# Competing Discourses: A genealogy of adolescent literacy discourses in New Zealand secondary education, 1870-2008

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**Candidate's statement**

I certify that this report is the result of my own work except where otherwise acknowledged and has not been submitted, in part or in full, for any other papers or degrees for which credit qualifications have been granted.

Kenneth Gordon Kilpin

## Abstract

The thesis is a Foucauldian genealogy of adolescent, or secondary school, literacy discourses within Aotearoa New Zealand. It links cycles of competitive tension between local discourses of adolescent literacy to larger conflicts between national and international socio-economic discourses. Using Foucault's view of discourse as epistemic formations that reflect the material contingencies of their time and place, I analyse why certain historical conditions generated particular taken-for-granted truths, knowledge and beliefs about literacy education and schooling for adolescent New Zealanders between the years 1870 and 2008. I apply Foucault's analytic tools of discipline and control, biopower and governmentality to explore the complex relationship within New Zealand between adolescent literacy and early discourses of colonial economic development and social control (1870-1935), mid-twentieth century Keynesian national economic reconstruction and socially progressive education reform (1930s-1970s), and recent neo-liberal market and globalisation reforms of education (1980s-2008). In particular I examine the effect of international neo-liberal economic rationalist discourses advocated by the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) since the late 1960s, on contemporary conceptualisations of adolescent literacy and secondary schooling. I explain how the OECD's international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests reflect the OECD's deeper discursive advocacy of managerial rationalist principles to frame an international policy consensus for national education policy making and reforms. Since 2000, PISA has emerged as a powerful global instrument of neo-liberal education policy standardisation that aims to comparatively measure the effectiveness of national secondary schooling systems and their teachers to generate literate adolescents as privatised human capital necessary to service the demands of the neo-liberal global economy. I conclude that New Zealand adolescent literacy education discourses have been continuously shaped by *a priori* positivist principles of post-Enlightenment scientific rationalism. These have variously emerged within subsequent discourses of classical, social and neo-liberal forms of economic rationalisation, policies of curriculum or syllabus reform, and historical conceptions of teacher identity. Notwithstanding their particular socio-cultural aspirations or intentions, all reflect the hegemonic dominance of the laws of market capitalism, and the need for schooling systems to satisfy its demands for trained, literate and credentialed human capital.

## Acknowledgements

The adage that good things take time is most apt to the completion of this thesis and the fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Education degree, begun as far back as 2005. In this sense, completion is as much about resilience and perseverance as it is about inspiration and insight. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of colleagues and family, without whose committed support and encouragement, this thesis would not have been attempted, let alone completed.

My thanks firstly go to my supervisors: to Professor Howard Lee whose 2008 Education Policy paper set my research direction, and who in what I thought then to be a leap of faith, insisted I undertake a research thesis into adolescent literacy policy; to Anne-Marie O'Neill whose knowledge, expertise, sharp critique and enthusiastic collegiality consistently challenged me to 'up my game' as a researcher, analyst and writer; and to Dr. Brian Finch whose steady and reassuring hand helped guide the thesis to its completion, especially at times this year when it appeared just a little too big.

My wife Nora has identified a new presence in our relationship – Ken's 'thesis head'. She has tolerated, stepped around and compensated for times when writing this thesis distanced me from her and from the important minutiae of day-to-day living. Her reliable, consistent and stubborn encouragement allowed me the space and time to wear my thesis head, no matter how annoying and frustrating it must have been. My thanks also go to our daughters Hanna and Caitlin whose determination to succeed academically and vocationally, in very competitive environments, helped push their dad to knuckle down and stick with it.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the gift our late son Alexander left our family when his cancer finally took him on October 22nd 2010, after a brave seven-year battle. The gift was two-fold: don't give up even if the odds are against you, for in perseverance and resilience lie possibilities for success and happiness. Second, 'just do it' because our hold on life is too fragile to waste time not having a go, wondering what might have been, and then later regretting not doing it! This thesis is in memory of our dear Xand, his stubborn refusal to give up, and his determination to do all he could to live a full, if sadly shortened, life.

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## Understanding the personal and professional

There are many instances in any teacher's career that are sufficiently memorable to be recalled long after the event. Some are unique, one off occasions, but others are later conferred a material significance as portents of our teaching futures that we hardly appreciated at the time.

In my modest career, memories of students in drama productions, of classroom 'personalities', and of particular English classes, readily come to mind often with a wry, amused smile. But this thesis is not a memoir of a moderately successful teacher. My departure from the hurley-burley of fulltime daily teaching at the end of 2003, and the value of postgraduate study thereafter, have brought to mind other memories which are, within the context of this thesis, significant milestones of professional change as revealing as any chalkboard (or whiteboard) war stories.

Four memories are germane to this thesis. First, my career as an English teacher began in 1980 in a lower decile, urban, coeducational high school. In my second year I was allocated the top stream Form 3 English class, and my Head of Department (HOD) instructed me to do what I liked with them so long as I 'pushed them hard'. Second, in late 1993 I attended a professional development 'jumbo day' to familiarise a number of sceptical English teachers with the draft English syllabus. I was to encounter the new language of educational neo-liberalism. Third were the consequences of my school's (now a rural decile 4 high school) 1998 Education Review Office (ERO) report which berated the English Department, amongst others, for non-compliance with the gazetted 1994 English Curriculum. We were one of a small number of audited schools on a one year notice to rewrite schemes of work aligned to its linear outcomes, objectives, levels and statements. Finally, a 2005 oral reporting session to the Ministry of Education made clear that extensive qualitative reporting of English advisory work inadequately measured the positive shifts the work was intended to generate in student achievement as a consequence of changed teacher practice. The feedback recommended that I receive

professional development to gather quantitative data to measure the shifts and therefore quality of my work and levels of effectiveness.

Hindsight, subsequent experience, and new learning have conferred a deeper meaning upon these events. Now they represent episodes in a bigger narrative about the inflexible and irresistible transition of teachers' work from the relative autonomy the like of which I experienced in 1980, to a managerialist control of teacher (and adviser) labour, evident in my work through the 1990s and 2000s. Adolescent literacy and the English Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994) together became a locus for radical neo-liberal educational reform, and an important instrument of control.

There are two catalysts for this thesis: a growing awareness of this conservative radicalisation, and an increasing concern about its effects on my work and that of teachers in secondary schools. I was learning that within scientific and managerialist neo-liberal discourses lie the conceptual origins of redefined educational instrumentalism and technologies that hegemonically manage the compliant reshaping of my professional identity. I also was to learn metaphorically, why as a Head of Department in 1997, and an adolescent literacy adviser in 2005, I could not practise my craft with the same professional freedom to 'push them hard' that my Head of Department in 1980 had enjoyed and willingly extended to his staff and me.

The thesis is both a professional and personal exploration of the policies, rhetoric and politics of adolescent literacy that initially shaped the 1877 Education Act. It examines their evolution through much of the twentieth century as multiple, competing discourses within education policy and teacher practice, to now be an essential component of wider neo-liberal economic and globalisation discourses. It asks why certain material beliefs and truths about adolescent (or secondary school) literacy were powerful enough at particular times to shape wider national discourses about who should learn to be literate, to what extent that should occur, who should teach it, where it is taught, and why it should be done. I look back into New Zealand's educational past for evidence of the discursive evolution of adolescent (or secondary school) literacy in order to trace its pathway towards its recent dominance of national secondary school discourses of effective learning, teacher practice and student achievement. Simultaneously, a

discursive history of adolescent literacy is also a narrative of changes in teacher professional practice, especially since 1970.

The research is formed around three related inquiry streams. The first analyses how particular socio-cultural beliefs, values, and ideas have influenced and shaped the evolution of New Zealand's adolescent literacy discourses in the years 1870 to 2008. The second focuses on the impact that international and domestic economic interests have had on these discursive formations, particularly after 1984 with the election of the Lange-led fourth Labour Government (1984-1990). The third explores the extent to which New Zealand's recent approaches to adolescent literacy were discursively modelled on international neo-liberal policy scenarios, with a focus on the instrumental role of international adolescent literacy testing and the application of economic rationalism to adolescent literacy professional development processes.

**Colonial discourses of literacy, the maintenance of class, and social mobility**

The 1877 Education Act was the culmination of two decades of debate about the role that primary education should play in the development of late nineteenth century colonial New Zealand. It articulated a vision of universal entitlement so that all children could maximise their potential in accordance with the scientific and social mores of the day (Clark, 2005). The Act legislated for universal access to primary schools, equal treatment through a common national curriculum, formal qualifications, uniform standards of resource allocation, and teacher training. In doing so, it shifted responsibility for primary education away from the colony's provincial councils to the central government.

