207	662
1948	450	232	682
1949	488	246	734
1950	461	233	694
1951	402	231	633
1952	415	227	642
1953	437	227	664
1954	469	249	718

Table A.14
Continued

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1955	476	302	778
1956	454	233	687
1957	530	249	779
1958	511	230	741
1959	621	289	910
1960	553	268	821
1961	597	268	865
1962	611	310	921
1963	653	326	979
1964	671	371	1042
1965	642	409	1051
1966	754	411	1165
1967	758	377	1135
1969	782	403	1185
1970	735	373	1108
1971	860	449	1309
1973	720	364	1084
1974	688	349	1037
1975	525	250	775
1976	501	221	722
1977	443	210	653
1978	477	233	710
1979	398	193	591
1980	309	152	461
1981	307	153	460
1982	283	149	432
1985	276	139	415
1986	275	131	406
1987	275	134	409
1988	255	132	387
1989	276	147	423
1990	298	147	445

Table A.15
Number of pupils aged from 7 and under to 16 and over in Opportunity classes for selected years, 1935 to 1979

Year	Seven and under		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen		Fourteen		Fifteen		Sixteen and over	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1935	5	2	37	13	46	25	52	41	46	21	37	19	29	13	20	2	7	2	2	0
1936	2	3	28	9	44	23	59	36	42	34	53	20	38	21	21	2	3	1	0	0
1937	1	1	17	9	47	22	65	36	48	38	52	28	52	17	14	6	5	1	1	0
1938	5	4	23	12	36	24	71	30	62	46	59	41	52	27	26	15	6	0	1	1
1939	5	3	22	13	39	22	59	30	66	39	59	43	60	30	16	18	3	3	0	1
1940	7	1	20	10	46	32	74	48	73	40	79	53	67	41	9	8	2	3	1	1
1941	6	0	26	6	53	26	70	50	72	43	87	48	76	60	14	7	4	0	0	0
1942	2	3	21	10	55	13	63	42	81	53	76	46	68	45	15	28	5	1	1	0
1943	2	1	13	7	50	21	82	29	76	45	77	55	72	49	15	10	3	4	2	0
1944	8	1	26	9	46	16	62	33	77	38	73	43	70	56	23	13	7	7	1	0
1945	12	3	24	10	58	20	69	27	74	38	70	41	72	45	21	12	3	2	0	1
1946	34	14	41	17	60	26	69	31	73	29	74	43	70	35	25	7	3	2	0	0
1947	18	7	68	21	76	34	75	39	73	31	56	30	63	33	21	11	5	1	0	0
1948	27	7	55	29	69	42	72	37	68	44	72	33	58	26	24	13	4	1	1	0
1949	15	6	58	19	77	46	82	48	93	44	74	39	64	32	19	9	6	2	0	1

Table A.15
Continued 1

Year	Seven and under		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen		Fourteen		Fifteen		Sixteen and over	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1950	20	4	54	23	68	28	72	49	68	36	87	47	74	37	15	8	3	1	0	0
1951	9	5	47	19	72	32	74	35	54	51	57	37	69	42	16	9	4	1	0	0
1952	8	0	43	15	67	35	75	41	73	46	55	39	63	32	26	16	4	3	1	0
1953	4	0	34	9	67	23	68	41	77	44	88	41	63	48	31	18	5	3	1	0
1954	17	1	37	21	70	23	83	42	73	44	82	40	78	56	26	20	2	2	1	0
1955	13	2	34	18	59	34	76	32	91	42	72	45	94	69	27	48	10	7	0	5
1956	3	2	30	10	64	26	79	34	64	25	86	50	71	54	41	23	14	6	2	3
1957	6	0	28	12	68	29	107	52	95	38	81	43	81	47	48	19	13	7	3	2
1958	1	0	36	7	65	31	99	42	101	40	79	38	76	46	39	20	14	5	1	1
1959	14	8	13	8	79	22	108	49	119	58	127	56	100	51	46	33	11	4	4	0
1960	17	5	23	9	57	26	82	38	104	45	93	49	106	53	56	32	14	10	1	1
1961	21	9	18	3	47	21	99	46	111	41	103	57	107	46	63	34	24	8	4	3
1962	17	9	27	9	57	23	88	50	111	56	115	48	107	57	69	25	17	20	3	13
1963	5	4	33	15	77	27	95	46	96	47	109	58	116	62	88	36	32	23	2	8
1964	15	12	40	16	65	26	100	46	95	58	97	59	131	62	101	58	23	29	4	5
1965	12	14	22	14	68	28	86	37	105	66	84	72	111	69	117	83	33	18	4	8

Table A.15
Continued 2

Year	Seven and under		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen		Fourteen		Fifteen		Sixteen and over	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1966	20	20	35	12	62	30	108	49	125	53	145	78	111	83	115	63	31	21	2	2
1967	4	1	44	18	75	37	105	39	128	57	137	64	137	69	88	71	35	20	5	1
1969	27	12	52	22	88	48	141	72	147	83	142	66	99	47	48	37	25	15	13	1
1970	2	2	38	16	94	48	141	63	148	80	149	79	84	47	45	26	20	12	15	0
1973	49	28	57	28	125	38	111	69	150	85	138	56	72	42	10	7	7	9	1	2
1974	51	37	83	31	98	57	147	53	132	79	134	59	35	18	3	9	4	4	1	2
1975	9	4	12	10	46	19	91	40	102	55	139	55	96	51	29	15	1	1	0	0
1976	6	1	11	7	48	28	74	28	107	54	126	53	105	46	23	3	1	1	0	0
1977	17	1	12	6	45	21	61	42	90	43	116	47	84	39	17	11	1	0	0	0
1978	16	5	30	5	46	22	73	41	86	55	100	48	94	46	25	7	7	1	0	3
1979	14	7	17	5	56	17	50	29	70	46	78	36	83	37	18	13	5	1	7	2

Table A.16
Number of pupils aged from 7 and under to 16 and over in Special classes for selected years, 1980 to 1990

Year	Seven and under		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen		Fourteen		Fifteen		Sixteen and over	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1980	12	7	17	11	39	13	55	21	50	29	70	38	52	26	11	6	1	0	2	1
1981	13	4	17	8	35	26	54	20	56	25	60	32	57	30	14	6	0	2	1	0
1982	13	8	16	9	28	26	51	33	62	21	50	24	47	24	16	2	0	1	0	1
1985	37	11	15.5	8	37	16	45.5	18	39	27	56.5	25	37	26	7.6	5	1	1	2	2
1986	23	13	33	11	40	12	52	25	54	29	33	18	32	14	7	7	1	2	0	0
1987	27	8	27	9	45	23	48	16	47	32	53	22	21	16	6	4	1	1	0	3
1988	36	18	28	10	26	14	39	29	42	21	37	21	36	15	7	1	3	0	1	3
1989	35	12	27	15	45	14	45	20	44	33	40	21	34	21	7	8	1	0	0	3
1990	37	13	31	15	39	18	57	23	48	29	52	26	25	14	4	4	2	1	3	4

Table A.17
Percentage of boys and girls retarded by one year in Grades 1-7, 1935-1990

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1935	25.22	24.65	37.06	34.22	39.79	37.78	36.10	37.90	38.01	39.16	39.67	40.44	45.64	47.35
1936	25.27	22.77	36.07	35.13	41.03	38.11	38.92	38.06	36.01	38.03	40.01	39.26	46.21	47.70
1937	26.07	23.10	36.70	33.86	40.03	40.15	38.70	37.87	38.43	36.86	38.65	38.55	46.31	46.22
1938	23.57	22.50	36.81	35.03	39.66	38.97	39.33	40.04	38.24	37.82	39.70	38.38	44.17	45.76
1939	23.76	22.12	36.28	33.97	39.92	38.55	37.89	37.74	38.79	38.45	38.65	38.94	44.97	44.88
1940	23.03	21.37	35.38	33.20	39.58	39.03	38.19	37.52	36.82	37.59	39.42	39.33	44.88	43.66
1941	21.22	20.60	34.52	32.64	37.70	37.43	38.26	38.77	37.18	37.72	39.54	37.97	45.71	45.81
1942	20.26	18.44	31.61	29.51	36.27	34.98	34.21	35.18	36.81	35.56	38.19	38.84	43.89	41.18
1943	8.87	6.86	15.63	13.69	21.60	19.46	24.29	21.45	25.49	22.79	27.20	26.75	30.78	26.71
1944	7.97	7.15	15.23	11.32	20.10	17.23	22.24	20.51	25.61	22.20	25.73	24.10	29.55	27.85
1945	6.22	4.90	12.40	10.51	18.90	14.34	20.57	17.97	23.03	19.95	26.12	22.94	29.05	27.04
1946	5.91	4.51	10.67	7.76	15.37	13.15	19.93	14.85	20.58	18.53	23.83	21.54	27.51	24.90
1947	4.98	4.23	10.00	7.97	14.30	10.73	17.35	14.56	20.65	15.89	22.65	19.63	25.00	22.36
1948	8.61	7.01	11.86	9.44	15.62	11.79	17.63	14.73	20.09	18.69	25.11	19.35	25.16	22.82
1949	8.78	7.09	13.64	9.14	15.85	16.07	17.63	14.88	19.17	16.43	21.22	19.73	25.86	21.25
1950	7.90	6.44	13.21	10.07	14.75	11.07	17.30	13.56	18.78	15.69	20.11	17.38	22.47	21.15
1951	8.46	8.21	13.48	10.95	14.88	11.36	17.45	13.32	18.33	15.15	21.09	17.29	22.08	18.97

Table A.17
Continued 1

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1952	7.77	6.50	14.24	10.01	14.68	10.77	16.90	14.14	18.43	14.72	20.21	17.37	23.02	18.18
1953	7.46	6.31	12.87	9.17	15.52	11.27	17.44	13.32	18.75	15.71	20.48	17.49	21.36	18.13
1954	9.10	7.85	11.94	9.42	14.14	10.60	17.51	13.82	17.86	13.92	19.71	17.36	21.34	17.77
1955	8.22	6.63	15.44	10.67	13.91	9.34	16.17	12.62	18.71	14.99	19.17	15.53	20.64	17.99
1956	7.68	6.57	13.74	10.48	16.87	12.21	15.83	12.09	18.02	13.87	19.84	16.80	20.29	17.31
1957	8.78	6.18	14.05	9.38	17.54	12.60	19.22	14.48	16.70	13.18	18.26	13.99	20.56	18.05
1958	8.98	6.47	13.68	8.95	15.89	11.66	19.05	13.67	20.23	15.75	17.94	14.49	18.37	14.88
1959	7.43	5.23	12.10	8.19	17.44	11.61	17.51	13.08	19.06	14.36	21.36	17.58	18.04	15.14
1960	7.17	6.15	11.48	8.01	15.75	10.71	18.71	13.48	18.80	16.93	20.39	16.04	22.28	18.55
1961	6.99	4.57	12.68	8.89	13.81	10.09	17.76	12.52	19.20	14.15	19.68	14.88	20.81	16.85
1962	5.91	4.91	11.00	7.86	13.84	9.89	15.79	11.43	18.43	13.12	20.82	15.46	19.58	14.80
1963	6.04	4.64	9.71	7.25	12.54	9.20	15.83	11.51	16.76	12.29	18.88	14.89	20.90	15.30
1964	5.08	3.71	9.19	6.51	10.39	7.12	14.22	10.85	16.79	12.53	17.79	13.83	18.91	14.66
1965	4.30	2.75	8.28	0.87	10.49	7.07	12.98	8.78	16.07	12.02	18.22	13.97	18.36	14.08
1966	4.35	2.77	7.62	4.81	9.63	6.15	12.18	8.48	14.57	10.11	17.17	12.98	18.69	14.14
1967	3.80	2.62	7.78	4.65	9.05	5.68	11.18	7.41	13.47	9.74	15.33	11.38	17.15	13.60
1968	4.43	2.74	6.71	4.49	8.27	5.27	11.10	6.93	12.13	8.13	14.75	10.18	15.42	10.93

Table A.17
Continued 2

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1969	3.72	2.50	6.49	3.83	8.04	4.72	9.49	6.52	11.81	7.72	13.14	8.82	15.13	10.60
1970	3.25	2.42	5.25	3.45	6.89	4.61	8.93	5.33	10.51	7.17	12.39	8.05	12.91	8.88
1971	3.23	2.18	4.78	3.44	5.84	3.99	7.64	4.97	9.29	5.61	10.85	7.26	12.72	8.37
1974	2.14	1.38	3.27	2.10	4.05	2.84	5.52	3.25	6.02	3.92	6.95	4.29	7.42	4.97
1975	1.68	1.04	2.59	1.71	3.65	2.31	4.53	2.92	5.37	3.31	5.84	3.38	7.00	4.12
1976	1.66	1.08	3.02	1.58	3.50	1.91	3.92	2.46	4.40	2.94	5.46	3.31	5.92	3.32
1977	1.62	0.97	2.54	1.55	3.18	1.80	4.00	2.32	4.19	2.79	4.67	3.15	5.74	3.21
1978	1.80	1.13	2.38	1.30	2.71	2.00	3.44	2.04	3.56	2.04	4.24	2.39	4.33	2.60
1979	1.80	1.16	2.19	1.44	2.95	1.72	3.13	2.36	3.48	2.19	4.10	2.25	4.21	2.49
1980	0.95	0.79	1.92	0.99	2.60	1.24	2.43	1.31	2.48	1.72	3.11	1.74	2.94	1.60
1981	1.24	0.93	1.50	1.01	1.85	1.30	2.48	1.34	2.74	1.54	2.59	1.70	3.31	1.90
1985	2.81	1.58	2.94	1.92	3.09	1.78	2.91	1.80	2.35	1.65	2.68	1.58	3.30	1.98
1986	3.71	2.62	4.59	2.95	4.09	2.60	3.38	2.00	3.32	2.22	2.97	1.91	3.07	2.01
1987	4.83	3.10	5.11	3.43	4.98	3.54	4.51	2.61	3.64	1.99	3.40	2.01	2.93	1.84
1988	5.95	4.45	6.76	4.28	6.74	4.10	5.39	3.61	4.59	2.56	4.21	2.01	3.78	1.87
1989	6.44	4.53	9.92	6.79	8.76	5.93	8.18	5.09	6.56	4.63	5.86	3.18	4.60	2.62
1990	6.96	4.80	8.05	5.29	10.44	7.25	9.57	6.19	9.15	5.54	6.47	4.53	6.34	3.64

Table A.18
Percentage of boys and girls retarded by more than one year in Grades 1-7, 1935-1990

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1935	6.15	4.38	11.34	8.91	17.56	15.20	23.55	19.39	25.94	21.45	25.05	24.89	15.43	14.01
1936	6.21	4.94	11.49	8.50	17.70	15.05	22.36	18.00	25.82	21.90	24.14	21.95	14.81	15.55
1937	6.32	6.06	12.97	9.22	18.09	13.15	21.64	18.66	25.97	21.84	24.96	22.49	13.08	13.53
1938	5.06	4.60	12.36	8.38	20.19	14.31	22.16	16.51	24.58	20.58	23.63	22.67	12.68	11.51
1939	4.96	4.45	11.72	8.30	18.26	13.05	22.99	17.59	24.52	19.74	24.30	20.51	13.75	13.26
1940	4.71	4.16	9.99	7.51	18.43	12.86	22.84	17.11	25.99	19.69	22.60	18.69	14.37	11.92
1941	4.92	3.70	10.24	7.58	15.90	11.68	21.71	16.35	25.90	20.10	23.05	19.78	13.60	10.84
1942	4.69	3.83	8.90	6.97	15.95	10.90	20.52	16.97	25.08	19.94	23.77	18.86	13.43	11.91
1943	2.10	1.69	4.63	3.18	8.69	6.00	11.49	8.45	14.96	11.28	16.74	12.42	8.82	5.87
1944	1.56	1.69	3.41	2.43	7.93	5.13	10.45	7.31	13.59	9.12	13.94	11.21	8.21	4.55
1945	1.37	1.07	2.75	1.93	5.05	3.51	9.09	6.02	11.24	8.88	11.93	8.87	7.04	4.70
1946	0.96	0.84	2.15	1.91	4.62	2.52	6.48	5.04	9.30	7.23	11.89	8.66	6.69	3.63
1947	1.42	1.10	1.77	1.97	4.28	2.81	5.84	4.34	8.77	6.58	9.30	8.03	6.97	3.99
1948	1.99	2.09	3.92	2.47	4.33	2.92	6.85	5.21	8.44	5.67	9.84	7.53	6.34	4.21
1949	2.26	1.78	3.86	3.03	4.56	3.96	6.98	4.65	9.14	6.24	9.51	6.86	6.29	4.15
1950	1.95	1.54	4.02	2.94	3.79	3.21	6.23	4.37	8.67	6.47	9.81	7.40	5.86	4.12
1951	1.60	1.50	3.97	2.89	5.05	3.09	7.04	4.07	8.72	5.62	9.77	7.29	5.24	4.13

