PUPIL TEACHERS and JUNIOR TEACHERS
in
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

1873 to 1965

An Historical and Humanistic Sociological Analysis


Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Education, University of Adelaide.

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### Abbreviations

PEB Public Examinations Board
PRO, GRG Public Records Office, Government Record Group
SAEG South Australian Education Gazette
SAPP South Australia, Parliamentary Papers
SATJ South Australian Teachers' Journal

### Other

ANZHES Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society
ABSTRACT

Pupil Teachers were introduced in South Australia in 1874, as a means of providing initial teacher training and additional staff for schools. The system of Pupil Teachers (or Junior Teachers, as they were termed from 1913) was used to varying degrees until 1965. This study investigates this educational phenomenon from an historical and a humanistic sociological perspective. Much of the historical data was taken from the accounts in contemporary official documents of the comments of those who managed the system, and of those, its supporters and its opponents, who observed it and its effects. Another view of the system was provided by memoirs collected from those who had been appointed as Junior Teachers between 1919 and 1964.

The first part of the study outlines the main changes to the system and discusses the early concerns about both the general education and the professional training of teachers and the place of practical teaching prior to entry to a training institution. From its inception until 1889, pupil teachers carried out both the roles in their title at the same time. They taught in schools and studied to pass the examinations that enabled them to progress through the four levels in the system. When the University of Adelaide became responsible for the training of teachers at the University Training College in 1900, the Education Department had to prepare pupil teachers for both admission to tertiary studies and the practical experience which was still seen as an essential part of preparation for College. As a result pupil teachers became pupils first, for two years at the new Pupil Teachers’ School, and then teachers for two years in ordinary schools. Between 1908 and 1913 the system changed yet again with the ‘cultural’ aspect for junior teachers being provided for in three years of secondary education at the Adelaide High School and the ‘professional’ aspect in one year of practical teaching prior to College. Debate over the place of practical experience as a preparation for further training continued until 1921 when reforms to the training of teachers saw the virtual elimination of junior teachers from the teaching force and the removal of any requirement of a prerequisite period of practical teaching.

The onset of the Great Depression, however, led to the re-employment of large numbers of junior teachers, most of whom were required to teach. The staffing situation worsened during the war and the overuse of junior teachers in place of trained staff led to complaints of the exploitation of the junior teachers and harm to both them and the children they taught. The strong case mounted by the S.A. Teachers’ Union and other opponents of the system led to a recommendation by the Education Inquiry Committee in 1945 for its abolition, an action that eventually took place twenty years later. The history of the junior teacher system that is recorded in the nine chapters that form Part 1 of this study presents a view of the system that reflects the managerial, economic and professional concerns of those who observed it, and it is a view tinged generally with a strong measure of pragmatism, utilitarianism and negativity.
Part 2 of the study analyses the junior teacher system from the perspective of those who experienced it. The views of 341 former junior teachers were collected through a Memoir Document that canvassed their opinions on general aspects of the system and on a number of the areas that had attracted specific criticism, especially during the early 1940s when the S.A. Teachers' Union led an organized campaign against it. The use of memoirs in this way stems from the framework of humanistic sociology, as developed by Znaniecki and extended by Smolicz and Secombe. The first part of each of the first six questions in the Survey allowed for the collection of concrete data similar to that presented to the Education Inquiry Committee in 1943. The second part was framed in such a way there was scope and space for the cultural data that emanated from the assessments and evaluations made by the respondents about the various aspects of their experience. Much of what they wrote is quoted verbatim in order to emphasise the importance of the human element in social and cultural life and to bring the reader into first hand contact with the thinking of the respondents. The memoir responses are presented in Chapters 10 – 14, which follow the chronological history of the Junior Teacher System outlined in Part I.

The two sets of data provided a double view of the reality of life as a junior teacher. A comparison between the material in the memoirs and that documented in a survey published by the S.A. Teachers' Union in 1942 reveals a similarity of data that justifies regarding the memoirs as authentic sources of historical and sociological data. There is a close correlation, too, between material in the memoirs and that documented in 1921 and in 1966, thus leading to a general conclusion about the authenticity of the memoirs collected from all periods. The memoirs also provide different points of view that help to balance up what from the documentation is predominately a negative view of the system. Not only do many of the respondents express different views on such issues as exploitation, harm to children and the need for abolition but their recollections of the time as generally happy, their finding of the system as useful and their commitment to teaching and to children do much to extend an understanding of the reality of life as a junior teacher. They provide, too, a wealth of material beyond that available elsewhere and in this way broaden understanding of the system. Of particular interest are the reflections on social issues of gender, age and social class that came to light in the history of the system.

The study suggests that the introduction of a humanistic sociological analysis from the memoirs of those who were junior teachers does much to enhance an understanding of a period of educational history which is important in relation to the education and professional training of teachers. The findings have implications for current debates on the relative balance between theory and practice in the preparation of teachers.