Despite its apparent progressive humanism, realpolitik reflected narrow self-interest and colonial pragmatism. Government in the colony was controlled by economic elites – landowners and business people – who recognised that education, organised in a particular way on a national scale, was a pre-requisite for the economic development of the new colony. Education would provide the literate and skilled labour necessary to support New Zealand's fledging industrial and agricultural economy. Further, uneducated youth were regarded as a potential criminal class that could threaten the social order. However, social order might also be undermined by a universally

accessible, centrally controlled, national primary education that could create conditions for undesirable working class social mobility, and demands for political change. Harker (1990, pp. 25-44) argues that the colonial government required a literate voting labour force to contribute to economic growth, taught by a national education system that reproduced the values of the existing power structures and the economic elites. Rather than being an expression of social progressivism, the 1877 Act was a cautious reform that prioritised economic pragmatism, and the maintenance of the existing social order. The objectives were the creation of a literate, capable, yet socially compliant workforce for an emerging agri-industrial colonial economy, and the entrenchment of the power and interests of the colony's dominant socio-economic elites. In other words, the links between a literate workforce, economic growth in an unfettered liberal free market, and the maintenance of social order, were already well understood by national legislators in the new colony (Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993; Sabine & Thorsen, 1973).

**The rise of Keynesian redistributive discourses**

Following the Great Depression (1929-1935), education reforms undertaken by the Labour Government during the period 1935-1939 were in part a social democratic reaction to the failure of classical free market economics to deliver and distribute the social, cultural and economic benefits of national growth and progress (Clark, 2005). The State undertook to ameliorate the worst excesses and injustices of free market capitalism, by introducing reforms shaped by Keynesian redistributive discourses. These reconstituted literacy as a social good, rather than a private good rationed by class and wealth. Education policies therefore supported a common curriculum, redistributive provisioning, and universal access, shaped as a social contract between the State, its citizens, and educational professionals. All school children would have access to and receive a nationally prescribed and equitably resourced education in which literacy was to be a central focus.

The policies, however, continued to reflect the close relationship between economic development and schooling provision. They were a compromise between social democratic egalitarian ideals and the pragmatism of market-based economic development (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004). An egalitarian publicly funded primary school education was regarded as important for restoring New Zealand's long term

economic prosperity. Olssen et al. (2004) argue that an egalitarian schooling system "subsumed notions of the possessive individual" (p. 131) and represented the "conditions of human dignity" (p. 130) within which equality of opportunity could be achieved. However, it was up to the individual to take those opportunities. Primary schools students would learn the necessary skills, processes and knowledge to gain employment and to function as adults in everyday life, and to contribute to the country's economic future. Echoing the competing discourses underpinning the 1877 Education Act, the post-depression reforms saw literacy become instruments for advancing market-based economic progress as much as they were for restoring the nation's post-depression social, cultural and spiritual cohesion.

**Competing paradigms in the post-war years**

The education reforms immediately following the Second World War continued to reflect these discursive tensions between market capitalism, economic progress, wealth distribution, and egalitarian social justice. The political, economic and social destruction wrought by both world wars further strengthened the instrumental relationship between robust national literacy achievement and accelerated economic recovery and growth. However, the destructive consequences of militaristic, totalitarian regimes made embedding democratic values and practices into New Zealand's society at all levels an important goal for the curriculum, for which literacy was also a key tool (McKenzie, 1992). Throughout the 1950s, supported by international advances in cognitive psychology, high national standards of literacy were prioritised by government and expressed in the production of national literacy measurement tests and primary school literacy curriculum (Soler, 2000). Thus, creating literate citizens took on a number of functions. It was considered a priority for sustaining a socially just and democratic post-war society, for supporting individual growth and advancement, and for developing a more prosperous market economy.

The post-war Keynesian social welfare consensus (Olssen et al., 2004, pp. 129-132) was the context in which particular international socially progressive pedagogies gathered discursive strength in the 1960s. The consensus saw education, and language and literacy in particular, as necessary preconditions for a just society and for the full realisation of individual potential. As this thesis will argue, its discursive power is

exemplified in the establishment of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) in early 1970. Equally, the NESC is a case study of the discursive tensions and compromises embodied in the Keynesian consensus. It is a narrative of social democratic idealism applied to curriculum design, and of the first national attempt to introduce secondary teachers to language and literacy as a powerful instructional tool for learning across the curriculum (Catherwood, Rathgen, & Aitken, 1990). It is also a case study of rapid discursive decline as it quickly succumbed to both Labour and National Governments' post-1987 neo-liberal economic reforms.

The NESC language and literacy curriculum reform is the context within which my HOD in 1980 gave me the licence to explore literacy education within my Year 9 English class, constructed as the open-ended study of language and literature. My thesis is, in part then, an exploration of the historical precedents and material discourses of adolescent literacy and curriculum design that enabled him to grant me that licence, and to be confident that the Forms 3-5 English Curriculum, with its focus on literacy learning in a secondary school environment, would endorse his decision.

**Conflicting discourses, 1970-1990**

In spite of the success of the NESC curriculum, it was apparent that by the late 1970s, the discursive hold of the Keynesian social contract was weakening against emerging alternative international neo-liberal free market discourses. These challenged at deep levels the post-war compromise of literacy as a social democratic right and as a tool for economic growth. The challenge was exacerbated by serious domestic social, cultural, and economic problems, that Codd, Gordon, and Harker (1990) argue amounted to a social and economic crisis for the New Zealand State. It presaged a radical neo-liberal transformation of New Zealand society and its schooling system. Through the 1990s and 2000s, adolescent literacy would be prominent in national debates, reforms of curriculum design and national professional development policies. Many of these affected my teaching and advisory practice and are represented in those milestone moments described earlier.

In 1984, the New Zealand electorate put David Lange's Labour Party into power, and with it, unwittingly initiated a neo-liberal reform of the New Zealand economy (A-M.

O'Neill, 2004). Reflecting its centrality to neo-liberal theories, education quickly became the site of wider and deeper social, cultural and political reforms that, according to Adams (2005), amounted to "a radical reconceptualisation by those in power of what society should be like" (p. 4). Education's role was fundamentally reshaped. Economic imperatives subsumed or subjugated other social and cultural objectives that had influenced education discourses since the 1930s (G. Lee, Hill, & Lee, 2004). Education's dominant role was to promote the types of values, skills, knowledge, and practices of an entrepreneurial society and an enterprise culture – national economic progress, competitive individualism, and the private accumulation of wealth and property (Peters & Marshall, 2004). Education policy began to prioritise the acquisition of skills by the individual, such as advanced literacy learning, that were claimed to be vital instruments for successful participation in an increasingly globalised knowledge-based capitalist economy. Echoing earlier classical liberal beliefs, the individual again became a discrete unit of production, socially isolated by the dynamics of competitive market forces. Knowledge and literacy were now instruments of human capital enhancement to generate individual wealth.

Social democratic ideals based on collectivist, socially liberal, egalitarian and redistributive principles were silenced as inefficient, ineffective, and irrelevant in the new economic environment. The social contract that had its cautious, discursive beginnings in the 1877 Education Act, and were expanded by Peter Fraser in the late 1930s and successive National Governments from 1949, was effectively torn up. It was replaced by a narrower, ideologically radical re-conceptualisation of the individual, of society and the role of education, and literacy within it.

**Rhetorical discourses of anxiety, crisis, and solution**

New Zealand education's discursive landscape became increasingly contentious during the 1990s, as neo-liberal economic interests and lobby groups, against a background of economic decline, successfully targeted literacy policy or criticised teacher practice (Harrison, 2004; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). As I discuss, this fuelled a rhetorical crisis of confidence in literacy education in primary and secondary schools. Several media publications claimed that literacy standards in primary schools were falling, and argued that students were victims of teacher ineptitude. By 1997, the Business Round

Table's affiliate, the Education Forum, identified teachers' professional practice as being the root cause of the decline in educational standards (Smith, 2000). In 1998, media outlets were claiming that "47% of unemployed 14- to 19-year-olds had no formal qualifications; one-third of school leavers went straight from school onto the unemployment benefit with no postsecondary education", and that polytechnics and universities struggled with students' basic literacy standards (Openshaw, 2007, p. 12).

These attacks were part of a more generalised conservative assault on education and student achievement in New Zealand that re-emerged in the late 1980s to bolster market reforms of education (Smith, 2000). In literacy terms, primary school students were not being taught to read and write effectively, and secondary school students were underachieving and leaving school too early, inadequately literate, poorly credentialed and ill-prepared for work and further study. The policy response, however, was to further manage literacy learning rather than learning new and more effective ideas. As MacFarlane (2000) argues:

> … [neo-liberal reform] mistakenly believed that an intensified, more visible and accountable management of literacy teaching and learning would result in improved literacy. The new model was based on the detailed measurement of children against predetermined outcomes, which itself was an extremely controversial practice. (p. 100)

This was the national context within which I attended an English curriculum familiarisation day in 1994, only to come away feeling more managed than empowered, yet unable to articulate why or how. In 1998, ERO visited my high school to audit the English Department's operationalisation of the English Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994). This reflected ERO's intensified demand for schools to operationalise curriculum as national standards (A-M. O'Neill, 2013). In the year following the visit, the English Department reworked its instructional programmes to comply with the Curriculum's specifications. ERO revisited the school a year later to monitor compliance to their demands. Despite inner reservations, I began to explicitly manage teacher practice, student learning and assessment against externally derived outcomes, objectives and levels, an approach that started to directly shape my subsequent practice

in ways quite at odds with the empowering spirit and intent of the NESC a decade earlier.