Table A.18
Continued 1

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1952	1.59	0.65	3.88	2.63	4.07	2.53	6.77	4.15	7.93	5.34	9.09	6.46	5.28	4.06
1953	1.85	1.29	3.13	1.86	3.66	2.48	6.63	4.33	8.10	5.82	9.52	6.50	5.73	4.16
1954	1.91	1.08	3.47	1.92	3.63	2.11	5.83	3.99	8.18	5.96	9.19	5.95	5.32	4.15
1955	2.06	1.72	3.02	2.22	4.09	2.89	6.08	3.88	7.51	5.32	9.27	6.39	5.64	3.69
1956	1.94	1.38	4.38	3.00	4.37	2.91	6.02	3.77	7.62	4.89	7.84	5.64	5.44	3.87
1957	1.78	1.58	3.35	2.68	5.67	3.62	6.61	4.24	7.81	5.36	8.52	5.35	5.34	3.64
1958	2.02	1.69	3.83	3.11	4.48	3.31	7.43	4.84	8.79	5.47	8.52	5.99	6.30	3.50
1959	1.42	1.59	3.48	2.58	4.03	3.29	6.81	4.32	9.30	6.00	8.98	5.78	5.69	3.79
1960	1.76	1.32	2.94	2.83	4.32	2.71	6.25	4.51	8.50	6.64	10.51	7.09	5.91	3.78
1961	1.55	1.29	3.05	2.54	3.66	2.74	6.28	4.37	8.16	5.81	9.70	6.25	7.56	4.64
1962	1.35	0.98	3.61	2.35	3.58	2.50	5.57	3.96	8.18	5.36	9.18	6.79	7.44	4.26
1963	1.22	0.91	2.74	1.85	3.28	2.14	5.40	3.64	7.20	4.96	9.39	6.04	6.77	4.63
1964	0.87	0.83	1.51	1.28	2.46	1.55	3.86	2.65	5.99	4.17	7.57	4.95	7.73	5.10
1965	0.59	0.64	1.36	0.16	1.64	1.28	3.45	1.96	4.45	3.07	6.36	4.26	6.56	4.37
1966	0.33	0.17	1.17	0.93	1.26	1.01	2.23	1.54	4.00	2.24	5.29	3.47	5.60	3.89
1967	0.43	0.27	0.79	0.61	0.97	0.88	1.91	1.12	2.82	1.79	4.52	2.67	4.71	3.58
1968	0.65	0.65	0.74	0.46	0.79	0.48	1.21	1.02	2.29	1.53	2.96	2.14	3.95	2.30

Table A.18
Continued 2

Year	Grade 1 boys	Grade 1 girls	Grade 2 boys	Grade 2 girls	Grade 3 boys	Grade 3 girls	Grade 4 boys	Grade 4 girls	Grade 5 boys	Grade 5 girls	Grade 6 boys	Grade 6 girls	Grade 7 boys	Grade 7 girls
1969	0.28	0.37	0.44	0.30	0.57	0.33	0.98	0.42	1.48	0.95	2.28	1.22	2.71	1.91
1970	0.29	0.31	0.44	0.46	0.40	0.39	0.83	0.57	1.25	0.69	1.37	0.96	2.05	1.08
1971	0.22	0.16	0.38	0.39	0.29	0.29	0.40	0.32	0.79	0.63	1.03	0.50	1.28	0.76
1974	0.10	0.08	0.30	0.09	0.41	0.32	0.48	0.34	0.30	0.30	0.32	0.45	0.42	0.24
1975	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.04	0.15	0.18	0.27	0.19	0.50	0.34	0.26	0.32	0.24	0.16
1976	0.09	0.07	0.13	0.07	0.11	0.13	0.16	0.10	0.20	0.15	0.28	0.21	0.24	0.33
1977	0.12	0.12	0.07	0.09	0.13	0.09	0.22	0.20	0.28	0.28	0.43	0.33	0.37	0.34
1978	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.16	0.09	0.18	0.04	0.19	0.14	0.20	0.15
1979	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.14	0.07	0.27	0.16	0.33	0.19	0.20	0.04	0.13	0.08
1980	0.08	0.08	0.15	0.07	0.14	0.11	0.17	0.06	0.14	0.06	0.14	0.10	0.07	0.10
1981	0.12	0.11	0.07	0.13	0.20	0.09	0.22	0.11	0.11	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.10	0.04
1985	0.16	0.11	0.03	0.04	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.13	0.06	0.09	0.01
1986	0.15	0.06	0.21	0.12	0.16	0.06	0.15	0.10	0.17	0.16	0.13	0.03	0.13	0.04
1987	0.14	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.31	0.16	0.07	0.12	0.04	0.13	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.03
1988	0.19	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.17	0.06	0.17	0.06	0.10	0.12	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.06
1989	0.18	0.08	0.14	0.10	0.17	0.25	0.24	0.14	0.15	0.11	0.10	0.08	0.08	0.06
1990	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.10	0.25	0.16	0.20	0.22	0.23	0.12	0.11	0.15	0.13	0.10

Table A.19
Percentage of boys and girls aged 7 to 13 in one grade below the norm for their age, 1935-1990

Year	Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1935	36.87	32.63	47.04	42.86	42.64	41.90	42.22	41.72	40.87	44.65	42.62	43.30	55.55	59.52
1936	35.35	31.55	46.77	42.94	45.15	41.23	41.85	41.55	40.85	42.17	41.29	44.16	58.13	61.52
1937	36.89	31.23	45.32	41.55	44.10	42.49	43.37	41.64	41.41	40.71	40.81	41.77	55.97	61.53
1938	35.34	30.84	45.35	42.53	44.10	41.72	42.82	42.34	41.61	42.64	39.90	40.84	56.04	61.50
1939	37.58	31.79	46.24	40.61	42.12	40.81	42.64	40.96	42.12	41.60	40.05	42.76	57.20	62.59
1940	33.19	30.32	47.80	41.88	43.91	40.82	40.67	40.38	40.19	40.16	41.31	41.47	57.39	64.37
1941	32.91	29.51	41.88	39.64	44.81	42.19	41.53	40.73	40.61	41.00	41.30	40.90	58.13	64.59
1942	30.70	27.82	40.42	35.55	39.38	38.58	42.10	40.60	39.21	37.67	39.56	41.36	58.61	62.60
1943	13.16	9.85	21.49	18.34	23.71	20.78	27.23	23.58	30.25	26.03	31.45	30.66	60.53	64.08
1944	12.17	9.59	20.06	14.88	24.33	20.46	23.81	21.36	28.41	24.67	33.69	31.64	59.23	68.06
1945	8.96	6.81	17.40	13.52	21.75	16.09	24.34	21.41	24.89	21.62	31.97	30.32	67.06	70.77
1946	8.34	5.99	13.68	9.98	19.51	15.21	22.50	17.17	24.22	21.74	30.46	27.74	66.74	72.47
1947	7.58	6.05	12.79	9.89	16.46	12.32	21.39	16.70	23.37	18.36	31.52	28.66	65.70	67.66
1948	10.18	7.91	9.33	6.62	17.68	13.11	20.33	17.13	24.65	21.33	31.67	26.55	66.90	70.80
1949	10.47	8.41	9.77	6.42	18.72	17.67	19.91	16.21	22.04	19.06	29.57	27.25	65.55	70.38
1950	10.47	8.19	9.10	6.56	17.47	12.97	20.48	15.70	20.80	17.04	27.35	25.24	64.63	69.46
1951	9.83	8.81	8.69	7.05	17.55	13.01	20.63	15.89	21.20	17.18	28.14	23.81	64.97	68.41

Table A.19
Continued 1

Year	Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1952	10.07	7.72	8.87	6.19	17.84	12.93	19.87	16.39	21.56	17.31	28.13	25.06	65.68	69.34
1953	10.63	8.15	9.57	6.44	17.57	13.02	21.27	16.27	21.05	18.02	29.62	26.25	62.71	67.89
1954	9.15	6.97	7.68	5.53	16.92	12.72	20.14	16.07	21.36	17.05	27.54	25.13	64.22	68.52
1955	9.28	6.62	8.02	5.08	17.73	11.75	19.50	15.08	21.02	17.29	27.42	23.67	63.62	68.63
1956	8.26	6.86	7.84	5.30	16.62	11.81	19.96	14.87	21.18	16.49	27.38	25.44	65.95	70.96
1957	10.12	6.20	7.60	5.10	19.28	13.26	18.88	14.08	20.57	16.15	26.69	21.29	64.41	72.63
1958	9.73	6.40	7.23	4.39	17.56	12.70	21.04	14.58	20.06	15.48	26.11	23.12	63.11	65.51
1959	8.02	5.20	6.47	4.10	19.28	12.39	19.09	14.33	21.05	15.51	26.49	23.28	62.88	69.16
1960	7.52	5.81	6.13	4.06	18.24	12.19	20.46	14.55	20.22	18.05	28.02	22.61	63.97	68.95
1961	7.39	4.68	7.00	4.55	15.49	11.12	20.38	13.85	20.94	15.08	26.47	21.72	65.28	69.69
1962	6.04	4.68	5.93	4.08	15.35	10.53	17.59	12.65	21.17	14.50	27.61	21.77	64.85	65.96
1963	6.17	4.39	5.11	3.73	14.26	10.19	17.45	12.33	18.53	13.48	26.69	21.68	67.17	69.63
1964	5.05	3.43	5.13	3.51	11.50	7.92	16.06	11.95	18.44	13.52	24.40	20.00	71.53	74.74
1965	4.39	3.82	4.24	0.44	11.68	7.72	14.36	9.77	17.86	13.34	25.58	20.74	73.28	76.18
1966	4.52	2.59	4.11	2.53	10.57	6.47	13.37	9.23	16.11	11.26	25.07	20.11	77.71	80.40
1967	3.87	2.52	4.28	2.41	9.87	6.29	12.21	7.76	14.91	10.69	22.40	18.41	79.29	82.96
1968	3.63	2.04	3.73	2.42	8.99	5.55	11.99	7.61	13.16	8.54	22.26	16.29	83.95	83.90

Table A.19
Continued 2

Year	Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1969	3.04	1.84	3.59	1.98	8.64	5.00	10.34	6.88	12.75	8.52	19.87	14.28	87.26	89.07
1970	2.60	1.81	3.11	1.90	7.24	4.74	9.65	5.71	11.36	7.63	18.86	13.85	89.10	89.97
1971	2.53	1.60	2.75	1.90	6.08	3.98	7.97	5.09	10.04	6.06	16.97	12.09	92.51	93.92
1974	1.78	1.03	1.86	1.20	4.08	2.79	5.45	3.24	5.99	3.88	11.40	7.50	95.42	92.29
1975	1.39	0.85	1.73	1.07	3.60	2.33	4.56	2.88	5.37	3.31	9.59	6.12	96.13	94.93
1976	1.35	0.82	1.92	1.05	3.85	2.00	3.91	2.52	4.43	2.92	9.18	6.11	96.37	94.15
1977	1.33	0.72	1.67	1.01	3.35	1.97	4.39	2.43	4.18	2.88	8.08	5.91	94.78	91.07
1978	1.33	0.78	1.54	0.83	2.91	2.06	3.59	2.19	3.89	2.17	7.21	4.86	96.62	95.18
1979	1.32	0.79	1.33	0.85	3.01	1.77	3.34	2.47	3.68	2.38	7.92	4.62	93.66	97.01
1980	0.71	0.54	1.15	0.56	2.51	1.17	2.51	1.34	2.67	1.80	6.56	4.41	95.11	96.10
1981	0.94	0.69	0.94	0.60	1.68	1.17	2.42	1.27	2.86	1.60	5.70	4.16	97.35	95.26
1985	2.54	1.34	2.70	1.79	2.88	1.67	2.74	1.69	2.20	1.59	5.67	3.71	96.92	96.36
1986	3.58	2.46	4.15	2.55	3.65	2.35	3.12	1.83	3.13	2.14	5.78	4.38	96.98	98.71
1987	4.80	3.11	4.89	3.21	4.42	3.01	4.02	2.34	3.32	1.85	6.71	4.59	98.28	96.40
1988	6.24	4.55	6.73	4.35	6.33	3.72	4.75	3.13	4.05	2.31	7.55	4.20	99.30	96.30
1989	6.77	4.59	10.18	6.85	8.66	5.96	7.66	4.68	5.82	4.01	8.88	5.46	97.90	96.72
1990	7.29	5.05	8.42	5.33	10.57	7.30	9.52	6.23	8.53	5.16	9.08	6.80	97.71	96.64

Table A.20
Percentage of boys and girls aged 8 to 13 in more than one grade below the norm for their age, 1935-1990

Year	Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1935	6.85	4.69	12.15	9.03	16.93	14.34	21.56	17.85	25.97	23.43	44.45	40.48
1936	6.79	4.89	12.05	9.44	16.12	12.94	21.61	17.25	25.92	22.72	41.87	38.48
1937	6.44	5.38	12.74	9.60	17.23	12.26	20.67	17.37	26.62	23.17	44.03	38.47
1938	5.51	4.36	11.66	8.63	17.64	11.92	21.00	15.44	25.33	21.51	43.96	38.50
1939	5.83	4.59	11.68	8.09	15.19	11.41	20.53	15.38	26.33	20.41	42.80	37.41
1940	5.66	4.65	10.99	8.00	16.34	11.08	19.62	14.61	25.09	18.89	42.61	35.63
1941	5.57	4.13	11.68	8.33	15.63	10.90	19.17	13.99	24.19	19.55	41.87	35.41
1942	5.23	4.74	9.91	7.17	16.27	11.04	19.56	15.63	24.60	17.95	41.39	37.40
1943	2.22	1.82	5.26	3.32	7.80	5.62	11.10	8.21	18.09	11.60	39.47	35.92
1944	1.89	1.60	4.23	3.19	7.91	5.30	9.29	7.04	16.51	11.79	40.77	31.94
1945	1.27	0.96	3.46	2.37	5.65	3.92	9.14	6.22	12.98	10.72	32.94	29.23
1946	0.91	0.94	2.57	2.18	5.06	2.57	7.21	5.84	12.30	9.37	33.26	27.53
1947	1.34	0.98	2.03	2.03	4.40	3.15	7.22	4.42	10.92	9.66	34.30	32.34
1948	1.14	1.03	2.43	1.59	4.69	3.06	7.42	4.94	11.63	8.54	33.10	29.20
1949	1.31	0.91	2.25	1.38	4.77	4.03	7.13	5.20	12.45	8.58	34.45	29.62
1950	1.26	0.89	2.27	1.75	4.11	3.18	6.83	4.51	10.90	8.84	35.37	30.54
1951	0.87	0.83	2.02	1.38	5.29	3.41	7.64	4.21	12.66	8.16	35.03	31.59

Table A.20
Continued 1

Year	Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1952	0.98	0.42	2.07	1.24	4.47	2.81	7.56	4.68	11.77	8.30	34.32	30.66
1953	1.35	1.00	2.04	1.03	4.20	2.91	7.12	4.52	12.01	9.01	37.29	32.11
1954	1.11	0.64	1.80	0.87	4.08	2.26	6.47	4.56	11.55	8.35	35.78	31.48
1955	1.04	0.66	1.53	1.27	4.23	3.05	7.14	4.45	10.83	7.93	36.38	31.37
1956	0.89	0.70	1.73	1.01	4.87	3.13	6.75	4.49	11.57	7.33	34.05	29.04
1957	0.91	0.82	1.55	1.15	4.84	3.02	7.39	4.58	11.66	8.66	35.59	27.37
1958	0.83	0.75	1.68	1.24	4.20	3.02	6.85	4.32	12.21	7.84	36.89	34.49
1959	0.60	0.58	1.38	0.97	4.01	3.13	6.53	4.36	11.06	7.60	37.12	30.84
1960	0.87	0.53	1.18	1.05	4.09	2.49	6.22	4.28	10.85	8.77	36.03	31.05
1961	0.72	0.55	1.42	1.01	3.69	2.59	6.11	4.13	10.20	8.16	34.72	30.31
1962	0.72	0.38	1.49	0.96	3.59	2.25	5.81	3.80	10.09	7.51	35.15	34.04
1963	0.53	0.43	1.16	0.72	3.36	2.00	5.10	3.57	9.74	6.43	32.83	30.37
1964	0.39	0.37	0.73	0.59	2.32	1.56	3.93	2.61	7.66	5.75	28.47	25.26
1965	0.30	0.33	0.55	0.10	1.79	1.29	3.34	1.99	5.65	4.32	26.72	23.82
1966	0.18	0.10	0.50	0.39	1.24	0.99	2.31	1.66	5.46	3.32	22.29	19.60
1967	0.24	0.15	0.34	0.26	0.97	0.77	1.98	1.10	4.01	2.86	20.71	17.04
1968	0.20	0.22	0.44	0.27	0.78	0.50	1.34	1.03	3.37	2.38	16.05	16.10

Table A.20
Continued 2

Year	Eight		Nine		Ten		Eleven		Twelve		Thirteen	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls		
1969	0.12	0.14	0.21	0.15	0.58	0.37	1.05	0.42	2.32	1.34	12.74	10.93
1970	0.16	0.12	0.23	0.23	0.37	0.37	0.79	0.58	1.90	1.12	10.90	10.03
1971	0.12	0.09	0.22	0.18	0.28	0.29	0.36	0.29	1.30	0.99	7.49	6.08
1974	0.06	0.04	0.16	0.05	0.32	0.25	0.44	0.22	0.49	0.55	4.58	7.71
1975	0.04	0.03	0.10	0.02	0.14	0.17	0.24	0.17	0.69	0.61	3.87	5.07
1976	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.10	0.31	0.19	3.63	5.85
1977	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.15	0.11	0.23	0.16	0.53	0.63	5.22	8.93
1978	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.20	0.07	0.37	0.17	3.38	4.82
1979	0.03	0.02	0.08	0.04	0.11	0.05	0.23	0.15	0.63	0.35	6.34	2.99
1980	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.16	0.11	0.14	0.08	0.25	0.18	4.89	3.90
1981	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.12	0.05	0.17	0.10	0.30	0.23	2.65	4.74
1985	0.13	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.20	0.12	3.08	3.64
1986	0.13	0.04	0.20	0.09	0.11	0.05	0.12	0.09	0.34	0.33	3.02	1.29
1987	0.13	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.23	0.15	0.08	0.05	0.13	0.29	1.72	3.60
1988	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.10	0.15	0.08	0.17	0.03	0.15	0.18	0.70	3.70
1989	0.18	0.08	0.13	0.11	0.17	0.21	0.21	0.14	0.29	0.11	2.10	3.28
1990	0.15	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.26	0.14	0.23	0.24	0.32	0.22	2.29	3.36

Table A.21
Percentage of pupils accelerated (i.e. who 'skipped' a grade or grades), 1935-1990

Year	Under-six		Six		Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
1935	0.09	0.41	0.13	0.06	0.09	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.17	0.05	0.02	0.07
1936	1.32	0.74	0.11	0.21	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.09	0.00
1937	0.11	0.34	0.06	0.07	0.00	0.16	0.02	0.08	0.02	0.07	0.00	0.12
1938	0.19	0.00	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.04	0.07
1939	0.95	0.82	0.03	0.14	0.00	0.06	0.05	0.09	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.10
1940	0.19	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.15	0.06	0.00	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.03
1941	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.12	0.06	0.03	0.11	0.06
1942	0.27	0.30	0.06	0.19	0.03	0.16	0.03	0.09	0.08	0.15	0.09	0.19
1943	0.53	0.48	0.27	0.31	0.35	0.21	0.26	0.13	0.31	0.09	0.11	0.18
1944	0.50	0.37	0.03	0.32	0.27	0.42	0.33	0.40	0.45	0.25	0.34	0.87
1945	0.81	1.44	0.17	0.27	0.40	0.52	0.30	0.45	0.08	0.15	0.21	0.13
1946	1.35	1.12	0.19	0.22	0.12	0.24	0.13	0.17	0.30	0.65	0.17	0.19
1947	1.01	1.04	0.16	0.18	0.19	0.21	0.27	0.35	0.33	0.23	0.79	1.38
1948	0.34	0.90	0.11	0.37	0.26	0.18	0.28	0.19	0.22	0.24	0.31	0.22
1949	0.25	0.32	0.22	0.20	0.06	0.31	0.17	0.27	0.21	0.10	0.22	0.16
1950	0.05	0.17	0.19	0.31	0.21	0.32	0.17	0.14	0.22	0.15	0.40	0.15
1951	0.23	0.12	0.13	0.28	0.17	0.36	0.12	0.24	0.18	0.26	0.42	0.17

Table A.21
Continued 1

Year	Under-six		Six		Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
1952	0.08	0.08	0.16	0.23	0.27	0.08	0.14	0.23	0.17	0.29	0.06	0.21
1953	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.19	0.05	0.14	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.13	0.24	0.24
1954	0.05	0.00	0.06	0.19	0.24	0.20	0.03	0.29	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.09
1955	0.05	0.15	0.13	0.15	0.04	0.13	0.10	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.12	0.08
1956	0.23	0.05	0.09	0.15	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.09	0.25
1957	0.35	0.24	0.22	0.00	0.11	0.11	0.05	0.04	0.20	0.16	0.19	0.16
1958	0.14	0.24	0.06	0.12	0.11	0.18	0.16	0.15	0.06	0.12	0.08	0.17
1959	0.23	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.08	0.15	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.04	0.05
1960	0.16	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.03	0.01	0.09	0.08	0.06
1961	0.04	0.11	0.12	0.08	0.05	0.06	0.08	0.20	0.06	0.14	0.09	0.04
1962	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.11	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.10
1963	0.00	0.04	0.14	0.22	0.08	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.06
1964	0.27	0.28	0.11	0.16	0.17	0.28	0.02	0.10	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.07
1965	0.03	37.08	0.08	0.18	0.12	0.26	0.12	0.19	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.03
1966	0.03	0.00	0.16	0.06	0.03	0.13	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.11	0.06	0.04
1967	0.00	0.22	0.08	0.02	0.18	0.26	0.03	0.05	0.12	0.01	0.01	0.07
1968	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.26	0.10	0.05	0.08	0.27	0.27	0.23

Table A.21
Continued 2

Year	Under-six		Six		Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
1969	0.00	0.11	0.07	0.10	0.00	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.16	0.10	0.16
1970	0.31	1.50	0.80	0.48	0.15	0.22	0.07	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.12	0.18
1971	0.40	1.70	0.07	0.10	0.31	0.44	0.06	0.21	0.26	0.28	0.14	0.16
1974	0.30	0.34	0.28	0.31	0.29	0.58	0.35	0.36	0.70	0.72	0.46	0.48
1975	0.50	0.65	0.31	0.33	0.05	0.16	0.06	0.10	0.05	0.17	0.29	0.34
1976	0.75	0.88	0.47	0.28	0.43	0.66	0.46	0.58	0.26	0.31	0.25	0.18
1977	0.86	0.92	0.36	0.36	0.22	0.20	0.40	0.44	0.37	0.36	0.09	0.12
1978	0.15	0.09	0.32	0.19	0.26	0.43	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.27	0.18	0.16
1979	0.35	0.33	0.08	0.20	0.19	0.20	0.15	0.16	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.33
1980	0.20	0.35	0.24	0.25	0.46	0.54	0.36	0.42	0.25	0.54	0.25	0.44
1981	0.24	0.33	0.54	0.60	0.33	0.22	0.37	0.28	0.39	0.48	0.23	0.29
1985	0.14	0.43	0.05	0.10	0.15	0.08	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.35	0.17	0.24
1986	0.50	0.36	0.20	0.22	0.21	0.46	0.23	0.21	0.25	0.30	0.40	0.49
1987	0.10	0.09	0.12	0.15	0.08	0.10	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.14	0.20	0.14
1988	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.04	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.04	0.13	0.21
1989	0.00	0.20	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.11	0.03	0.09	0.07
1990	0.44	0.83	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.16	0.10

APPENDIX C

Graphs

The graphs comprising this appendix were generated from the Age-grade data-base: South Australian primary school pupils, 1921-1990, using Excel. They visually illustrate the nature and extent of twentieth century changes in primary school grade organisation.

Figure A.1 Mean chronological ages of boys and girls in selected primary grades, 1935-1990

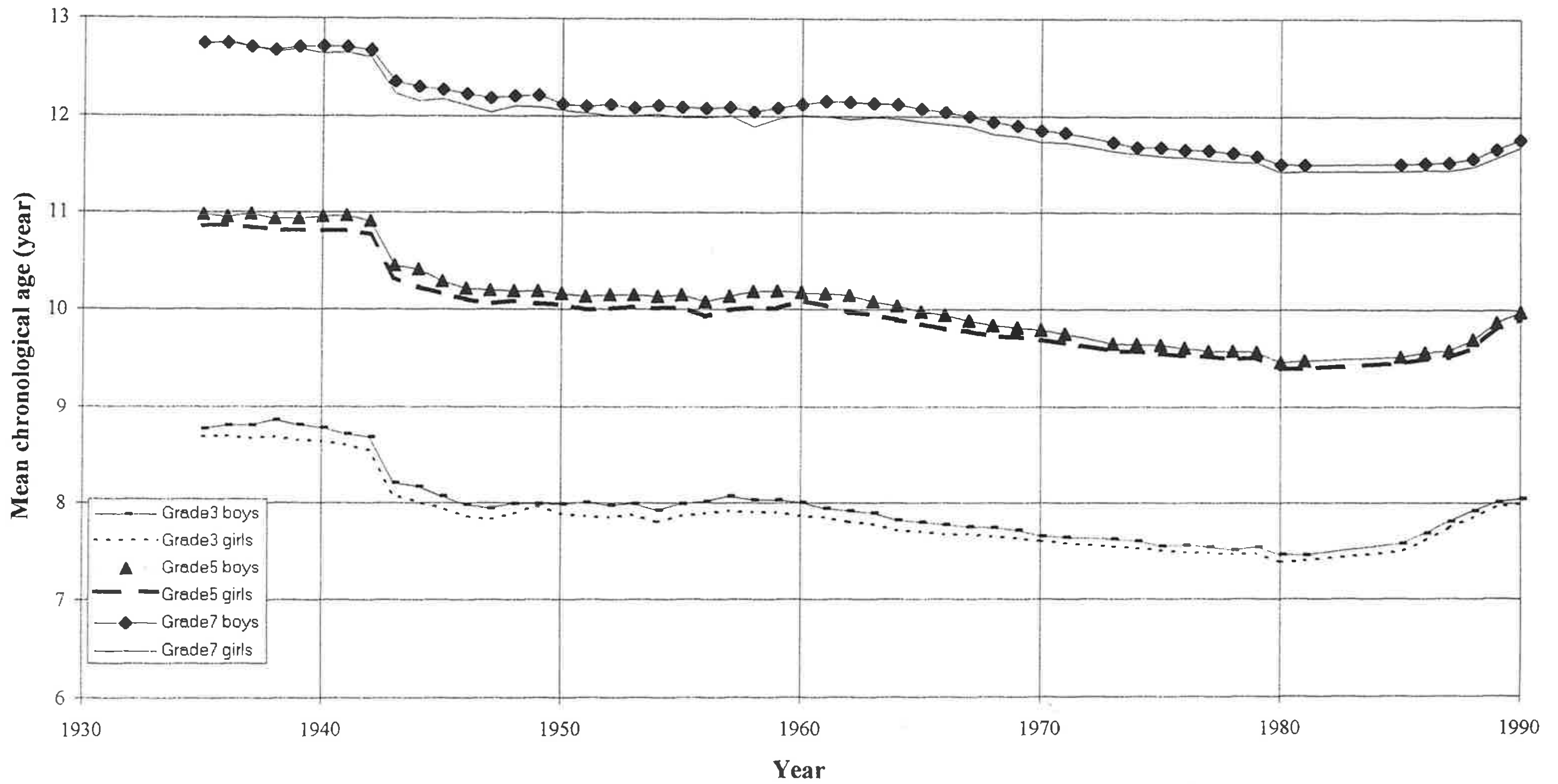


Figure A. 2 Mean chronological ages of girls in grade 1, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990)

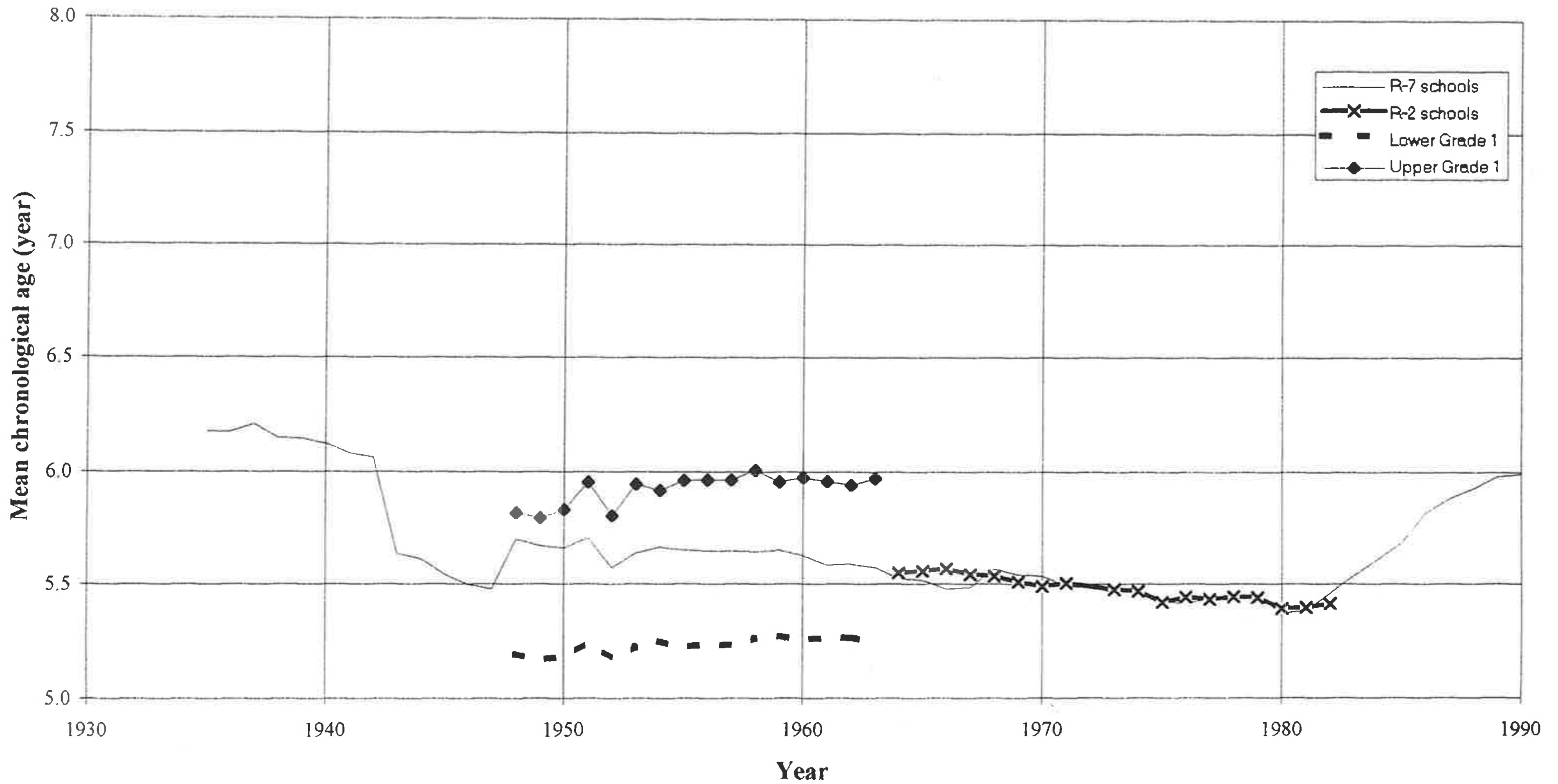


Figure A.3 Mean chronological ages of boys in grade 1, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990)

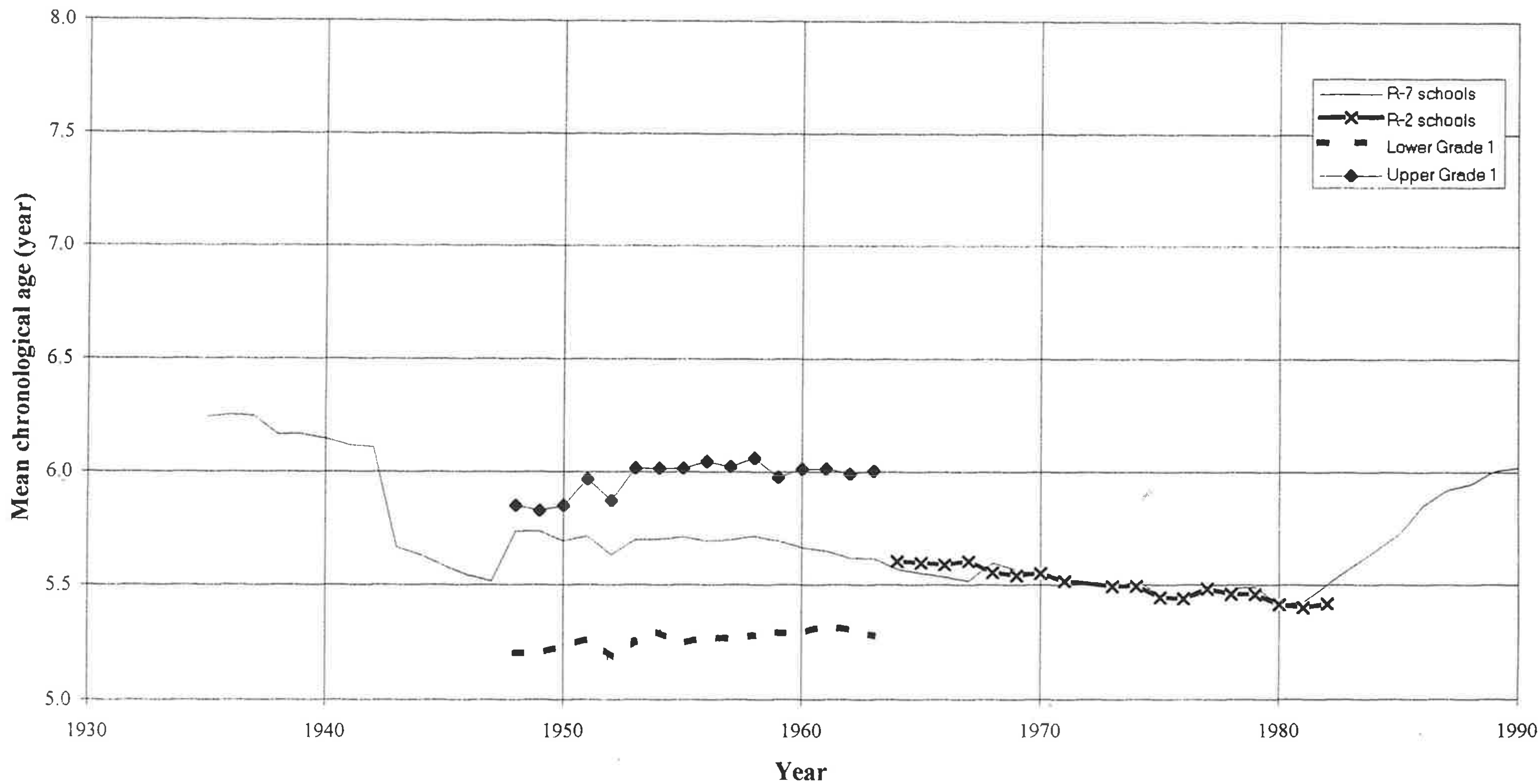


Figure A.4 Mean chronological ages of girls in grade 2, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990)