Adolescent literacy emerged as a major policy issue in the late 1990s in the context of these wider national conflicts and arguments about literacy achievement. In 1998, the Literacy Taskforce was established by the National Government amid concerns of a literacy crisis in primary schools. The Taskforce's report (Ministry of Education, 1999) prompted a small group of Ministry of Education officials, now working within a Labour Administration, to investigate adolescent literacy in New Zealand secondary schools that would lead to professional development programmes and resource development (Alkema, 2004).

Despite the election of a Left-leaning centrist Labour Government in 1999, and the initiatives following the Literacy Taskforce, neo-liberal beliefs, and in particular the economic instrumentalist view of curriculum and literacy it spawned, continued its substantial influence on adolescent literacy discourses and curriculum management into the first decade of the new millennium. Economic rationalist efficiency and effectiveness discourses emerged that encouraged the quantitative evaluation of student achievement, teacher accountability, and the success of national professional development policies. Conversely, qualitative analysis was rejected as unscientific, inexact, and subjective.

In 2004 I began to work as an English and adolescent literacy adviser, delivering Ministry of Education professional development contracts in the mid-central North Island. In my first year, I reported qualitatively on shifts in teacher practice in milestone reports. In 2005, my milestone report feedback pointed to the lack of quantitative evidence to support my report. By 2008, the final year of this study, my milestone reports for adolescent literacy development contracts were dominated by required statistical analysis of student literacy achievement data, and the quantitative survey and analysis of shifts in teacher practice that would confirm the cost-effective delivery of the contract. Professional autonomy began to be managed by the narrow principles of the business contract.

**Epistemological implications**

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) and the curriculum reforms of the 1990s restructured learning and assessment into discrete 'outcomes' and 'standards', calibrated to eight curriculum levels against which student achievement could be quantifiably measured, described and reported (H. Lee, O'Neill, & McKenzie, 2004). It introduced a standardised nomenclature to describe student achievement and, with it, a template with which to plan learning programmes and to create learning tasks. In epistemological terms, literacy learning and knowledge became scientifically structured as developmental stages and prescribed outcomes. It was calibrated to the eight levels of the English Curriculum, and was above all, predictable and quantitatively measureable. Subsequent national literacy testing tools were based on this framework or were adapted to comply with its achievement level outcomes and descriptors.

**International context**

New Zealand's education policies have been influenced directly and indirectly by policy discourses of extra-national international non-government organisations (Fitzsimons, 2000; Olssen et al., 2004). Since the 1970s, successive New Zealand governments have adopted the Organisation for Economic Cultural Development (OECD) policy models and scenarios to help develop their domestic educational policies.

New Zealand's membership of the OECD has led to our involvement in the international *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) (2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012) testing programme, that claims to measure the literacy skills and competencies of primary and secondary students the OECD deem relevant for optimising economic growth in first world capitalist economies. The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) reflects the educational language of international economics and globalisation with references or allusions to "future focused learning" (p. 9), "lifelong learning" (pp. 4 & 6), "globalisation" (pp. 8-9), and "key competencies" (pp. 12-13). These echo in word and intent the neo-liberal economic policy directions advocated by the OECD in its widely influential report entitled *The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* (OECD, 2005) (abbr. *DeSeCo Report 2005*), and the globalisation policy frameworks of the World Trade Organisation and

the World Bank (Adams, 2005). This thesis will explore how New Zealand's approach to adolescent literacy policy and practice has been discursively shaped by wider international economic discourses. These conceptualise and rationalise adolescent literacy, and schooling more generally, as human capital required for market-led economic growth, and for productive national engagement in the processes of global capitalism.

**Thesis structure**

The thesis chronologically traces the discursive history of adolescent discourses, beginning in 1870 and concluding in 2008. In Chapter 2, I explain my Foucauldian methodological approach, its significant features, and how it applies to my research into the historical and more recent discourses of adolescent literacy in New Zealand secondary school education. Initially, I make clear my motivations as a researcher in relation to my topic, to acknowledge that I am as discursively constructed as the material I wish to research. I then explain why and how I have chosen to use Foucault's genealogical approach to discourse analysis to trace the oscillation of New Zealand's adolescent literacy discourses and the historical conditions of the times in which they emerged.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I examine the prominent national and international forces that shaped the discursive landscape of New Zealand adolescent literacy policies and education more widely from 1870 to the present. Chapter 3 is in two sections. The first section analyses how *socio-economic discourses* competed for dominance in New Zealand adolescent literacy policy and practice between 1870 and 1970. The second section traces the development of *pedagogic discourses* from early twentieth century behaviourism to contemporary socio-cultural and discipline specific conceptualisations, which have influenced instructional approaches to adolescent literacy. In Chapter 4, international discourses that have shaped the instrumental function of adolescent literacy in nation building, capitalist economic development and educational globalisation, are discussed in relation to the influence of these discourses on current New Zealand curriculum policy and assessment.

Chapters 5 and 6 use two case studies to exemplify how this complex, multi-layered matrix of competing discourses directly affected two significant developments in New Zealand adolescent literacy policy, curriculum and teacher practice. Chapter 5 focuses on the years 1970 to 1990, during which particular progressive humanistic adolescent literacy discourses were embodied in the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) reforms and the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) project, against a background of resurging conservative educational discourses and the fracturing of the Keynesian consensus. Chapter 6 analyses how national and international neo-liberal economic discourses quickly colonised and dominated adolescent literacy policy in the 1990s and 2000s. I also examine how the adolescent literacy professional development contracts I delivered between 2004 and 2008 were shaped by the new global educational norms of neo-liberal economic rationalism.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I step back to analyse the deeper socio-economic and pedagogical meanings, consequences and implications of this historical experience of continuity and change, of competing and opposing, and rising and declining discourses of adolescent literacy in the period 1870 to 2008.

**Conclusion**

This thesis is both a personal and professional research project. In one sense it offers a historical analysis of the discursive forces that have competed for dominance in New Zealand's adolescent literacy policy and practice. It is also a personal exploration of how those same forces have cumulatively acted upon the historical construction of my identity as an English teacher and a secondary school literacy adviser. By looking through a discourse lens, I hope to unpack the wider significance of my metaphors of identity change, and understand why I was left wondering quite how it happened and why I felt powerless to resist.

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I explain my research methodology. It focuses on Foucault's genealogical approach to discourse analysis, sets out my subjective research position, and explains how particular research methods are used to gather data.

# Chapter 2

# A Foucauldian approach to the analysis of New Zealand adolescent literacy discourses, 1870-2008

## Introduction

My interest in adolescent literacy discourses was fostered initially by 700 level papers on Educational Policy Analysis (2008) and a Qualitative Methodologies paper (2009). The lecturer for the latter course exhorted us to research and question power relationships and their social conditions, and we were encouraged to engage in research that incorporated personal as well as academic interests. Both courses reacquainted me with socio-political concepts such as ideology and hegemony from my undergraduate years, introduced me to contemporary approaches to discourse theory, and suggested a methodological pathway with which to undertake this thesis.

The learning acquired in these courses, especially that which focused on the socio-economic drivers of educational change, provoked me to question and to try to make sense of, my experiences and roles as a teacher and adviser, four of which I described in Chapter 1. I was initially drawn to Habermas and critical theory as a framework through which I might engage in what Locke (2004a) and Fairclough (1992, p. 64) describe as sense-making. I assumed this frame would enable me to analyse how historically located truths and beliefs (i.e. discourses) offer "a coherent way of making sense of the world" (Locke, 2004a, p. 5) and how discourses can be thought of as practices that represent particular meanings, which also reflexively create, form, and construct their own meanings (McHoul & Grace, 1997). Further reading led me to Foucault's re-theorising of critical historical inquiry, particularly his genealogical inquiry method. Genealogical discourse inquiry is concerned with analytically revealing how discourses were formed, how they modified and were modified by other related discourses, and how they exerted power to transform and embed, as taken-for-granted, hegemonic, 'common sense', particular systems of rules, principles and values (Locke, 2004a).

In this chapter, I discuss Foucault's genealogical approach to analysing historically located discourses of adolescent literacy. I explain how particular tools of critique can reveal how competing discourses have reflexively constructed historical and

contemporary understandings of adolescent literacy and curriculum. They can also illuminate the consequences of these power relationships on the evolution of secondary teacher identity and the role of New Zealand secondary schooling as a location for literacy education.

Subjectively informed, my research has been driven by my desire to analyse the broader discursive forces that gave rise to and underpinned events, practices, and forces that shaped my teacher/adviser identity. It seems appropriate that I should begin my methodological discussion by identifying the truths and beliefs that have reflexively shaped my research identity to make my own discursive positioning ethically transparent.

I then explain Foucault's theories of discourse and power relations by focussing on Foucauldian tools of critique that help reveal why certain discourses about adolescent literacy, as forms of power relationships, emerged to dominate the 'sayable' (Foucault, 1991, cited in Locke, 2004a, p. 29). A Foucauldian critique of discourse differs from a structural linguistics approach with its notion of universal laws or elementary structures. These exist as continuous ahistorical elements that "shape general underlying rules of linguistic or communicative function behind … imagined or invented text" (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 28; Olssen et al., 2004). Linguistic critique attempts to deconstruct the linguistic regularities *within* a discourse in order to explain its essence, which in turn explains its constituent parts. Foucault rejects this as a deconstructivist approach, because he is more concerned

> … to trace the historical constitution of our most prized certainties, to expose their contingent historical basis, and to track the interrelations between power and knowledge within a particular historical period. (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 53)

Thus, a Foucauldian approach explores discourse within its social conditions, or how they were shaped by discourse. It attempts to identify how ideas, beliefs and practices, as social objects in any given historical period, encourage, constrain or exclude the ways social objects can be said or thought. It examines what counts as true or false that is, what is sayable at particular junctures, and what is not (McHoul & Grace, 1997, pp. 28, 31).

The last part of the chapter briefly discusses why and how a number of semi-structured interviews of key practitioners in this field form a constituent part of the genealogy. I use evidence from three oral and one written semi-structured interviews to instantiate and elaborate the inter-relationships between multiple discourses of educational economic rationalism (Codd, 1998; Lam, 2001), adolescent literacy professional development policy, and their subsequent effects on teacher professional identity.

**Values and position: A paradigm away**

My initial social science learning at university in the mid-1970s regularly referenced Marxist and Hegelian dialectical theories of historical materialism. These intimated that it would only be a matter of time before capitalism, containing "the seeds of its own downfall" (Ham & Hill, 1993, p. 34), would cannibalise itself and false consciousness would disappear, to emancipate society into an ethical, just and democratic world. Returning to study in the mid-2000s to read about Habermas and critical theory seemed discursively familiar and comfortable.

However, as my postgraduate studies continued, these familiar and comfortable discourses seemed a paradigm away from what I was learning and processing in my courses about my more recent professional experiences. I was educated in a socially liberal and collectivist welfare society, the values of which my schooling helped to enculturate and shape as my adult personal beliefs. These continue to underpin my work as an educator. I began to question how progress towards a communitarian and just democratic society, based on wealth redistribution and equitable and just social policies, and espoused within the emancipatory dialectics of Marx, Hegel, Habermas and critical theory (Olssen et al., 2004; Prunty, 1985), was brought to an abrupt halt in the years after 1984. How did neo-liberal policies, aimed at a deliberate redefining of my professional values and work, come to thoroughly dominate education policy formation? Where did this technical rationalist policy ensemble originate (Prunty, 1985, p. 134), and why did it so quickly enculturate the values of the market, individualism and competition into New Zealand curriculum and adolescent literacy policies?

My elaboration of this personal/professional position follows Ozga's (2000) recommendation to articulate the underpinning values and beliefs I bring to my

research. She argues that no social science project can claim value free status - "Values pervade and infuse our activities as researchers … they shape our purposes in doing research" (p. 47) - both in the research focus and methodologies we adopt. Locke (2004a) and Bacchi (2000) argue that researchers need to acknowledge that they and their research methods are discursively constructed and on that basis, should be prepared to identify their common sensical thinking. Citing Dale (1989), Ozga suggests that the values a researcher brings to a policy analysis project will influence the choice of material they exclude and ignore, or emphasise and privilege in the project. She argues that the researcher's beliefs and values must be clearly articulated, in order for their methodological choices to make sense (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987, pp. 337-338, cited in Ozga, 2000, p. 48). In other words, discourse researchers should be aware of the "ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, inter-subjective and normative reference claims" (Kinchloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 140, cited in Locke, 2004a, pp. 35-36).

**My methodological tools**

In my initial 2009 proposal, I argued for the adoption of a Habermasian critical theory methodology. It seemed to offer to a somewhat disillusioned mature student of the social sciences, and an increasingly sceptical teacher, an emancipatory hope through "an exposure of the ideological interest at work in curricula in order that teachers and students can take control of their own lives for the collective, egalitarian good" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 32).

However, upon embarking on the project, I questioned whether this approach could generate a coherent, finely grained narrative analysis of the historical discourses that culminated in the powerful emergence of a positivist, neo-liberal policy ensemble after 1980. Ball (1993) argues that the colonising power of this policy ensemble appears to leave few rhetorical spaces for alternative critiques that might analyse and explain the social and political conditions from which such a powerful and radical discursive shift could emerge. This implies that there is little or no space to confront, challenge, or adopt an alternative adversarial or critically inquisitorial position.

Ironically, the conception of the idealised state, forms of reasoning that might realise it, and the emancipation from oppressive injustices they imply, that collectively underpin Hasbermasian critical theory, can also potentially limit its possibilities as a methodological approach for critical discourse analysis. Olssen et al. (2004) argue that from a Foucauldian perspective, Habermasian critical theory is constrained by its Hegelian themed conception of history as progress towards an ideal end state. Consequently, a critical theorist discourse analysis may be deterministic in that it is dialectically preconditioned by a linear historical inevitability to critique discourses that challenge the utopian "realisation of history's ultimate goal, … as the self-realisation of humanity" (p. 40). This argues that discourse analysis must be understood as more than the consequences of a dichotomous dominating/subjugating power relationship.

In light of these concerns, I decided to adopt a Foucauldian genealogical approach to discourse analysis. This makes possible a more refined account of the historically contingent power relations, the socio-historical conditions, the language, and the dominant knowledge constructs from which state policy, such as neo-liberalism and economic rationalism, emerge. It can also unpeel the layers of socio-historical patterns of thought, rituals, protocols, policies and actions about adolescent literacy – the focus of my research – that have shaped the evolution of local and national teacher identities in New Zealand secondary schools, and their multiple layers of meaning as discourses of adolescent literacy policy and practice (Codd, 1988, pp. 240-242, cited in Bacchi, 2000, p. 46).

**Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis**

In this section, I draw upon Michel Foucault's project on discourse and power relationships to explain the detail of this particular methodological approach to analysing adolescent literacy in New Zealand since 1870. I draw mainly from the work of Olssen (2006) and Olssen et al. (2004) to explain Foucault's genealogical approach to analysing the power trajectories of certain epistemological constructs about adolescent literacy that either created or subdued other knowledge forms within the same domain. This dynamically shifting power balance between multiple discourses Foucault terms *power-knowledge relationships*, exercised as disciplining forms of *governmentality* and *biopower*. This methodological 'toolkit' (Foucault, 1980, p. 145)

provides analytical insights into why some adolescent literacy discourses relinquished their discursive hold as more powerful discursive formations emerged to dominate New Zealand educational policy and teacher practice.

**What is discourse?**

Luke (1995/96) argues that discourse is a series of recurring written and oral, receptive and productive statements, which are representative of the historical contexts in which they were enunciated. When enunciated often enough, they become socio-cultural artefacts that usefully describe a historically material position. How much statements recur and repeat themselves, and are subscribed to by individuals and groups (Locke, 2004a) indicates how much potential they have to dominate other related statements and their possible material uses as technologies of social action (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 45).

Recurring statements that articulate a particular way of thinking and being in the world combine into a single system of formation, and in turn one form coalesces with other similar single formations to become a consistent and coherent discursive formation. A discursive formation arises around a shared idea, theme, or belief that is materially relevant to its historical period. It represents what its users believe to be truths and what is valid as knowledge at the time (Mey, 1985, cited in Luke, 1995/96, p. 15). Over time users adapt, modify and seek to disseminate particular discourses. In turn, their subjective identities are re-created and reshaped by the same discursive refinements they enacted. Thus people both create and refine discourses, and are themselves reshaped and reconstituted by those same refinements.

In other words, my genealogical research traces and unpacks New Zealand's adolescent literacy discourse formations that emerge from and then shape the material events of their time. Discursive formations act as epistemological markers, or signifiers, of what historically determinate truths, beliefs and knowledge systems within an individual, group or population. They are accepted and reproduced as hegemonic common sense, and manifested in individual experience, state policy and social practice. Further, a genealogical approach also seeks to expose discourse formations whose power to produce alternative truths and knowledges have been 'buried', 'disqualified' or 'subjugated' (Foucault, 1994, p. 22; Olssen et al., 2004, p. 44). This approach to policy

discourse analysis is a powerful way to examine why some knowledge is of low status and subordinated, and why other knowledge dominates as official truths. As Ball (1993, p. 14) argues, "we need to appreciate the way in which policy ensembles, collections of related discourses [about adolescent literacy], exercise power through the *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge', as discourses".