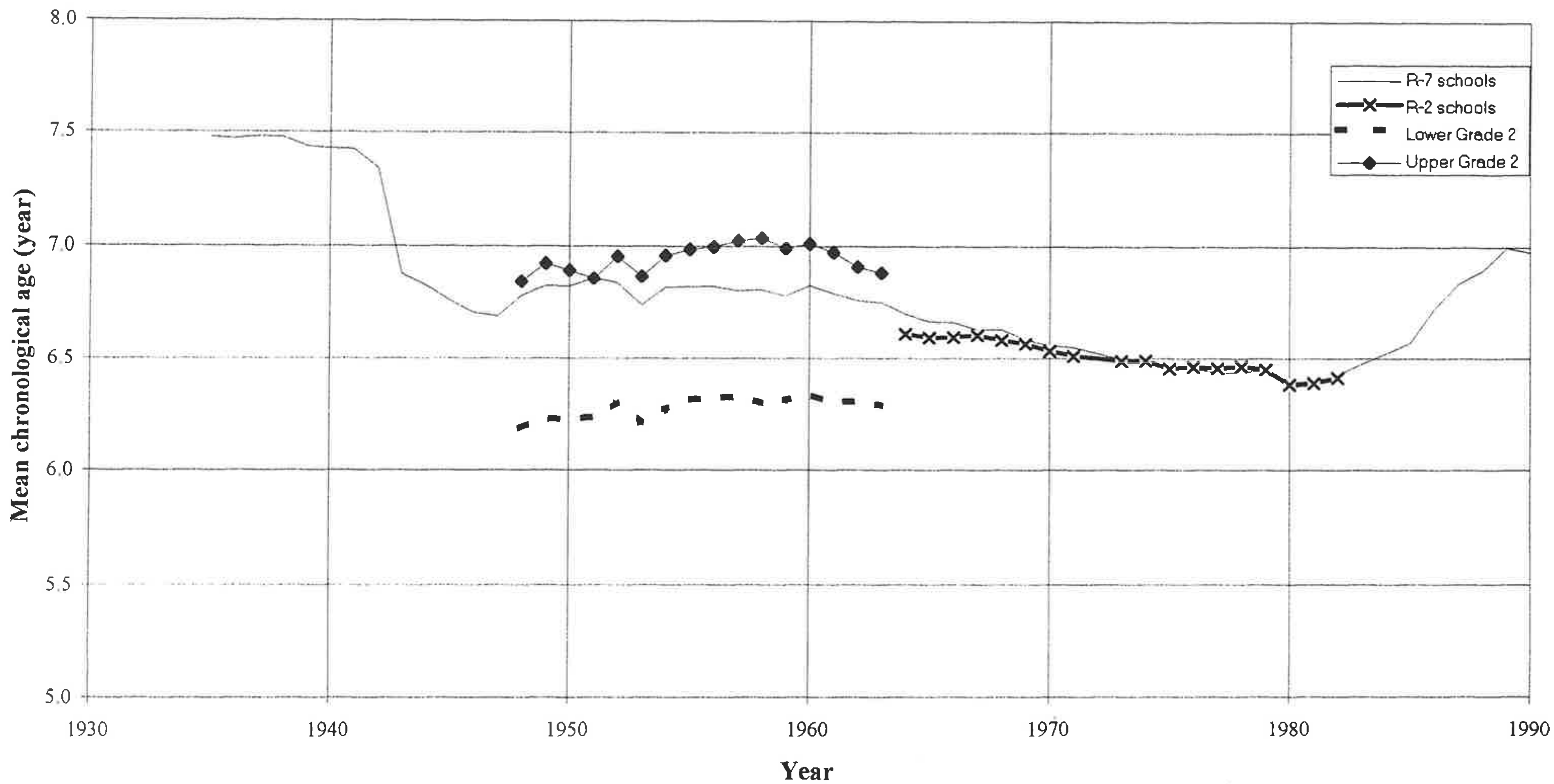


Figure A.5 Mean chronological ages of boys in grade 2, 1935-1990: showing differences according to school type (R-7 and R-2) for those years when separate statistics were published (1948-1990)

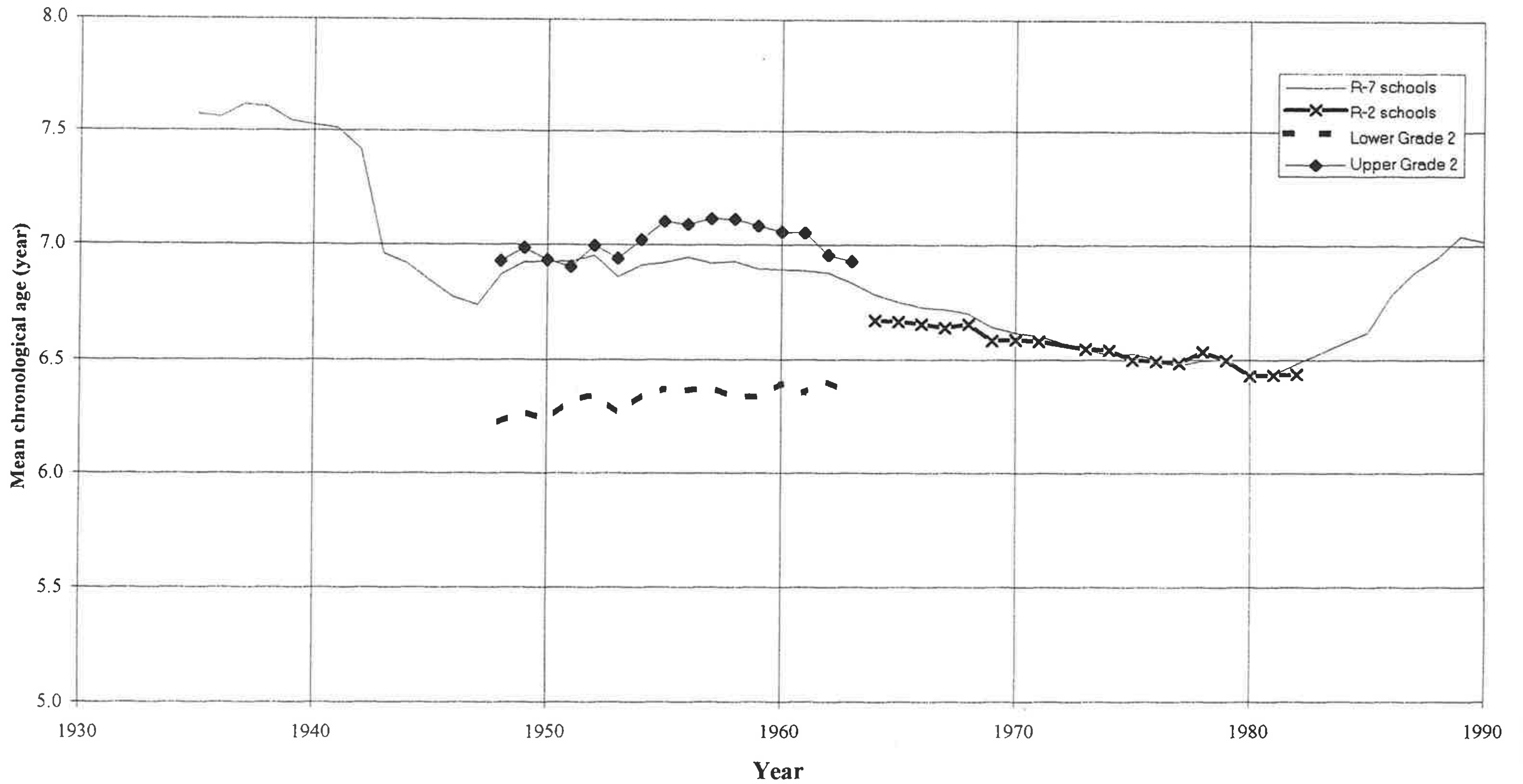


Figure A.6 Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

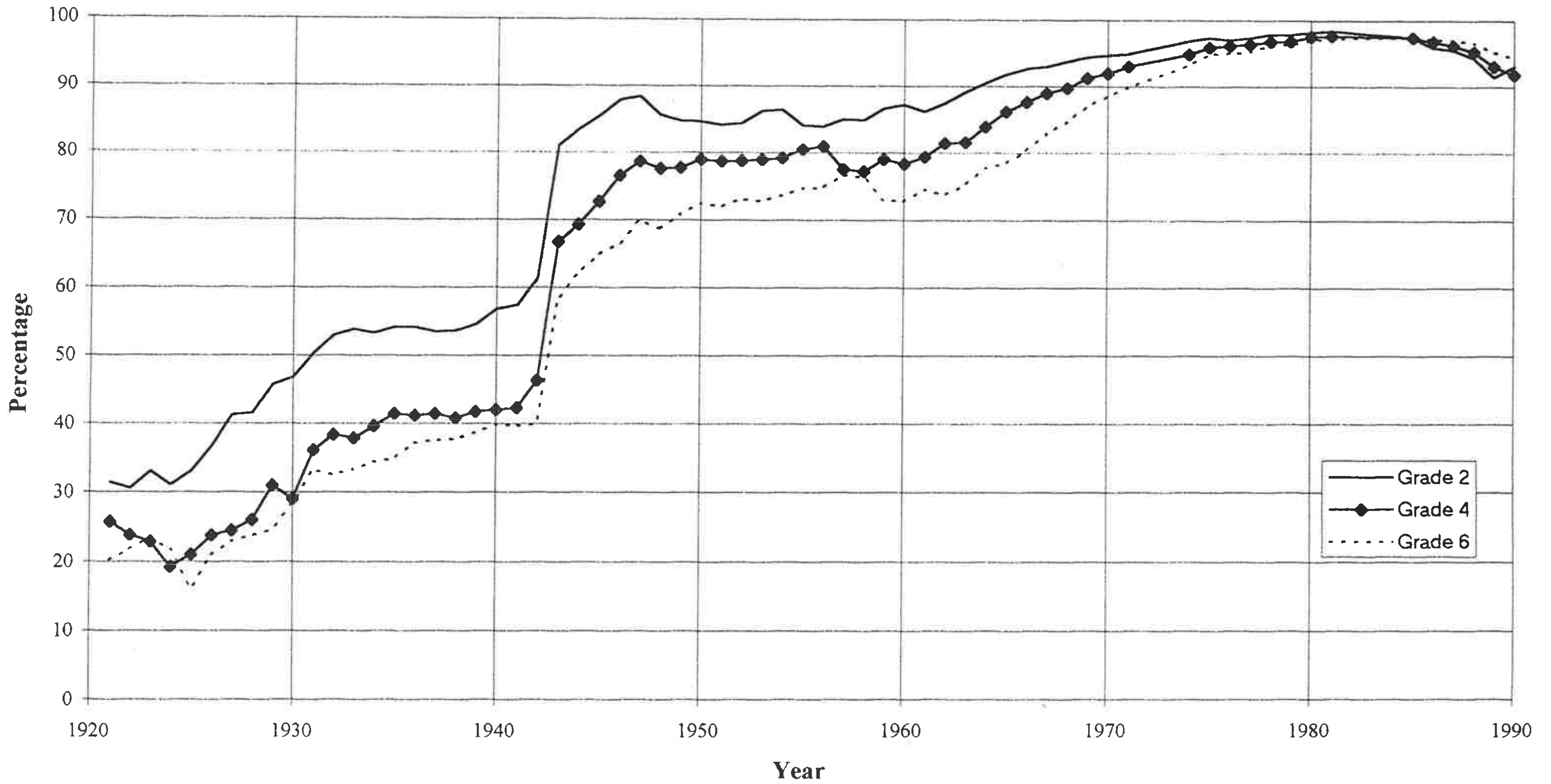


Figure A.7 Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

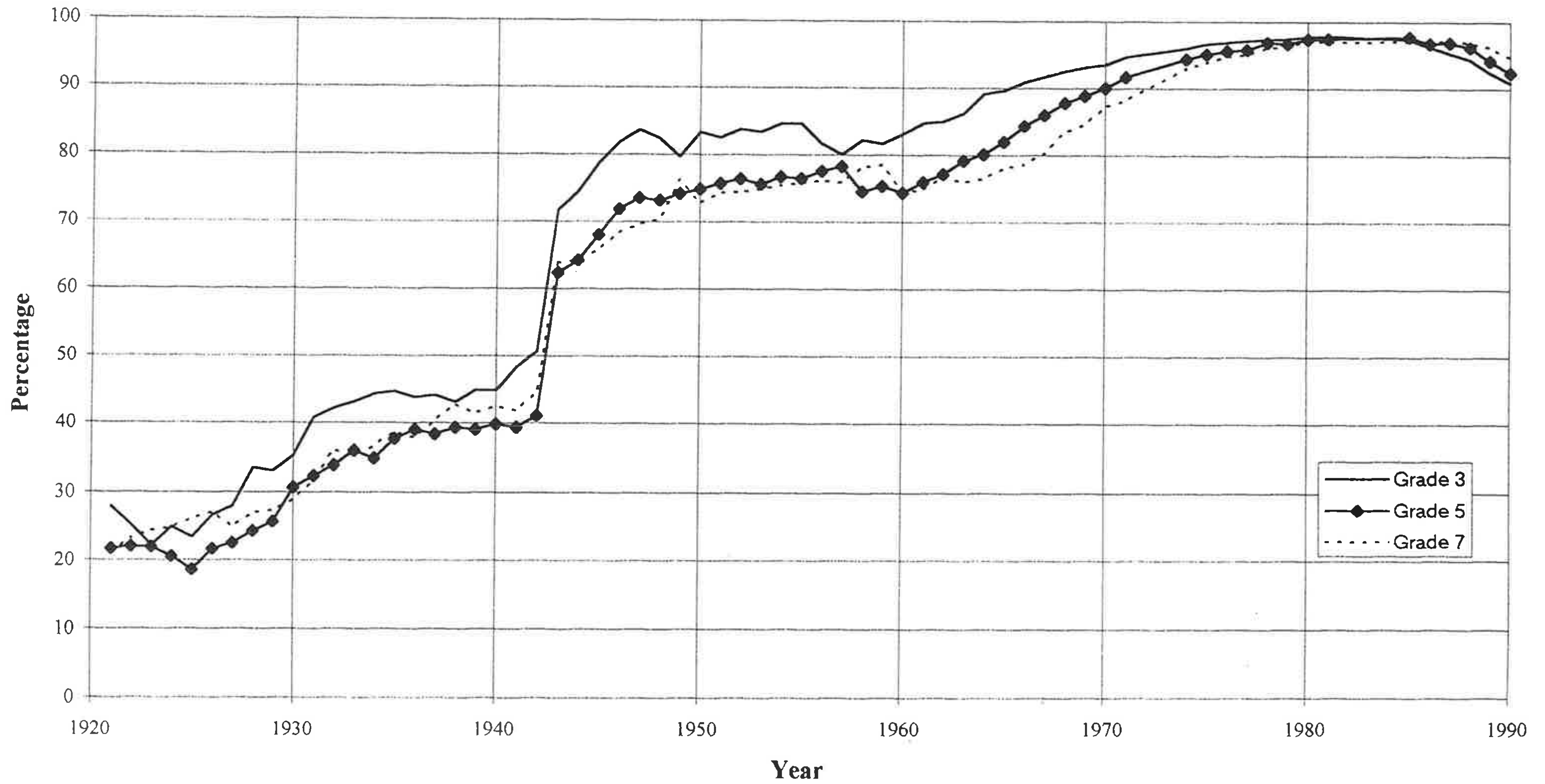


Figure A.8 Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age, 1921-1990: as a function of age

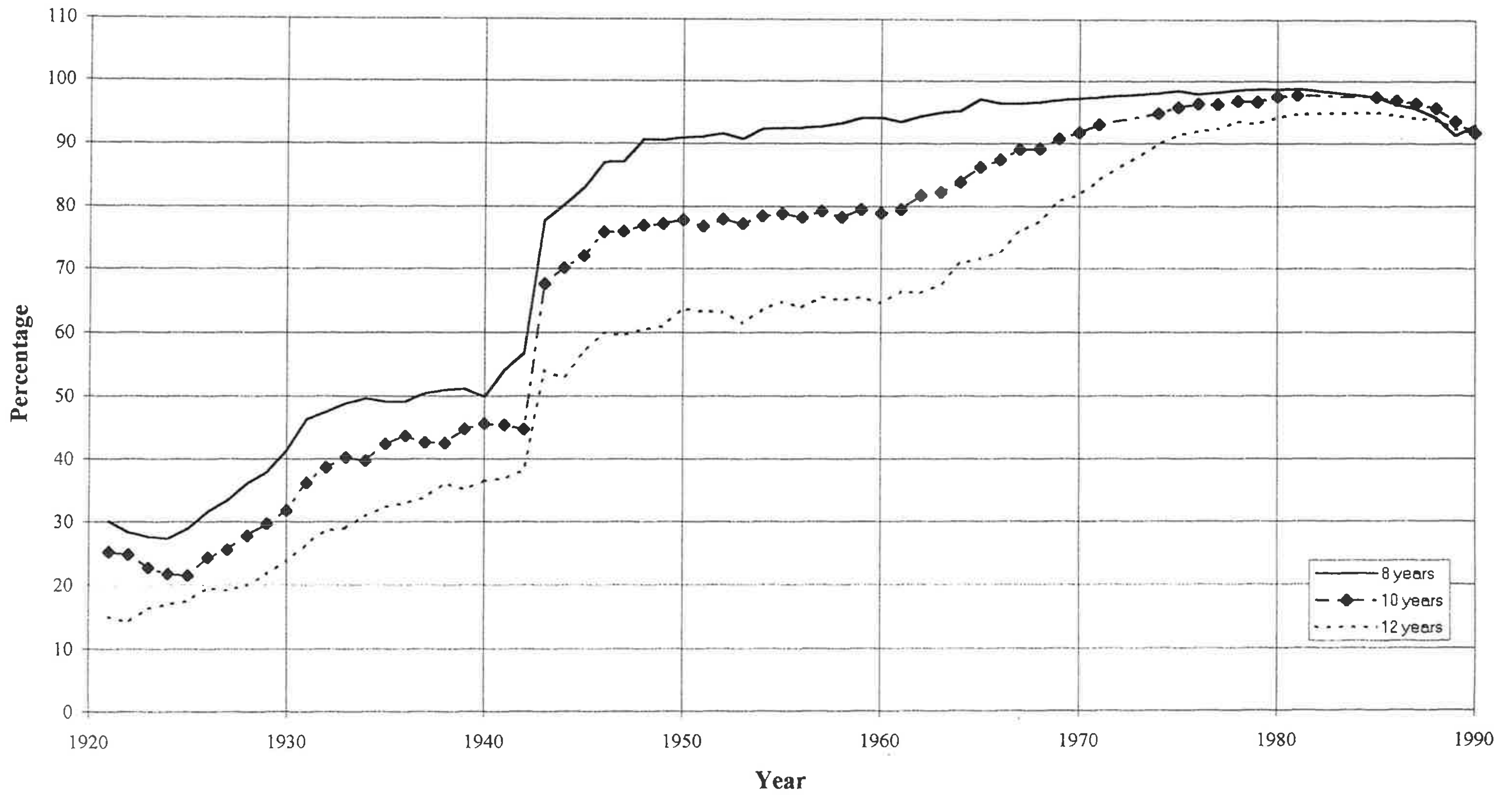


Figure A.9 Percentage of pupils at normal grade-age, 1921-1990: as a function of age