For Foucault, discourses are bounded areas of social knowledge and truths that enable, confirm and sustain certain official ways of being and doing – behaviours, individual and group interactions, belief systems, ways of communicating – that identify and define the accepted roles of groups of people in society, and the truths and values by which they are shaped. They represent that time's powerful thoughts, knowledge, beliefs and actions whose users promote within the individual and national sub-consciousness. Ultimately, users seek to establish their discursive positions as common sensical, taken-for-granted, hegemonic structures of social thought and practice. A Foucauldian critique of discursive power relations assumes therefore that there are no absolute truths or knowledge. Instead, there are only people's claims to truth and knowledge that are articulated, rearticulated and disarticulated, as overlapping discourses of power interests compete for hegemonic domination (Fairclough, 1992, and Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, cited in Luke, 1995/96, p. 20).

In Foucauldian thinking, then, discourses are historically specific and distinctive. Yet while they differ from one another, or from earlier or later forms of themselves, and therefore are discontinuous and provisional, they may also share a deeper foundational knowledge principle, even as they overlap, compete, and interact within the historical process (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 49). Each may share and carry forward a core knowledge structure, or episteme, which seeks to perpetuate itself within different discourses that emerge and decline within the changing historical conditions of times and places. This perpetuation has the effect of reinforcing the power of an overall worldview or paradigm. For Foucault, dominant discourses manifest this epistemic foundation, as regular and structured knowledge practice that is relevant to its historical context. This suggests that the closer that discourses are to their epistemic essence, then the more likely they are to become hegemonically dominant. In other words, an episteme is characterised as 'deep' knowledge structures that regulate, or discipline,

what ‘surface’ discourses may be considered as true or false. It mandates what cultural elements and artefacts may be accepted, rejected, or ignored, as legitimate and relevant as non-coercive forms of compliance with its underlying view of the world (Machado, 1992, p. 14; Olssen et al., 2004, p. 46).

A Foucauldian genealogical discourse critique investigates how discourses generate truths, knowledge and beliefs, and are themselves disciplining technologies of continuous non-coercive compliance. By applying Foucault’s genealogical methods to New Zealand adolescent literacy discourses, I intend to explore why certain historical conditions permitted the emergence (*Entstehung*) of particular discourses about adolescent literacy as distinctive and hegemonic truth generating power knowledge, while the power of other once dominant discursive truths descended (*Herkunft*)[1], or were subjugated as unsayable, irrelevant, or unusable within their historical settings. It is also an exploration to identify the deeper epistemic continuities, or regular and structured knowledge practices, that bind and unite these competing discourses within a common adolescent literacy discursive domain.

**Hegemony**

An analysis of discourse aims to understand and challenge how discursive structures, such as those concerned with adolescent literacy, are internalised by individuals, groups, and the population into irrefutable, hegemonic ‘common sense’ truths and beliefs. Luke (1995/96, citing Collins, 1989) describes hegemony as a means by which certain discourses establish themselves and function socially “as a form of common sense, naturalising [their] own function by appearing in everyday text” (p. 20). Discourses that function as official public policy, for example, become hegemonic when the individual or a population subjectively internalise them, *without* coercive encouragement, and intuitively uses them to reflexively shape their identity. When discursive formations achieve hegemonic dominance they are able to order and classify what knowledges and truths are heard, articulated, and are internalised at conscious and sub-conscious cultural levels. Conversely, their power/knowledge also sets limits on -

[1] For Foucault, *Entstehung*, or emergence, describes a process that traces “the movement of arising … the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength” (Foucault, 1977, pp. 148-150). *Herkunft* pertains to the “accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations” that can erode the knowledge/power relationship one discourse has with another or others (Foucault, 1977, p. 146).

that is, disciplines - what can be said, defines what can be ignored or subjugated, and declares who and what is worth listening to (Bacchi, 2000; Ball 1993). Fairclough (1999) argues that a discourse becomes hegemonic when it establishes itself as a form of common sense, which naturalises its own disciplining functions by appearing in everyday social interaction. When discourses are internalised non-coercively they become disciplinary tools "*par excellence*" (Luke, 1995/96, p. 9). That is, they enable subjects to construct subjective identities that are imperceptibly bounded by the very discourses they have been disciplined to internalise as common-sense knowledge.

A Foucauldian analysis therefore examines discourse as a powerful knowledge formation that is also an imperceptible disciplinary tool, or technology, of the self (Luke, 1995/96) and of the State. It is imperceptible because, if taken up, the community and individual become complicit in how they both are governed, and how they govern themselves. A Foucauldian approach focuses on the relationship between knowledge (as discourse) and its power to non-coercively and subjectively shape individual and social practices and structures at unconscious and taken-for-granted levels.

**Genealogy**

Foucault uses two complementary analytical frameworks within which to undertake discourse critique. The first is an archaeological or structural approach that discovers what rules bring discourse into being and construct them at any one time. The second and later approach is his genealogical framework that analyses how theoretical knowledge emerges, transforms, and flows within the context of a historical period, and how power interacts with knowledge to ensure the descent (*Herkunft*) of weakening and emergence (*Entstehung*) of new discourses (Olssen, 2006). This triggers what Olssen et al. (2004) describe as epistemological "jolts and surprises of history" (p. 48) that cause "changes to discursive formations and epistemes" (p. 47).

Olssen et al. (2004) argue that a genealogical approach to discourse analysis demonstrates why certain discursive or knowledge formations were sufficiently powerful to become hegemonically dominant in any given historical context. It also asks why previously dominant discourses in the same domain declined in their power to

sustain knowledge types at levels high enough to achieve and defend their hegemonic dominance. Olssen (2006) argues that a genealogical approach seeks to understand how a culture's dominant epistemic forces, structures, and processes, manifested as competing discursive formations, and normalise individual thinking and behaviours into dominating socially collective practices (pp. 14-18).

My research project draws on this genealogical toolkit (Foucault, 1980, p. 145) to track the historical oscillations of adolescent literacy policy discourse from 1870 to the present. I aim to make sense of why some discourses about adolescent literacy education declined while new, or alternative, discourses emerged, particularly after 1918. I also examine why certain discourses, and not others, were accorded a legitimacy powerful enough to underpin national adolescent literacy policies and collective beliefs about the national function of secondary schools, and their teachers as adolescent literacy educators.

More particularly, my research focus examines how and why some discourses about adolescent literacy, competing with others for epistemological dominance:

- emerged as winning shapers of literacy knowledge and practice;
- reflexively shaped individual and collective identities of advocates and antagonists
- created conditions for alternative discourses to be discarded, ignored or forgotten; and
- became technologies of power that internalised their epistemic structures as "taken-for-granted definitions and categories by which governments rule and monitor their populations and by which communities define themselves" (Luke, 1995/96, p. 9).

In other words, this genealogical analysis traces the historical links between adolescent literacy discourses as historically contingent knowledges and truths, and their advocates' capacity to non-coercively normalise them as hegemonic knowledge/truths, with which whole populations are persuaded to voluntarily comply. These discourses become norms to which populations, for example secondary school teachers and advisers, adapt their deeper identities, in a mutually reinforcing cycle of normalisation.

The thoroughness and depth of the normalisation process attests to power-knowledge reach or hegemony of these dominating discourses (Luke, 1995/96; Olssen et al., 2004).

**Genealogy, and the epistemic principle**

In my analysis I argue that scientificism, or scientific rationalism, is the hegemonic epistemological principle, or historical '*a priori*', that has been continually manifest in adolescent literacy discourses (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 47). I maintain that the scientific *a priori* underpins current discourses of economic rationalism, that merge within a larger neo-liberal policy ensemble formation (Lam, 2001). This form of rationalism objectifies knowledge in order to neutralise subjective factors or influences. It emphasises verifiability and calculability, and seeks atomistic control and manipulation of the objects of its inquiry. This in turn constructs adolescent literacy policy as managerial accountabilities embodied as outcomes, standards, performativity regimes, measureable discrete skills, standardised national testing, and prescriptive linear teaching processes (Carpenter, Weber & Schugurensky, 2012; Lefstein, 2005). In other words, scientific rationalism, and its contemporary neo-liberal economic form, is the glue that has bound, and continues to bind together, certain adolescent literacy discourses as irrefutable and irresistible knowledge (Olssen, 2006). This is articulated as policy that reflexively shapes the lives of teachers and students in schools.

**Foucault's power-knowledge relationship**

For Foucault, power exists at all levels of society in the form of relationships between individuals, groups, and populations. Power relationships may be productive as well as repressive, in that they can produce '*epistemic gains*' (Fairclough, 1999, p. 74) in the form of beneficial material items, social practices, rituals, and truths, as well as being instruments to dominate, subjugate and alienate particular discourses or groups. A power relationship for Foucault is also intrinsically oppositional and competitive. The relationship defines and regulates the potential of existing knowledge structures to adapt to new emerging discourses and to once dominant discourses that are in decline.

Hegemonic knowledge structures are socially constructed discursive structures that articulate what counts as historically located powerful knowledge and truths. Power is manifest in their capacity to set "'conditions of possibility', that is, what it is possible

and legitimate to say or write, and what counts as reason, argument and evidence" (Olssen, 2006, p. 24). Knowledge becomes a technology of further truth generation and knowledge production and a technology of disciplinary power. Therefore, undertaking a Foucauldian genealogical analysis of adolescent literacy discourses involves:

- Reading for evidence of how certain discourses were powerful enough to set the limits of debate, discussion, and dissent about adolescent literacy education;
- Analysing what truths and knowledge about adolescent literacy were promoted as valued and considered as legitimate at any one time, and which discourses declined, or were ignored or superseded; and
- Exploring why particular discourses exerted enough power to achieve a level of national internalisation, or hegemony, to form the 'new' common sense, and thereby reconstitute the professional identities of adolescent literacy educators and the functions of secondary schooling.

**Governmentality**

A discourse analysis of New Zealand's adolescent literacy history from 1870 onwards also explores how successive governments have deployed forms of knowledge (as discourses) to non-coercively secure its citizens' compliance with, and submission to, an increasingly intensive national regulatory environment. Literacy at primary and secondary schools is central to this process. Simultaneously, governments have to normalise increasing levels of national regulatory compliance as necessary liberal and more recent neo-liberal instruments of self-determination, individual progress and personal autonomy. This contradictory position exemplifies the challenge that post-Enlightenment governments faced to guide, shape and manage the conduct of their populations, without recourse to the illiberal imposition of legal coercion or martial force. Foucault identifies this complex and multi-purpose whole population management, from the individual to the total population, as the process of governmentality (Olssen et al., 2004, pp. 24-26).

In other words, governmentality is the art of population management that strives to secure a population's voluntary compliance with discursively constructed norms of knowledge, beliefs, values, and behaviours. It seeks to promote certain discourses that non-coercively discipline populations to accept two contradictory rationales: on the one

hand, the acceptance of constraints imposed by government conduct as taken-for-granted common sense, justified as the pursuit of a claimed greater national good; on the other, the discursive normalisation of these limitations as enhancements to personal liberty and individual autonomy (Olssen et al., 2004). Governmentality processes seek to construct an individual who self-disciplines their own compliance to discursive norms, that when aggregated, becomes a whole population that collectively self-disciplines and monitors compliance with dominant truth generating discourses. Foucault sees governmentality as a vertically totalising process in that it reaches deeply into individual identity yet simultaneously acts across a whole population. In this thesis, I explore how governmentality can help explain why the emergence of new neo-liberal discourses non-coercively, yet decisively, reconstituted national or macro truths and knowledge about what adolescent literacy should be for, and how individual secondary teachers and advisers, at the micro level, should compliantly reshape their identities and the practice their craft.

**Biopower and discipline**

Foucault uses the term *biopower* to describe the technologies and techniques governments use to generate, manage, and discipline the non-coercive compliance of a population to discourses it wishes to normalise as common sense, taken-for-granted knowledge/truths (Olssen et al., 2004)[2]. This involves governments applying multiple, explicit, calculated, and scientifically rationalised programmes of action (Dean, 1994, p. 158) such as forms of corporate managerialism, or market efficiency and effectiveness models, to public institutions, such as schools, curriculum and teachers, in order to indirectly engineer changes to their existing discursive norms. Disciplining technologies employ context specific techniques or regulatory mechanisms to exercise indirect control (Dean, 1994, pp. 187-188). For example, the business contract and its accompanying managerial practices constitute a biopower technique to regulate the employment conditions of individual teachers. It sets roles and responsibilities, linked to performance indicators, measureable outcomes, and regular review and accountability processes, calibrated to national norms and expectations. In other words, Foucault's conception of biopower refers to the techniques and technologies through which the

[2] A norm is defined as "a standard by which it is possible to assess or measure or appraise without recourse to external standards" (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 32).

State indirectly regulates and manages individuals' lives to align with particular favoured knowledge/truths it wishes to embed hegemonically in the whole population.
The development of panoptical surveillance or panopticism is a potent form of disciplinary power and normalising force. Surveillance is designed to render total compliance to discursive norms and to train people to be docile, and eventually to have them monitor their own levels of compliance so that they become self-regulating or self-disciplining (McHoul & Grace, 1997; Middleton, 1998). Panoptical surveillance controls through its capacity to order and classify society into hierarchies, and to differentiate functions for individual and collective identities. In doing so it segments, separates, and monitors all parts of the whole, vertically and horizontally, from the individual to whole population. Middleton (1998, p. 5) argues that neo-liberalism, in particular, has sequestered technologies of scientific managerialist discourses and experts to deploy their own ways of knowing (or discursive expertise) on the State's behalf in order to control, encourage and monitor obedience and compliance to new normalised behaviours and values.

This is pertinent to the focus of my research. Peters (2007, p. 167) argues that current New Zealand educational policy norms, for example those to do with national adolescent literacy achievement and curriculum orientation, are forms of state conduct or biopower techniques that aim to reconcile as normal the contradictions implicit in neo-liberal policy. This is one of the mechanisms through which the hegemonic dominance of capitalist free market economic discourses is sustained. These policies are techniques of biopower that use a number of sophisticated national non-coercive forms of surveillance, such as the maintenance of a school market place and national testing, to normalise the individual as a free market entrepreneur, while simultaneously the State is able to claim that the aggregated economic benefits of competitive individualism will generate nationally desirable and quantifiable forms of social and cultural progress, and enhance personal freedom and individual rights (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 30).

As this thesis will show, within New Zealand's literacy policies, surveillance and normalisation have become powerful disciplinary technologies, especially since the 1990s. Their mechanisms are implicit in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) as standards criteria secondary school teachers use to organise,

classify and judge students' success as literate people, in effectiveness and efficiency discourses that claim to measure quantitatively the quality of professional development, in the Education Review Office's accountability assessments of school teacher performance (Middleton, 1998; A-M. O'Neill, 2013), and in the importance attached to international literacy testing data (Lingard, 2010). Adolescent literacy is an artefact of New Zealand's secondary school education where new disciplinary norms of mathematical measurement, performativity, and accountability have rapidly intensified the micro and macro surveillance and monitoring of student progress and teacher practice, all presented as "new positive forms of state power scientised under the guise of public administration techniques, aimed at the public good" (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 32). It is through these techniques and technologies of biopower that the State links national adolescent literacy discourses to broader neo-liberal and economic globalisation discourses. This form of conduct indirectly engineers whole population compliance and docility in what Foucault describes as the conduct of State governmentality.

**Interviews**

Once the documentary research phase of this thesis was underway, it became apparent that including accounts of the personal experiences of individuals whose professional lives were closely shaped by the discourses I was exploring, would strengthen the levels of human experience, authenticity, and real worldness in my genealogical analysis.

Interviews give the researcher the opportunity to gather information that explores more comprehensively issues that the initial research has uncovered. They can follow up ideas, and probe more deeply, in more natural language, the informant's alternative and personal perspective on situations the researcher may have already formed, all of which have a direct link to the research objectives (Bell, 2005; Burns, 2000). Cohen et al. (2007) argue that the interview generates knowledge through the interplay of views, perspectives and purposes of two people who share a mutual interest in a topic, and enables them to "discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (p. 347). In other words, the interview, both written and oral, is central to knowledge production, and

illustrates within the context of a Foucauldian critique, the "social situatedness" (p. 347) of discourses in practice.

My material analysis is supplemented by four interviews (three face-to-face and one written) of subjects who were in one form or another involved in adolescent literacy policy making, curriculum development and the professional development of teacher practice at different times. Their work instantiates and exemplifies the effects certain adolescent literacy discourses had on national policies that shaped teachers' knowledge of adolescent literacy pedagogy and literacy adviser practice. Moreover, their experiences add a further level of explanation as to why these discourses were able, or unable, to recruit a national "subscription base" (Locke, 2004a, p. 33) powerful enough to embed them hegemonically within wider national educational policy discourses.

The in-depth interviews combine features of the semi-structured (or a guided or focused) interview and open-ended interview (Burns, 2000). I compiled a list of open-ended questions to give the interview an order and framework, to alert the interviewee to the topics for discussion, and to provide prompts to keep the interview 'on-topic'. The questions were open-ended to give the interviewees the latitude and flexibility to talk about the topics and to give their own views, in their natural language (Burns, 2000). Importantly, open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview approach were designed to elicit from the interviewee information, beliefs and opinions that validly represent their perceptions of themselves, their environment, and their experiences of the reality in which both parties share a common interest. As Burns (2000, p. 424) argues, semi-structured interviews help make "public the private interpretations of reality".

I received ethical permission to conduct the interviews as a low risk notification from Massey University Human Ethics Committee in August 2012. In accordance with its conditions, interviewees gave written permission to conduct the interviews, Project information sheets were provided for all interviewees, and each was given a list of questions in advance of the interviews. The first interview was completed at the interviewee's home, the second at the interviewee's workplace, the third was completed by Skype conversation, and the fourth, because of distance and scheduling problems,

was completed as written responses. Audio files of the three oral interviews were sent to interviewees for review and to offer them an opportunity to withdraw or modify comments they had made. No modifications were requested of the interview material. Information gained from the four interviews is used as part of my analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis, covering the years 1970 to 2008. All interviewees were sent copies of draft chapters in which information from their interviews was used, and invited to comment on their accuracy. No modifications to the texts were requested.