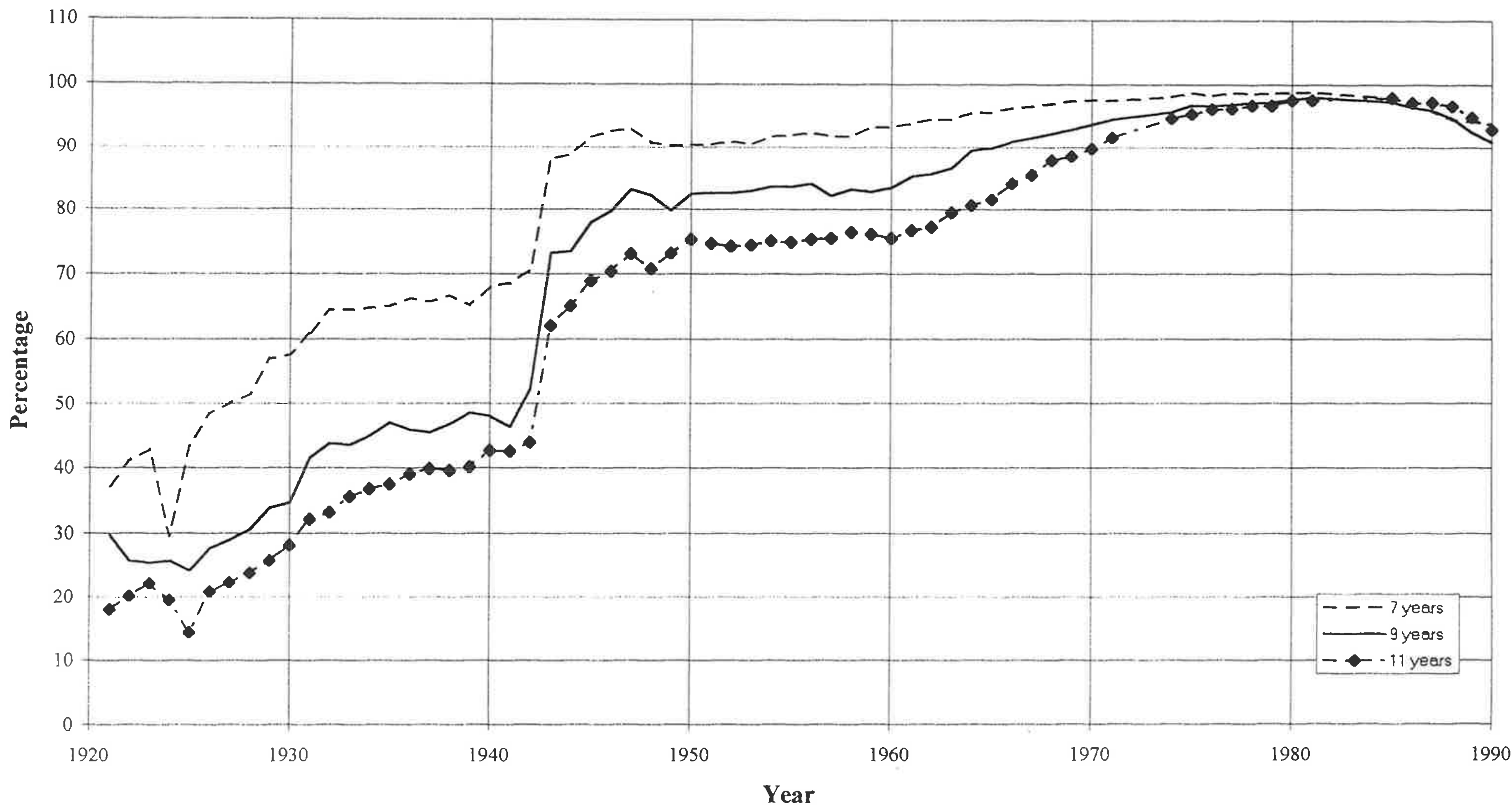


Figure A.10 Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for grade 1, 1935-1990

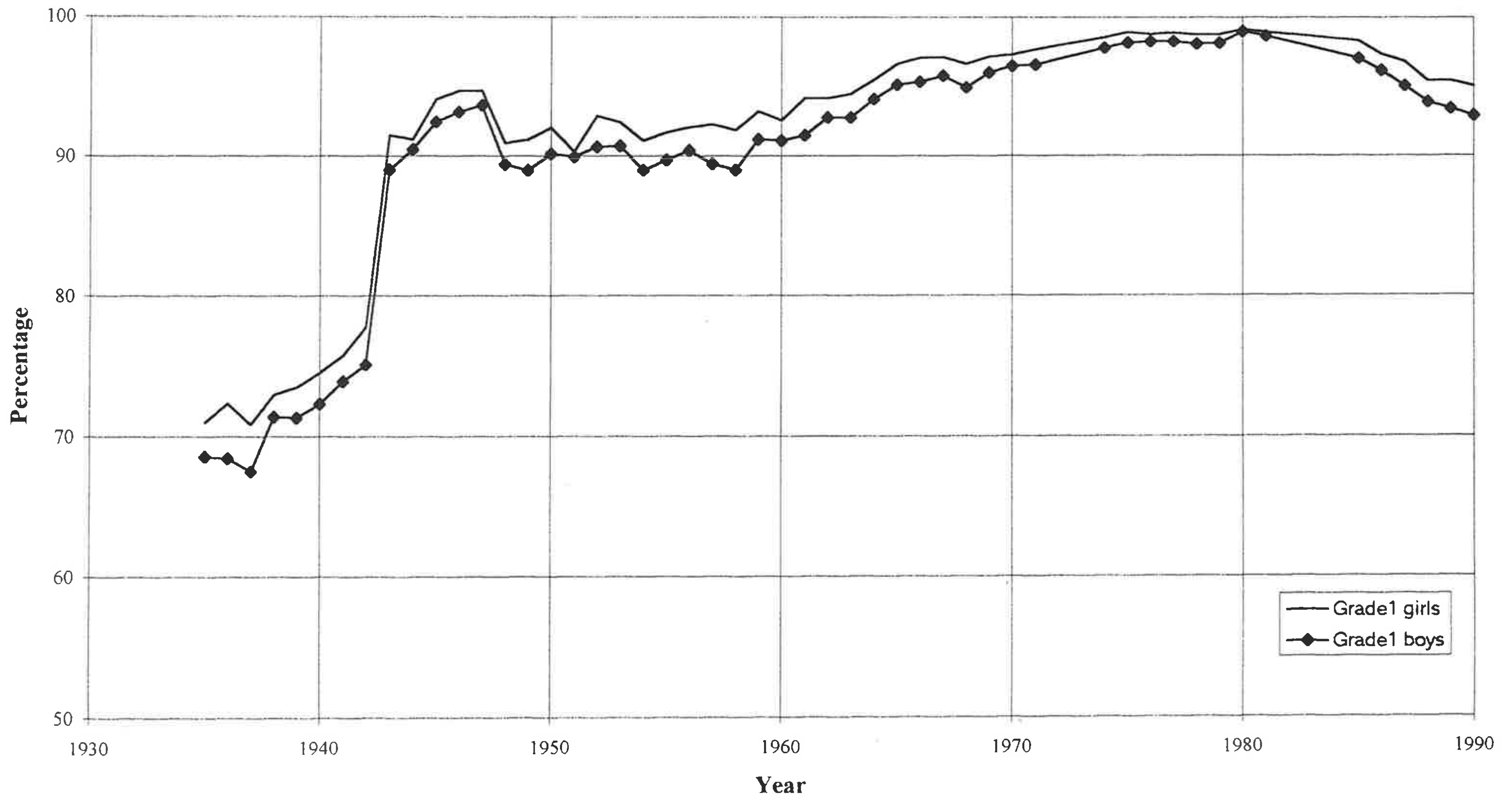


Figure A.11 Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for grade 3, 1935-1990

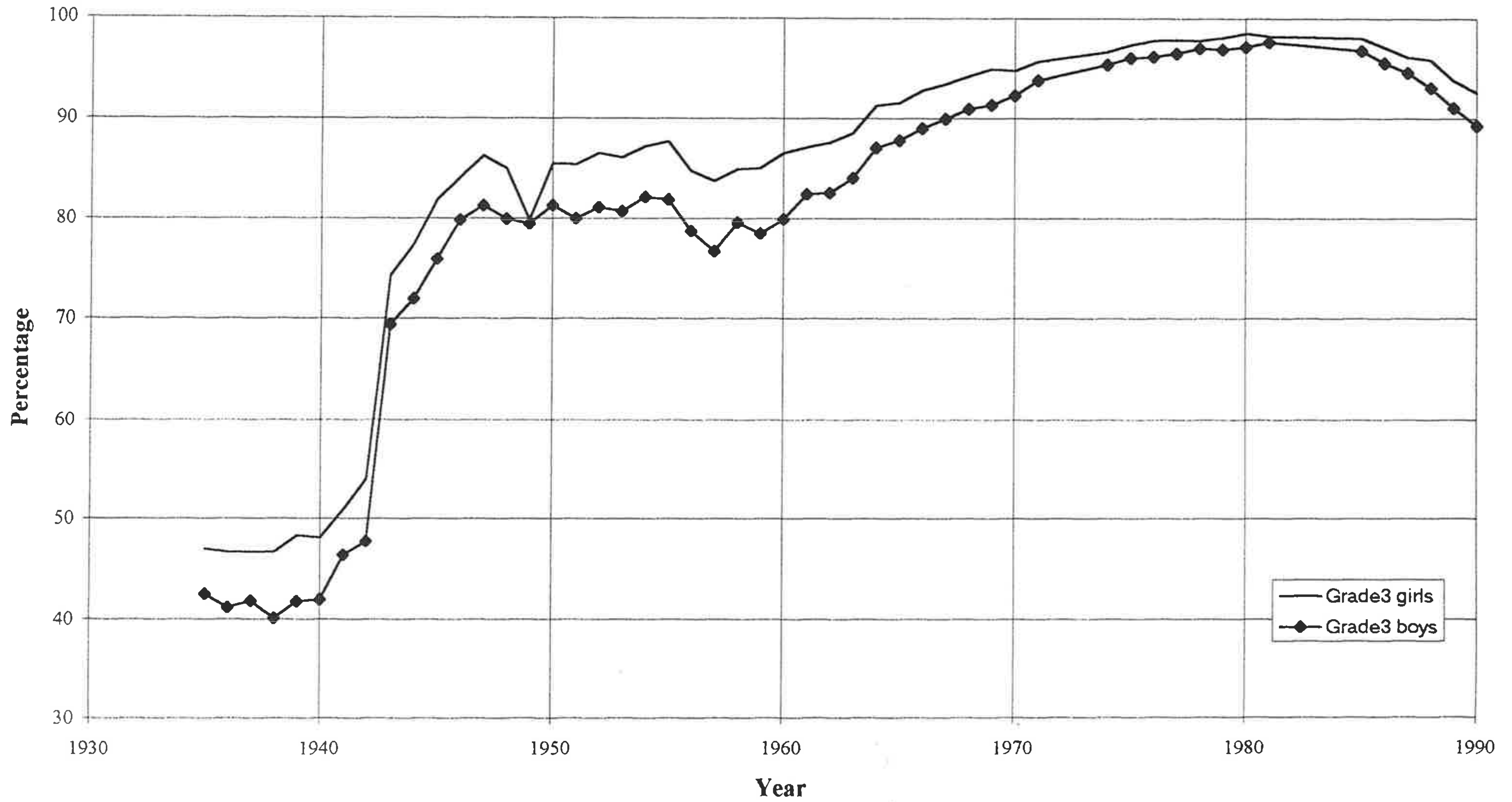


Figure A.12 Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for grade 5, 1935-1990

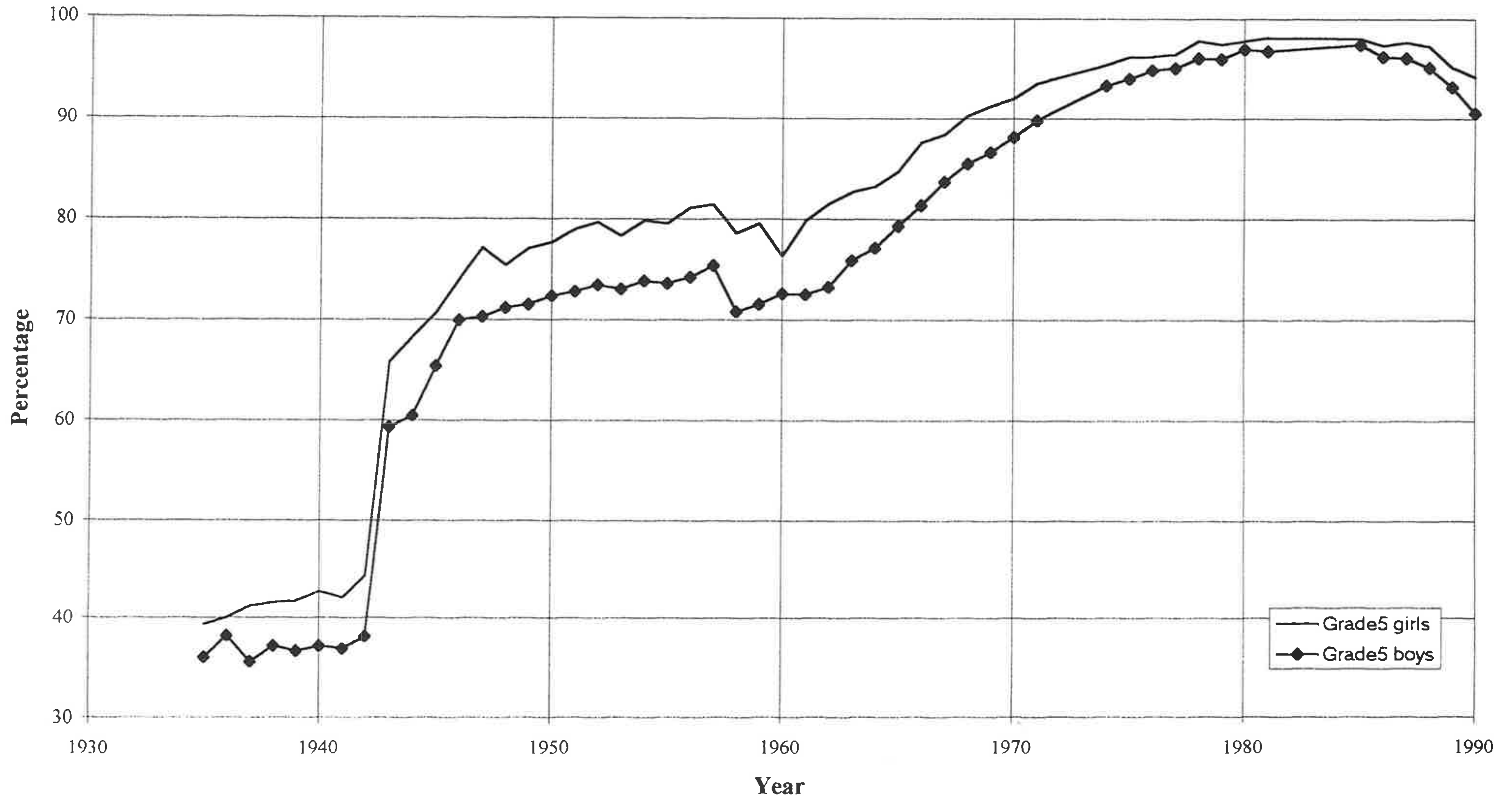


Figure A.13 Percentage of boys and girls at the normal age for grade 7, 1935-1990

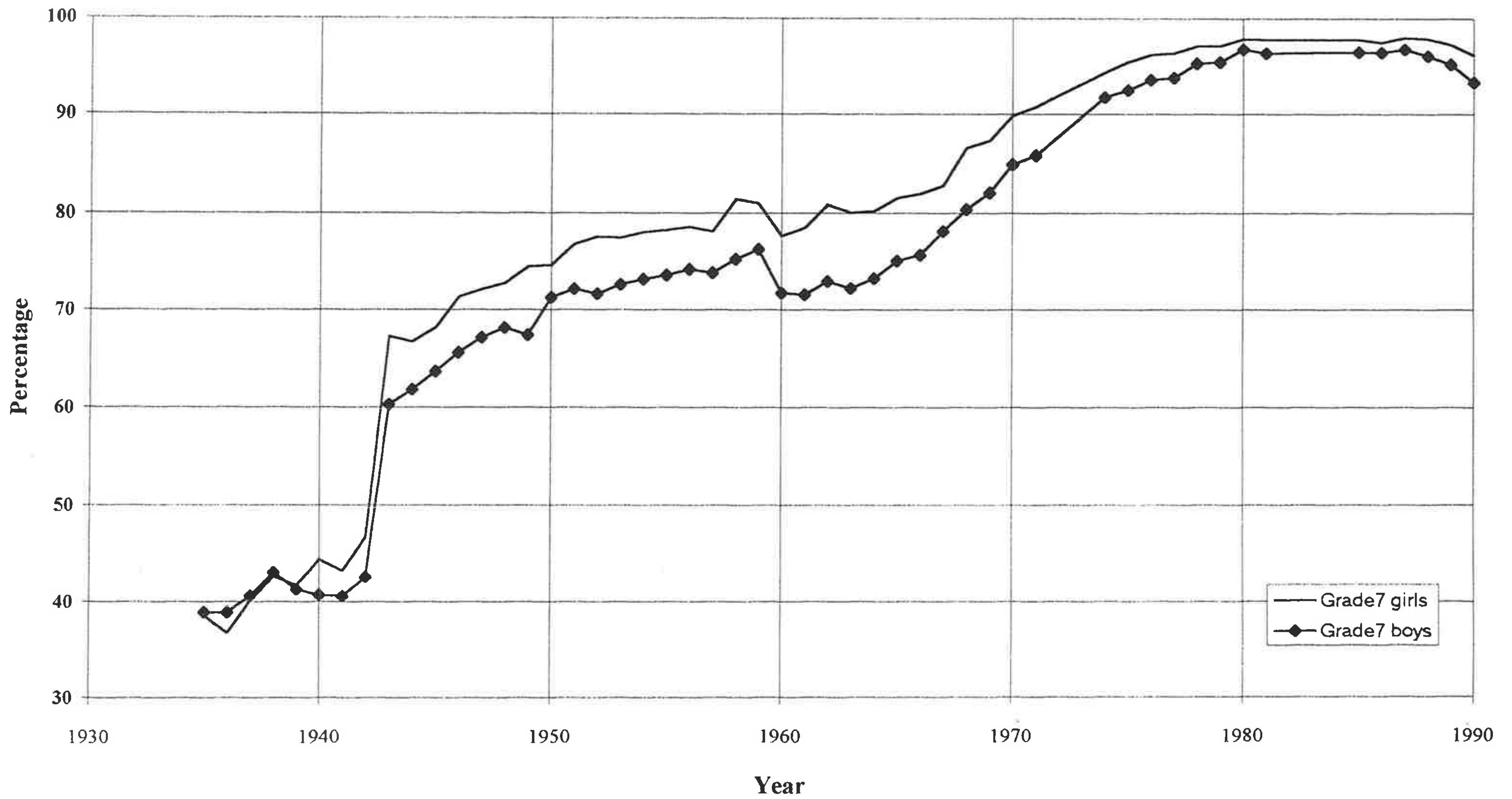


Figure A.14 Percentage of pupils accelerated in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

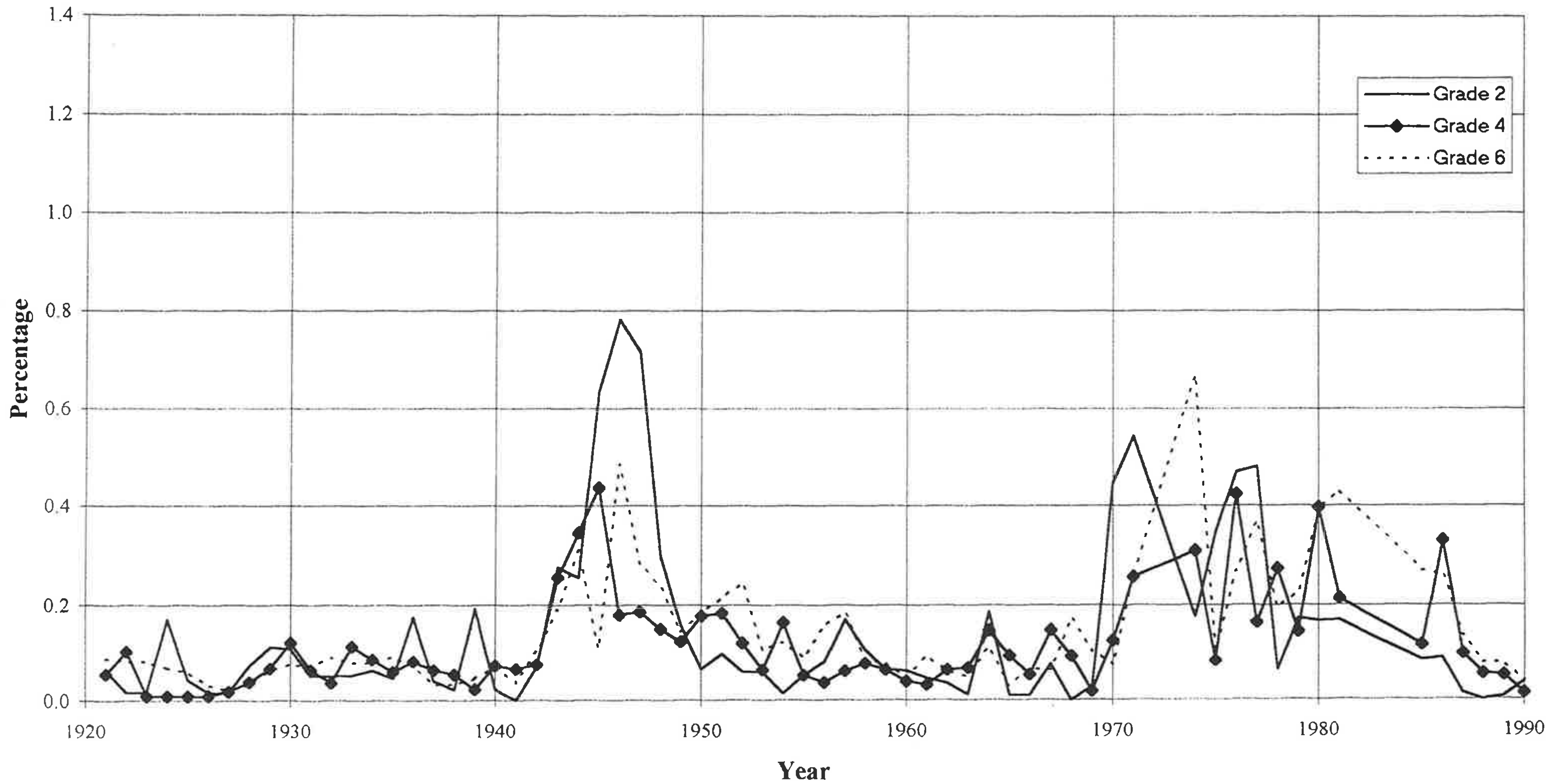


Figure A.15 Percentage of pupils accelerated in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

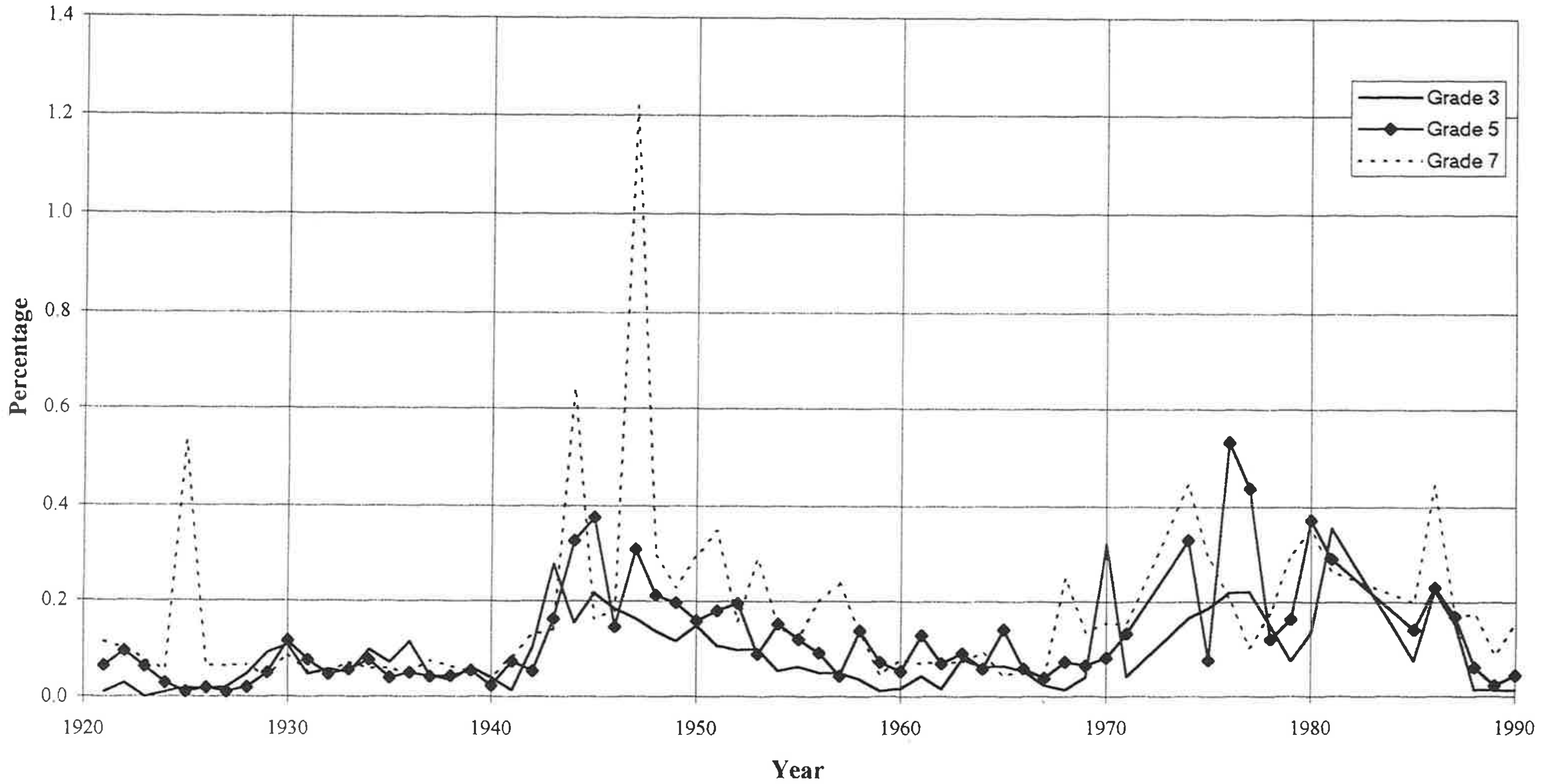


Figure A.16 Percentage of pupils accelerated, 1921-1990: as a function of age

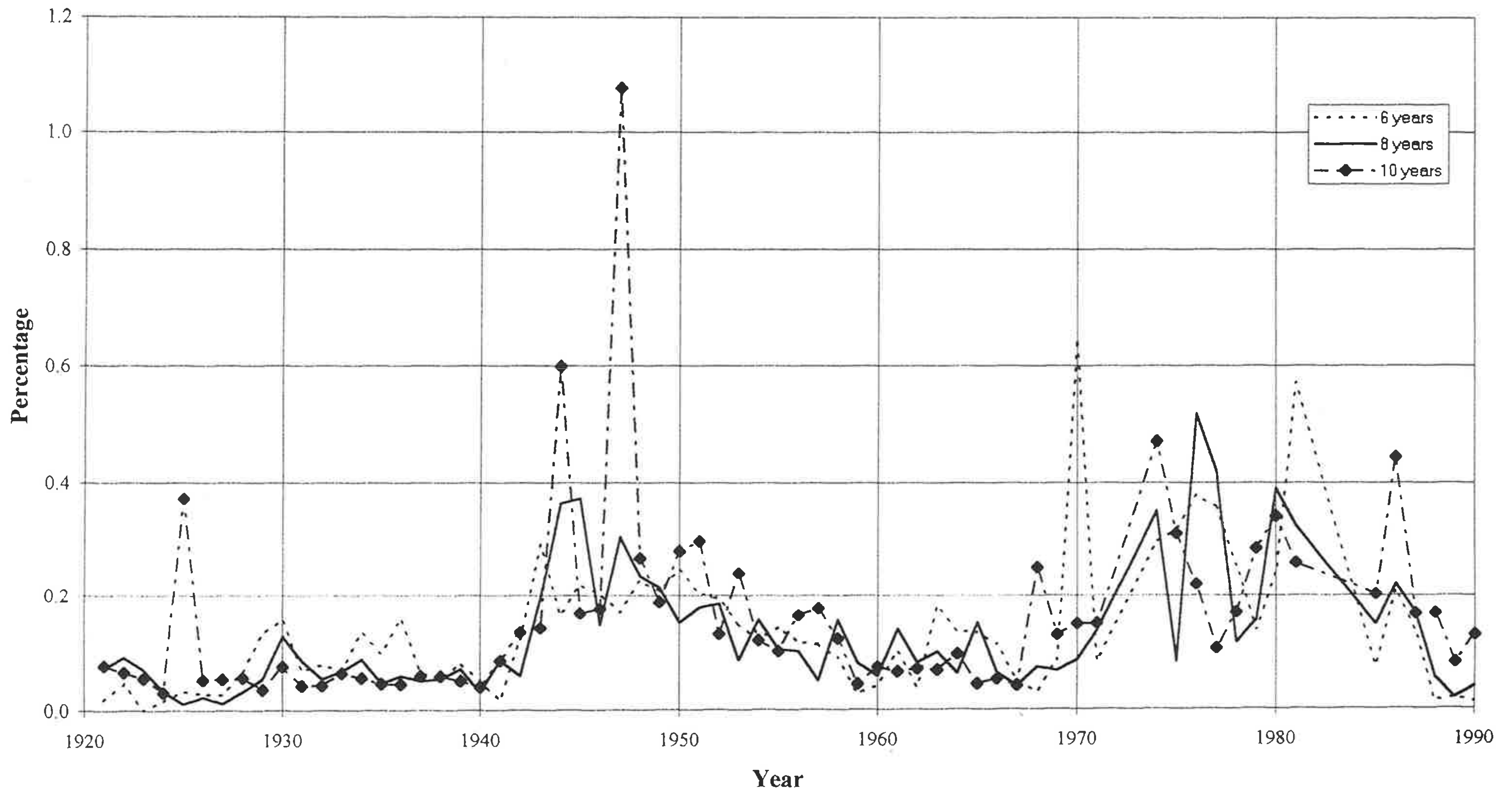


Figure A.17 Percentage of pupils accelerated, 1921-1990: as a function of age

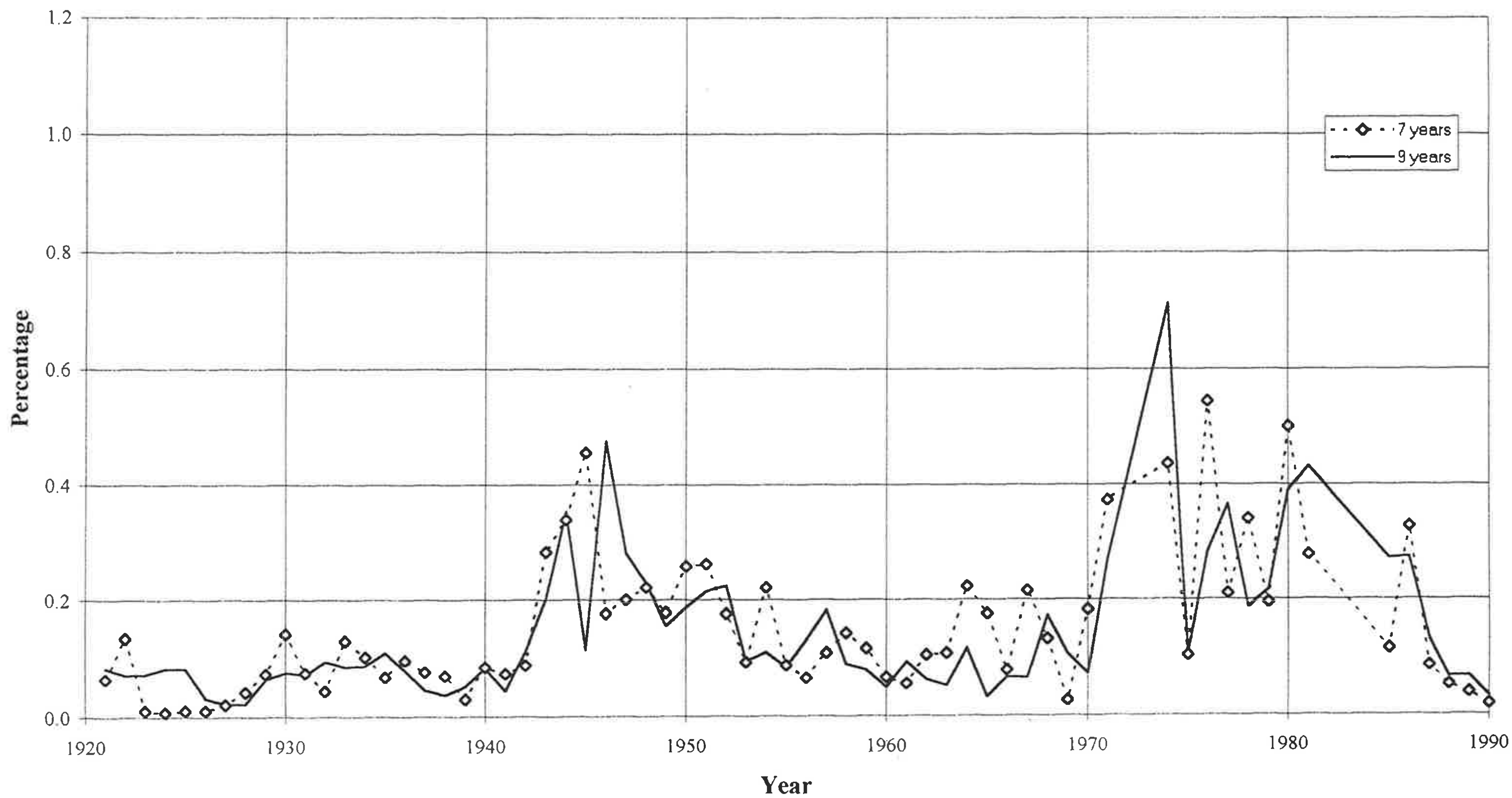


Figure A.18 Percentage of pupils retarded by one year in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