**Conclusion**

My research adopts a Foucauldian methodological approach to the analysis of historical conditions that have shaped adolescent literacy discourses in New Zealand since 1870. I argue that adolescent literacy discourses are epistemological imprints of wider and deeper historical claims of the beliefs, truths, customs, and practices of the material contingencies of their time A Foucauldian analysis attempts to explain why certain knowledge artefacts were sayable, thought and accepted, while others were limited, suppressed, and rejected.

The thesis draws substantially on Foucault's genealogy framework to analyse the emergence and decline of historically located adolescent literacy discourses. I apply his related concepts of the power-knowledge relationship, discipline, biopower, and governmentality to explore how certain discourses hegemonically established themselves as educational common sense within the wider socio-cultural and epistemological contexts of their time. To a lesser extent I draw upon Foucault's archaeological approach to identify the epistemic substrate of adolescent literacy discourses that have contributed to their oscillating historical presence in New Zealand post-primary education.

In Chapter 3, I undertake a genealogical analysis of adolescent literacy discourses beginning in 1870s colonial New Zealand. My discussion is divided into two parts. First, I analyse the tensions between opposing economic discourses and the role of the State that shaped the evolution of socio-economic understandings of adolescent literacy. I begin by exploring the discursive background to the 1877 Education Act, and then proceed to examine the impact of the 1930s Depression and the Second World War on

national perceptions of literacy as an instrument of national regeneration, and the consequences of post-war curriculum policies on adolescent literacy instruction. Second, I trace the impact that historical pedagogic discourses have had on approaches to adolescent literacy instruction, its current discursive conceptualisation, and link these not only to perceptions of the function of secondary schooling, but also to teacher identity as instructional agents of adolescent literacy.

# Chapter 3

# A discursive survey of adolescent literacy policy, practice and pedagogy, 1870-present

## Introduction

In Chapter 1, I set out the scope and focus of my genealogical inquiry into adolescent literacy discourses. I explained that my first 'inquiry stream' explores how particular socio-cultural beliefs, values, and ideas have influenced and shaped the evolution of New Zealand's adolescent literacy discourses in the years 1870 to 2008. In this chapter, I trace the complex and evolving interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogic ideas that, as forms of historically contingent knowledge and truths, have underpinned the shape and direction of literacy generally and, more specifically, the emergence of adolescent literacy policy, pedagogy, and practice. The discussion ends by defining current theoretical understandings and approaches to adolescent literacy policy formation and teacher practice.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I review the wider socio-historical contexts and conditions between 1870 and 1970, from which certain literacy discourses emerged to occupy centre stage while the power of other related discourses eroded, adapted, or was ignored (Foucault, 1977)[3]. Initially, I explore the values, contradictions and tensions implicit in the legislative steps that New Zealand's colonial government took between 1870 and 1914 to establish a national primary schooling system, with a clear emphasis on literacy and numeracy instruction. I then trace the emergence and impact of progressive, socially liberal educational discourses on New Zealand's literacy education policies between 1935 and the early 1950s. Finally, I begin to explore how scientific rationalism, and its later incarnations as scientific positivism (Giroux, 1981) and economic and managerial rationalism (Lam, 2001; A-M. O'Neill, 2013), have provided a deep and continuous epistemic principle underpinning a number of adolescent surface discourses (Machado, 1992, p. 14; Olssen et al., 2004, p. 46).

[3] In Chapters 5 and 6, I analyse the nature and impact of progressivist and later neo-liberal curriculum reform after 1970, especially within the subject of English, and on conceptions of adolescent literacy and teacher practice.

In the second section, I focus on the evolving understandings of adolescent literacy pedagogy. I begin by reviewing the discursive oscillations of academic and applied approaches to literacy learning and teaching in New Zealand. I locate these within broader international cognitive and learning and teaching discourses, and then explore their power/knowledge relationships that gave rise to different discourses of literacy education in primary schools and secondary schools, and consequently shaped their teachers' identities as literacy educators. Specifically, I trace the shifts in pedagogic theory and practice from early twentieth century behaviourism, through individualist cognitive constructivism, to contemporary social constructivist and socio-cultural approaches. Finally, I examine the emergence of disciplinary or subject specific adolescent literacy instructional discourses in New Zealand secondary schools in the early 2000s.

## Section 1: A genealogy of socio-economic discourses and adolescent literacy

### *Pre-industrial Anglo-European literacy*

The attainment of widespread literacy skills became spiritual and social imperatives after the English Reformation, and the spread of Lutheranism in Western Europe. According to Cressy (1980), Protestant clergy in England and their counterparts in Lutheran Northern Europe saw literacy as essential for a Christian's deeper, personal understanding of the Bible. It would prepare them for salvation on Earth, and for God's work in the next life. Literacy could also generate important social benefits for the maintenance of a Christian community. A literate citizenry was insurance against uncivil and immoral behaviour, and a potential decline into barbarism. It was widely believed that disorder, disobedience, and incivility, especially amongst youth, would decline as more people learned to read and write. Literacy was a civilising instrument with which to discipline and induct whole populations into particular beliefs and truths about justice, law and morality, designed to maintain the existing social order and hierarchies. Deepening the individual's commitment to religious duty would encourage social compliance with practices that maintained social, political and economic power structures. Thus literacy was less for personal advantage or individual ambition, but rather was a powerful tool for "the service of God, and the betterment of society" (Cressy, 1980, p. 9).

Holme (2004) argues that literacy is a relatively recent phenomenon emerging out of Enlightenment philosophies that education would explain a person's social position, lead them to accept it, and provide sufficient skills in order to make them productive citizens. Post-Enlightenment literacy discourses began to add an economic imperative to concepts of the literate citizen. Social position indicated how much access an individual had to education, and how much learning others considered 'sufficient'. Too much education for the lower classes could disrupt the hierarchical social order, while too little would restrict the creation of a wealthy and prosperous commonwealth. In Foucauldian terms, governmentality began to be concerned with reconciling emerging liberal ideas of the autonomous, free and competitive economic individual, with constraints necessary to maintain increasingly non-coercive compliance to traditional forms of social hierarchy and the continuation of their powerful elites.

No less than those espoused in later centuries, pre-industrial and early industrial conceptions of literacy were essentially instrumentalist. They were a means of personal, spiritual and economic improvement, but only insofar as it contributed to the maintenance of existing social order, and the power structures upon which that order was built.

### *Literacy education in colonial New Zealand*

#### *Primary schooling, and the 1877 Education Act*

Colonial New Zealand policy makers harboured similar concerns about literacy education to those of their earlier English and European counterparts (Harker, 1990; McKenzie, Lee, & Lee, 1996; Simon, 2000). Their concerns centred on reconciling a number of contradictory interests. On the one hand, this involved educated conservative elites protecting their power and positions, and on the other, aspirational Anglo-European immigrants demanding access to the educational opportunities and consequent social mobility and prosperity they were denied in their homelands (Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw et al., 1993). In the background was the pragmatic acknowledgement that the emerging colonial economy required a literate national workforce to grow, and that church-funded schools, or those set up as businesses by private citizens, continued to restrict educational access to those who could afford the

fees. In addition, concerns about the uneven quality of schooling across provincial New Zealand, and the potential for social disorder of a poorly literate, or illiterate, younger generation were, by the late 1860s, converging into a compelling case for greater State involvement in the provision of a national primary schooling system.

Concerns and anxieties similar to those in pre-industrial and Enlightenment Europe were threaded through arguments and debates around the eventual passing of New Zealand's 1877 Education Act (Harker, 1990). Government in the colony, be it provincial or national, was controlled by landowners and business people who reasoned that a national education system was a pre-requisite for the economic development of the new colony, especially the up-skilling of workers to meet the demands of an emerging agri-industrial economy. The Act established a nationally funded and managed *primary school* system which would teach a common curriculum that emphasised literacy and numeracy. Harker (1990) identifies four contradictory themes surrounding the passing of the Act: demands by working class immigrants to have access to education as of right; the desire for colonial elites to maintain political and economic power by controlling access to education; the shared desire to encourage economic prosperity and to create wealth; and concerns for the maintenance of civil order and social hierarchy that a literate citizenry, taught in a particular way, might provide (McKenzie et al., 1996; Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw et al., 1993).

The objective of education policy and provision for literacy instruction in colonial New Zealand was an exercise in governmentality to manage the attainment of certain economic, social, and political outcomes. Education policy and legislation were disciplinary tools of biopower, useful for entrenching the position of the colony's dominant political and economic elites as a 'natural order' of authority, while concurrently supplying labour skilled enough to support an emerging, liberal, free market economy they controlled, made more attractive by promises of opportunities for individual social improvement and advancement. These discourses, and their contradictory nature, were well understood and reproduced by national legislators as New Zealand's parliament passed the 1877 Education Act (Codd, Harker, & Nash, 1985) and other subsequent legislation.