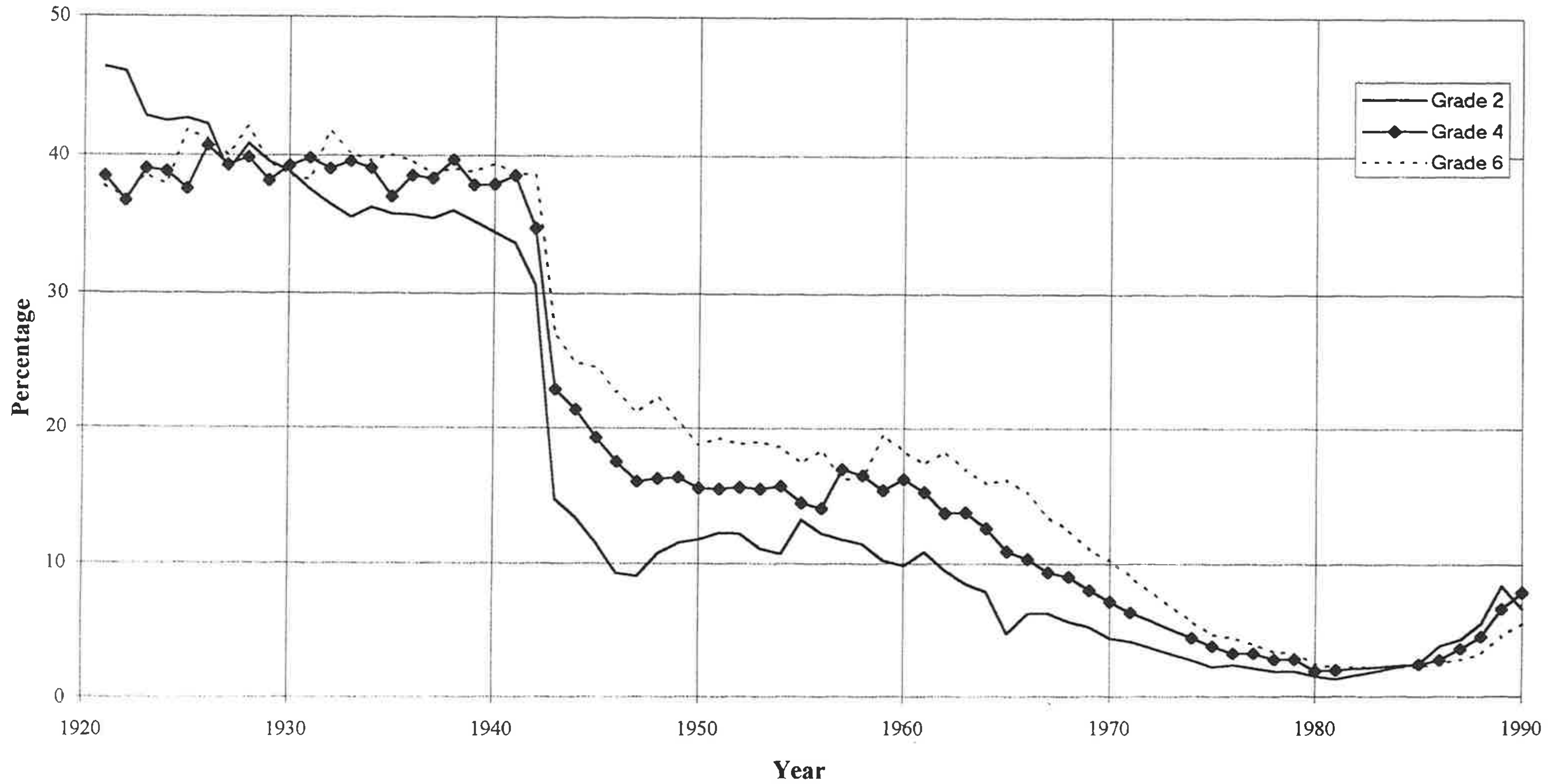


Figure A.19 Percentage of pupils retarded by one year in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

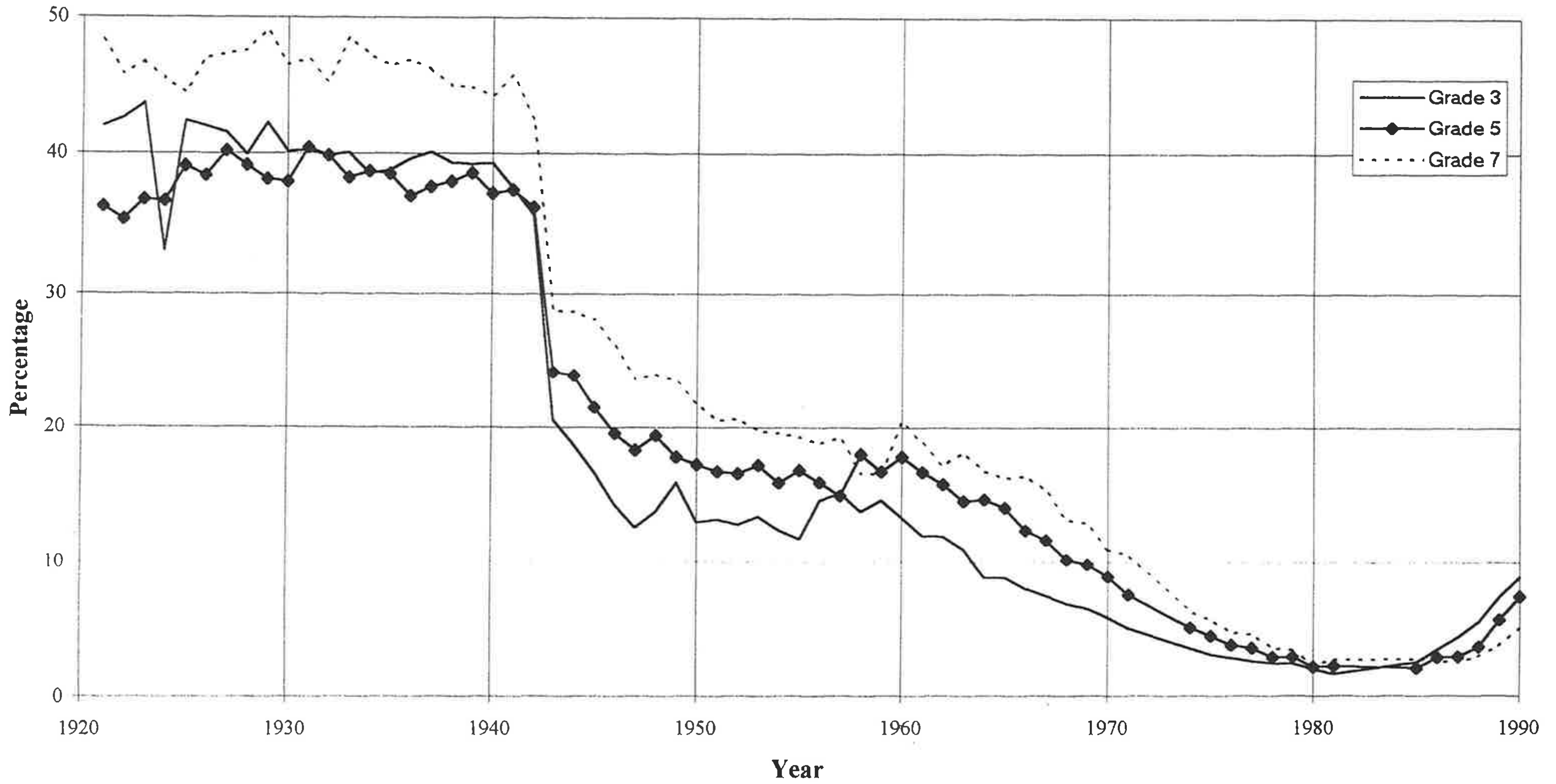


Figure A.20 Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year in Grades 2, 4 and 6, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

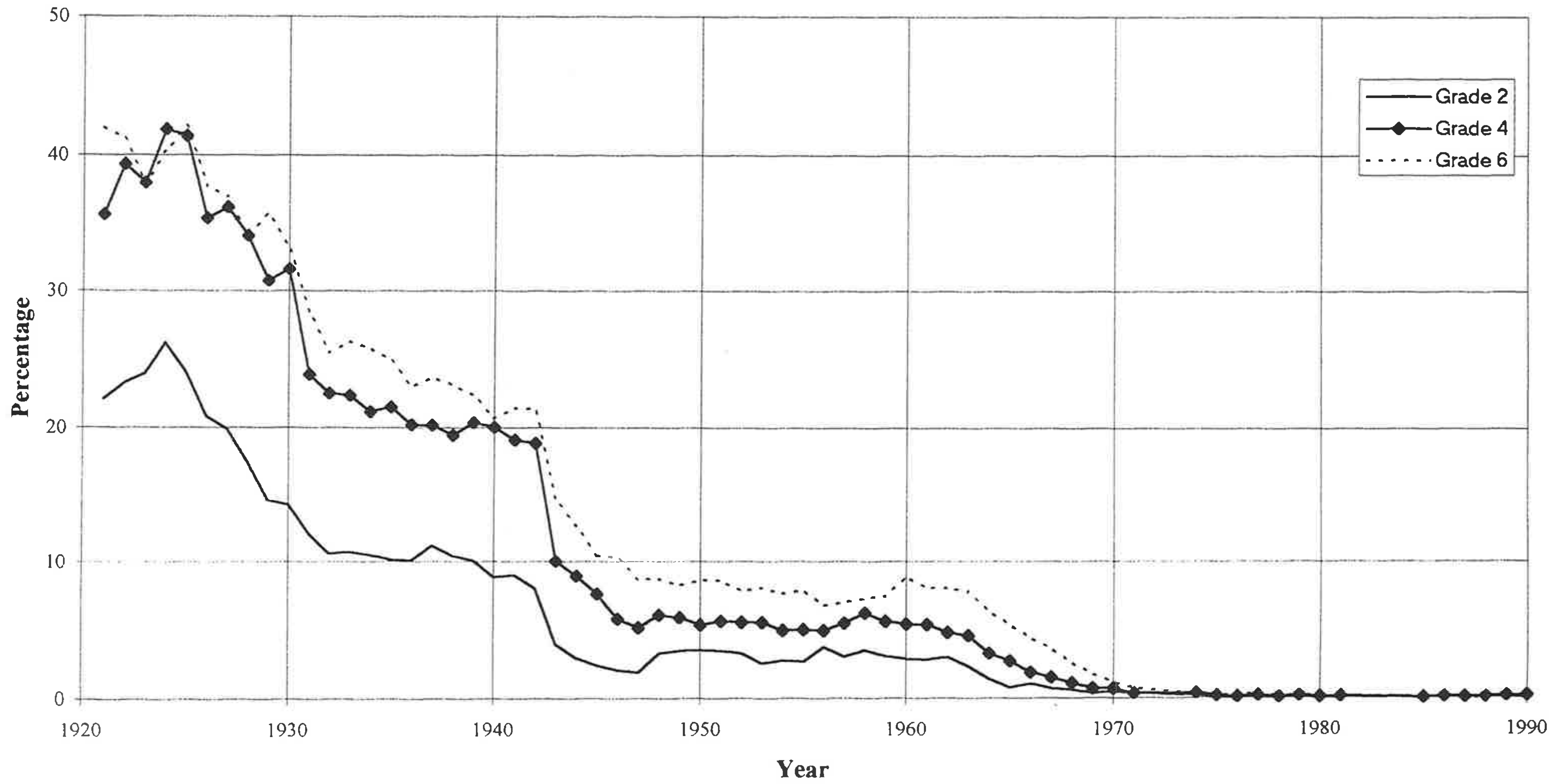


Figure A.21 Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year in Grades 3, 5 and 7, 1921-1990: as a function of grade

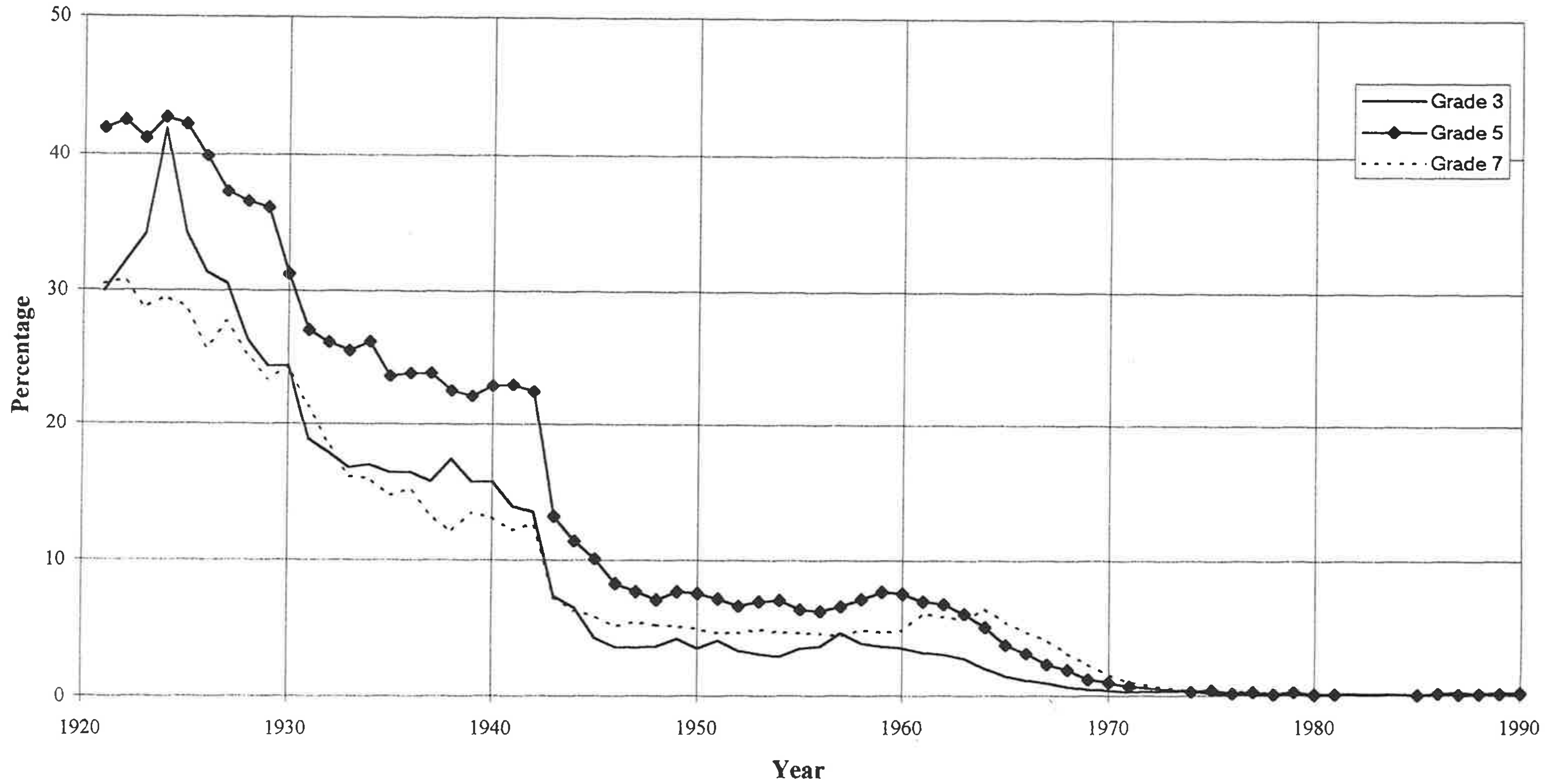


Figure A.22 Percentage of pupils retarded by one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age

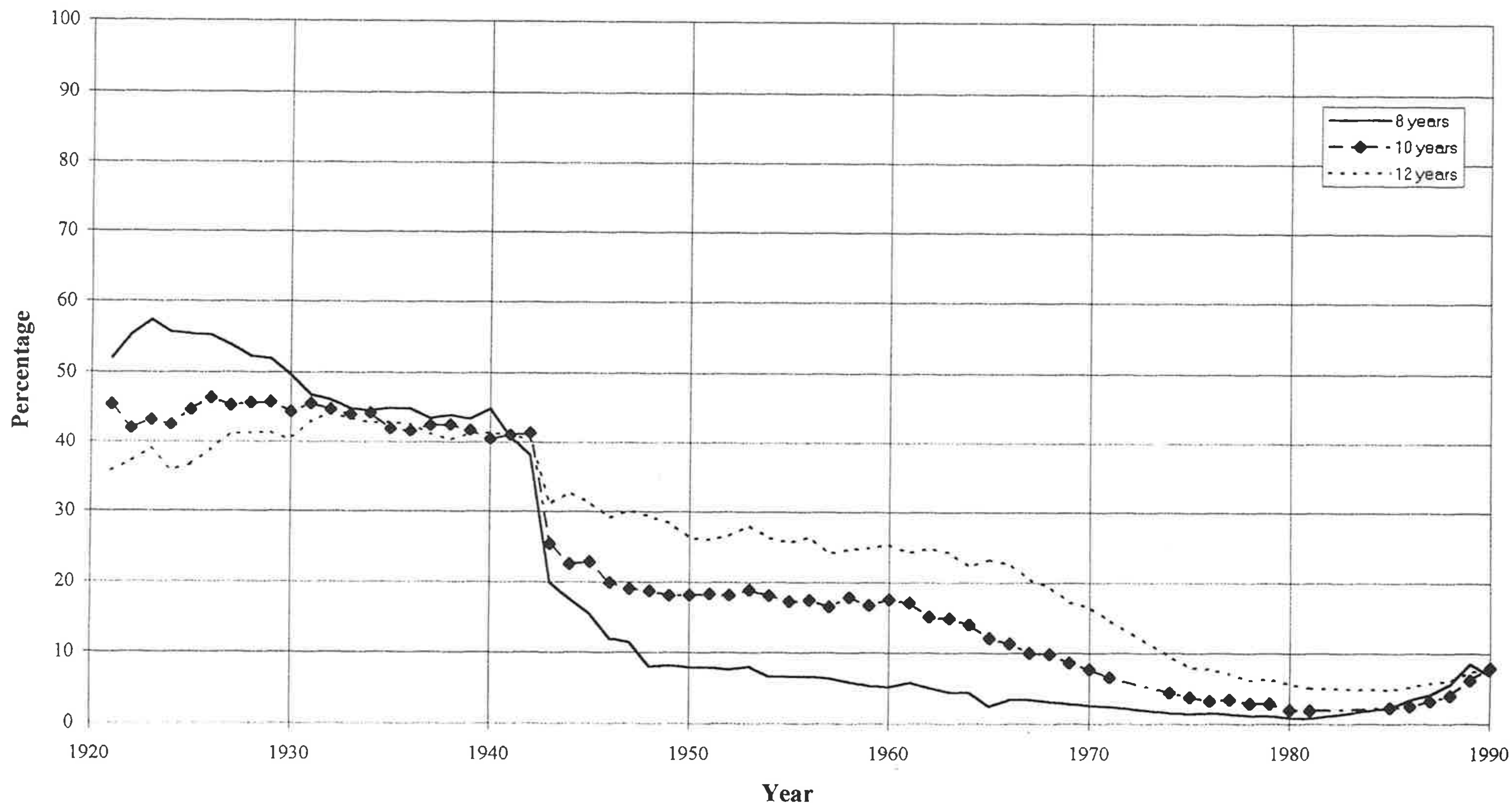


Figure A.23 Percentage of pupils retarded by one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age

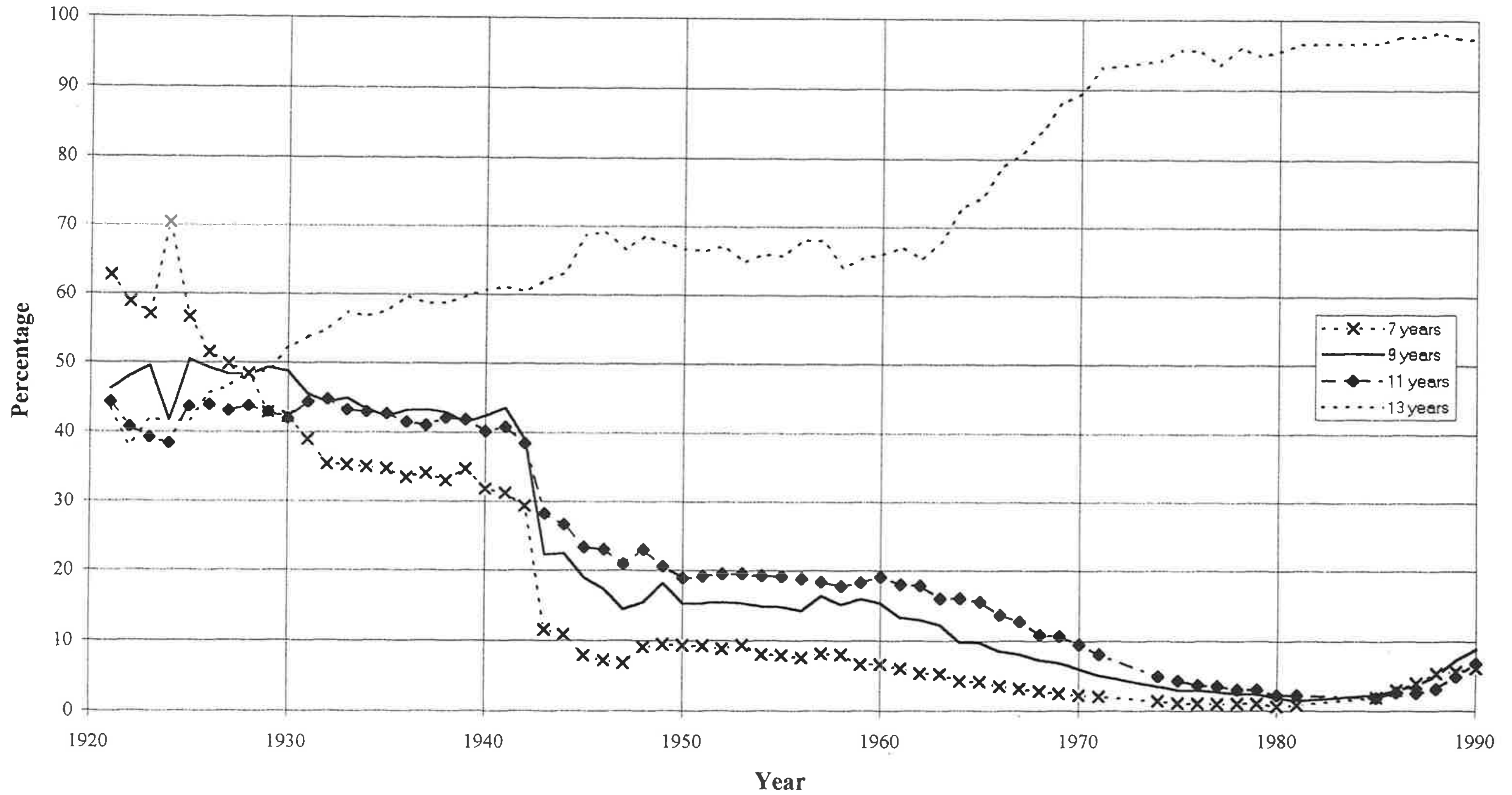


Figure A.24 Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age

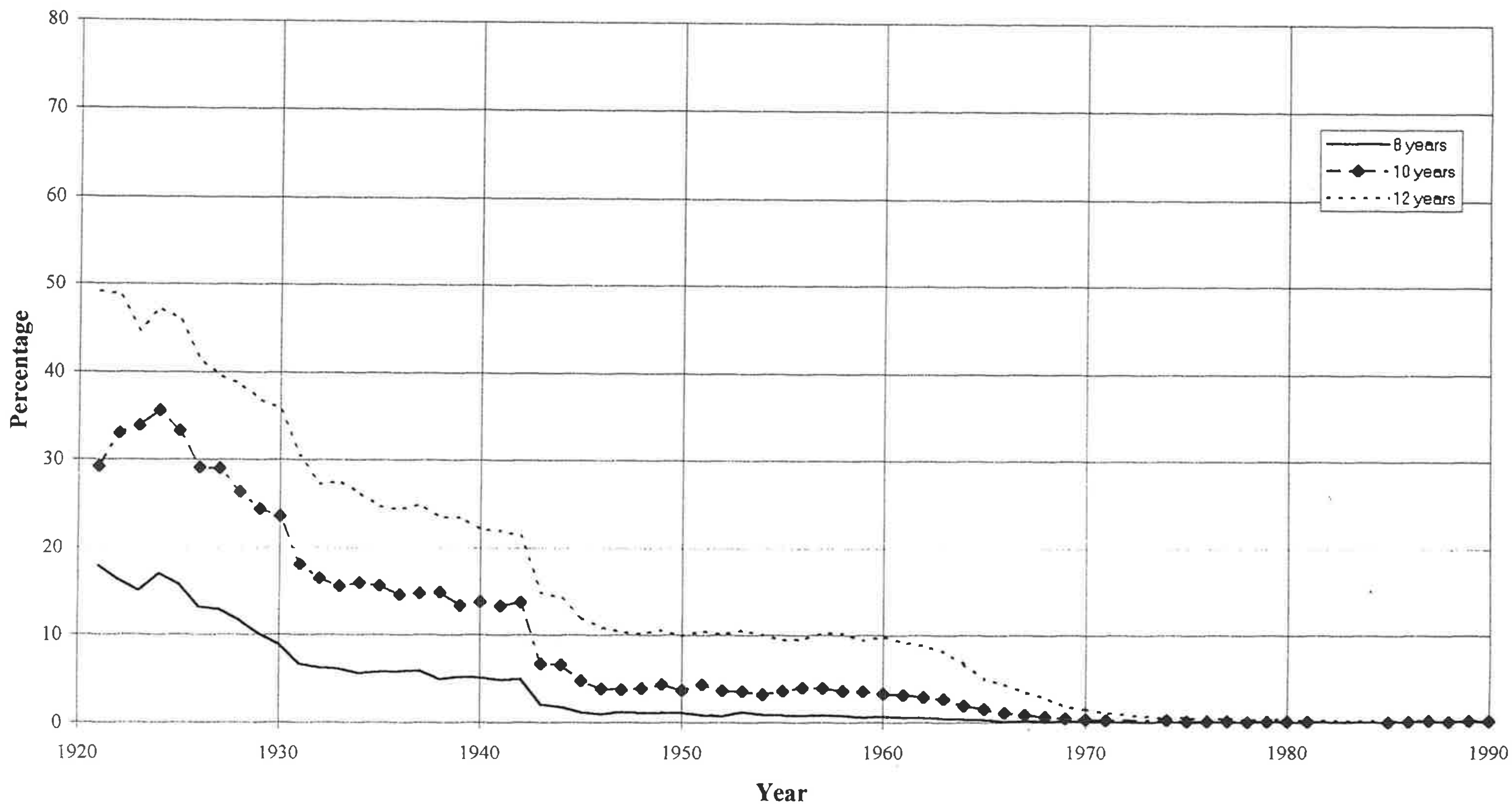
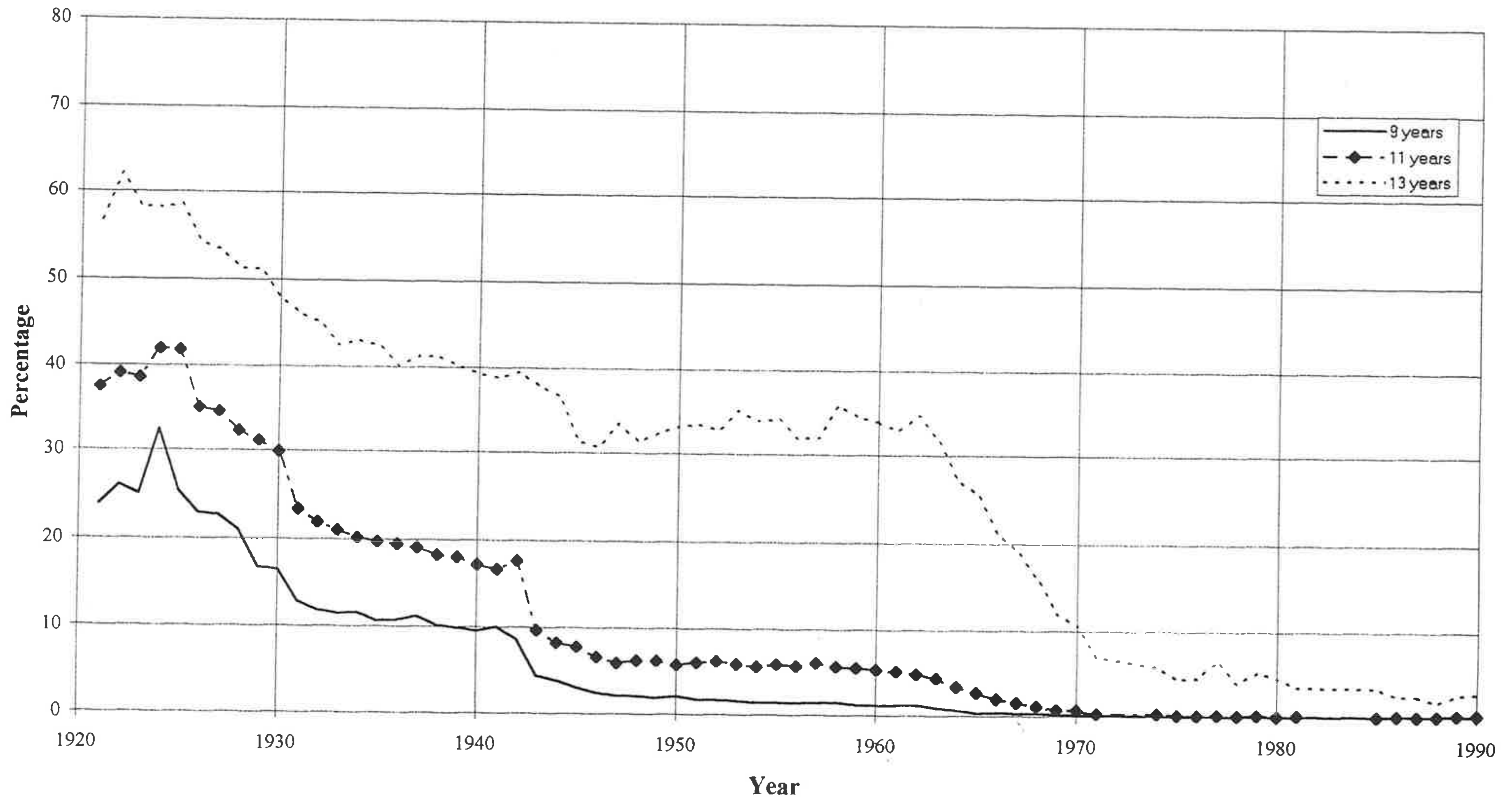


Figure A.25 Percentage of pupils retarded by more than one year, 1921-1990: as a function of age



APPENDIX D

Age-grade data-base: South Australian primary school pupils, 1921-1990

A methodological description

The first step in establishing this data-base involved computer entry of the age-grade statistics published in the Report of the Minister/Director-General of Education for 1921-1990. The original data had to be standardised since the categories and nomenclature used in the annual census of schools changed at several intervals to reflect the reorganisation of the primary curriculum and corresponding grades as well as the diversification of educational provision. Conversion of differences in the format of the published census results was also required. In particular, too, the percentages of 'normal grade-aged', 'retarded' (over-aged for grade) and 'accelerated' (under-aged for grade) pupils had to be calculated from the table: 'Number of scholars under instruction - age and classification' for each year prior to 1942 and after 1984 because, unlike in the intervening years, these figures were not presented in a second table.

To ensure consistency in the Age-number statistics file (Age-num Stat-file) from which the mean chronological ages, standard deviation of ages, age range, and percentages of normal-aged, retarded and accelerated pupils in each primary grade according to sex and school type (with/without a separate infant department) were to be calculated, it was further important to standardise the age categories used and to allow for the variable inclusion/exclusion of certain student cohorts in the original tables. It was also necessary to apply the definition of 'normal grade-age' (a two-year spread) which the Education Department utilised from 1942 onwards to the earlier statistics; and to express the 1921-41 figures in percentages rather than numerically. The same quest for uniformity in the data-base required decisions about how to handle major breaks in the way the information was extracted from the census returns and tabulated by the Statistics Branch. All this entailed an interchange of the knowledge I had gleaned from primary sources and of North American age-grade studies with the expert statistical knowledge of Dr Bibbo, whose services I engaged with the aid of University of South Australia funding.[1]

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[1] Dr Bibbo was thus provided with copies of relevant US age-grade surveys, the Research Officer's article in which he outlined how the annual age-grade returns were tabulated in the Education Department (A. C. Hitchcox, 'Some aspects of the retardation problem - I: Age-grade tables', EG (SA), 60:696, 15 July 1944, p. 141), and gazetted notices to head teachers informing them of alterations in the census procedures and related matters.

At the same time, I chose not to adjust the data in accordance with accepted methodological practice so as to show pupils' ages at a common time of the school year.[2] This was because I wished to highlight the officially-sanctioned manipulation of statistics which measured the fit between age and grade - notably as occurred in 1943 when the census date was amended from December to mid-year in order to redress the "unduly high" grade-ages of South Australian children that overseas comparisons had revealed. Similarly, I decided to retain the Education Department's separate statistical treatment of 'special' pupils within primary schools (that is, those in Opportunity Classes), to illustrate the point that their often considerable over-ageness would otherwise have seriously skewed grade-age averages.

Once data entry was completed and checked, a SYSTAT software program was run on the statistics. Maximum information was provided: for each year from 1921 to 1990, the Age-num Stat-file listed by primary school grade or sub-grade (in separate infant departments), the number of cases, the minimum and maximum ages of pupils as well as the age range (expressed in whole years), mean and median age, standard deviation, variance, co-variance, skewness, kurtosis, standard error and sum. These same statistics were replicated for (ungraded) opportunity classes. Finally, tables and graphs were produced, derived from the data in the Age-num Stat-file and using Excel, to visually demonstrate the nature and extent of changes in South Australian primary school grade organisation. [See Appendices B and C for these.] To take account of the huge amount of data and other factors which meant that comparisons across the whole period of study by sex of pupil and school type could not be sustained, nor all grades treated together in some respects, the information was divided on bases logically suggested by the original statistics: into blocks of time according to whether sex differences or merely the total pupils in each grade were recorded; whether the figures included

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[2] For quantitative studies of age-in-grade or reviews thereof incorporating a methodological discussion, see Henry J. Otto and Dwain M. Estes, 'Accelerated and retarded progress' in Chester W. Harris (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, Third Edition, New York, Macmillan, 1960, pp. 4-11; Dennis H. Cooke, 'A study of school surveys with regard to age-grade distribution', Peabody Journal of Education, vol. 8, no. 5, March 1931, pp. 259-66; Roger T. Lennon and Blythe C. Mitchell, 'Trends in age-grade relationship: a 35-year review', School and Society, vol. 82, October 1955, pp. 123-25; Eleanor H. Bernert and James N. Ypsilantis, 'A measure of relative progression of the school population of the United States: April 1950', Journal of Educational Research, vol. 49, December 1955, pp. 251- 263

infant school pupils or showed these separately; and whether junior primary grades were similarly or differently organised in R-2 and R-7 schools.

As indicated in the Introduction, the thesis additionally relies on statistical analyses performed by the Education Department Research Officer, the Commonwealth Statistician, the Australian Council for Educational Research, and several witnesses appearing before the Bean Committee of Inquiry into Education in South Australia, for its examination of specific dimensions of age-in-grade during the 1940s and 50s - especially in relation to apparent rates of retardation at different grade levels, in different geographic regions and school types, and according to the sex and socio-economic background of pupils.

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The bibliography has been arranged as follows:

I. Primary Sources

A. Archival material

B. Parliamentary sources, government and other official reports, &c.

C. Education Department (SA) publications

D. Contemporary books, pamphlets and periodicals

E. Newspapers

F. Diaries, personal papers, oral histories and written reminiscences

G. Individual school records and data bases

II. Secondary Sources

A. Books

B. Articles

C. Theses

D. Conference and other papers

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