*Post-primary schooling, and the 1903 Secondary Schools Act*

As schools became established, the 1877 Education Act was instrumental in providing a free, compulsory, universal, and secular primary school education for all children between the ages of five and thirteen. Students studied a literacy standards-based syllabus, tested annually by standards examinations culminating in the Standard Six 'Proficiency Examination'. This involved reading, spelling, dictation, writing, composition, and arithmetic (for all students), and geography and drawing (Standard Six only) (McKenzie et al., 1996). However, the 1877 Act did not immediately establish a compulsory and universal, state provisioned post-primary schooling system. Indeed the Act proscribed any discussion about post primary education because of its assumed excessive cost to the colony (H. Lee, personal communication, October 2013). For the most part, post-primary education continued to run as a business – that is, as private enterprise or under the auspices of Christian denominations – and academically able students were awarded government scholarships to attend their schools. This structural arrangement posed for adolescents the same barriers to post-primary schooling that the 1877 Education Act had sought to dismantle for younger students' entry into primary school (Simon, 2000). Post-primary education remained the privilege of socially and educationally ambitious parents who could afford to pay the fees for their children to attend private secondary school or their district high school (McKenzie et al., 1996).

Universal literacy policy discourses continued to worry social conservatives, despite their obvious value as a tool of economic development. Between 1880 and 1910, rural and urban working class New Zealand parents began to agitate for greater access to the same academic education as those of the wealthy (McKenzie et al., 1996). They demanded that all post-primary schools offer a comprehensive academic curriculum to all students, irrespective of class. Socially conservative elites feared that improved access to an *academic* education that was ill-suited to meet *their* requirements for the civil, economic, and political progress of the colony would create social and economic inefficiencies, and result in social instability as people rose above their station. Acquiring policy domination of the curriculum, the development of national school infrastructure, and the regulation of national credentials were the political levers required for creating an economically radical, yet socially conservative, individual (McKenzie et al., 1996; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010; Simon, 2000).

Discursively, the 1877 Education Act was an attempt to reconcile two factors. First, there was a belief that comprehensive academic literacy skills were key instruments for upward social mobility and self-improvement that would leave existing social structures unchallenged. Second, these skills enhanced employability in depressed economic times and were consensually regarded as necessary to meet the demands of rapidly developing manufacturing and service industries for increasingly specialised and skilled labour. In other words, as the colonial economy grew, an individualistic and entrepreneurial perspective about the role of literacy and popular access to primary and secondary schooling began to emerge. This reflected a deeper discursive commitment to the principles of a socially mobile, competitive, free market, liberal capitalist society. Crucially, these discourses needed to be reconciled in order to reinforce, rather than confront, conventional social and economic power structures.

Richard Seddon's 1903 Secondary Schools' Act gradually strengthened the domination of social conservative discourses into the first quarter of the twentieth century (McKenzie et al., 1996). The legislation provided for free places in secondary schools for all children who had completed their primary schooling with the Standard Six Certificate of Proficiency. Rather than a comprehensive generalised curriculum, the 1903 Act established different types of schools, with differentiated curricula based on commercial and economic imperatives. Accordingly, it protected class membership and the positions of power of historical social elites. In essence, a dominant socially conservative educational discourse was aligned with a liberal expansionist economic discourse. Conservatives saw the value of the legislation to the market and encouraged its passing, yet did not relinquish their power and position. As a form of policy, the 1903 Secondary Schools' Act offered the disciplinary biopower to ration by credential higher level educational skills and knowledge, and to construct forms of individual compliance to socially conservative, economically ambitious political agendas.

*Literacy and schooling, 1905-1935*

International social efficiency models advocated by theorists such as Americans Frederick Taylor and Franklin Bobbit were gradually reshaping educational governance and instructional approaches in primary schools and in technical high schools as instrumental/utilitarian discourses (H. Lee et al., 2004). These cast literacy, and

schooling more generally, as functional taught skills to serve the production demands for labour of burgeoning manufacturing and service sectors (Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). Literacy was vocationally based, concerned with teaching the majority of students to read and write to support them into work and training. Sufficiently literate workers, schooled to perform repetitive tasks efficiently against prescribed objectives and procedures, were seen as necessary to run a liberal capitalist market economy.

Conversely, secondary or post-primary school literacy was concerned with an academic education. It was subsumed into an abstract formal curriculum that consisted of the natural sciences, literature, social sciences and fine arts, designed for the elite 5% of students who needed to pass the University Entrance examination to enter tertiary study (Openshaw, 1995, p. 26). Consequently, the 1903 Secondary Schools' Act perpetuated literacy and curriculum as the sites of struggles between three competing discourses. The first was a conservative, abstract, academic formalist discourse whose proponents wished to protect their social and economic privilege; the second a democratic progressive, socially liberal discourse whose advocates campaigned for universal access to a comprehensive national post-primary curriculum for the less academic majority; and the third was an emerging economic and industrial discourse that argued that literacy's primary *raison d'etre* was to underpin economic growth by schooling a sufficiently skilled workforce for 'task and time' oriented factory production systems.

As a consequence of the Great Depression (1929-1935), many rural and urban parents saw improved advantages for their children who had a post-primary education and higher standards of literacy. Education at this level was assumed to contribute to greater chances of sustainable employment, social mobility, and increased wealth. School retention rates grew in response to a highly competitive job market and the continuing demands of economic and labour specialisation (Openshaw, 1995). Social conservatives baulked at demands to widen access. During the Depression, they further restricted entry into post-primary education by raising the pass requirements for the Proficiency Examination. However, echoing discursive tensions from the previous century, they later became concerned at the social threat posed by youths who were excluded from the

civilising benefits of being academically literate, skills purported to be gained from participating in post-primary education (Openshaw, 1995).

A compounding factor was the innate middle class conservatism of New Zealanders' attitudes at the time towards education, and literacy learning in particular (McKenzie et al., 1996; Openshaw et al., 1993; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). For example, Soler (2000) argues that the primary literacy curriculum, especially the 1929 syllabus changes that were supported by the New Zealand Educational Institute, required the study of English literature in order to inculcate into students a correct moral righteousness and a sense of the superiority of England's literary heritage. McKenzie et al.'s (1996) analysis of conflicts between the parents of rural Otago and Education Department officials is a regional example of the hegemonic levels of this Anglo-centric conservative discourse. It centred on the stubborn insistence by parents for their children to have access to the conservative academic education of their district high school's secondary school department, despite the fact that few would proceed to university study. They rejected arguments from officials for students to study subjects such as agriculture, or for 'practical' courses more attuned to the needs of rural labour, yet felt no need to confront the academic and social power structures that had erected barriers to their access in the first place.

Thus literacy, and an academic education generally were seen by under-skilled, poorer social groups in colonial New Zealand as key instruments to allow them access to more lucrative employment opportunities and, importantly, the promise of advancement into the prosperous middle class. Despite a complex backdrop of severe international economic depression, middle class conservative discourses continued to dominate literacy and education policies. Policies at the time strengthened the structural differentiation of New Zealand schools and the continued systemic rigidity and academic formalism of secondary schools, aimed at entrenching a curriculum steeped in colonial Anglo-centric values and beliefs. In the Foucauldian terms I discussed in Chapter 2 the schooling system was a technology of governmentality that sought to reconcile opposing discourses. The cautious moves to universal literacy and schooling were techniques of biopower designed to reconcile these contradictory tensions. On the one hand was the desire to reproduce the conservative moral, cultural and structural

certainties of Mother England and to maintain existing socio-political power structures. On the other were the demands for literate skilled labour to drive capitalist economic growth and the need to satisfy working class aspirations for social advancement into middle class prosperity.

*Literacy, schooling, and social progressive reforms, 1935-1950*

The election of the first Labour Government in 1935 heralded an important shift in power, or epistemological jolt (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 48) away from conservative socio-educational discourses as 'youthful' socially liberal Keynesian discourses 'erupted' from 'the wings' to 'take centre stage' in educational policy (Foucault, 1977, p. 146). Their proponents campaigned for an active, direct, and redistributive role for the State in the economic, social and cultural development of the nation. Educationally, this meant universal access and entitlement to secondary schooling, and the erosion of historical class barriers to higher levels of education. Such discourses were already emerging in America and England, about which educational leaders within the Department of Education, the New Zealand Education Institute, and post-primary organisations were familiar and eager to introduce (A-M. O'Neill, 2005; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010; Simon, 2000; Soler, 2000).

The Labour Party had campaigned for universal access to national post-primary schooling prior to the 1935 election. In 1937, the Proficiency Examination was abolished in order to allow more children to attend their nearest post-primary school. The Education Minister, Peter Fraser, confirmed the policy of universal access to post-primary education in 1939. Following the Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944), the leaving age was raised from 14 to 15 years. Students would study a compulsory common core curriculum of English, social studies, general science, mathematics, music, art and craft, and physical education to the end of Form 4, irrespective of academic ability, wealth or location. The School Certificate Examination, introduced in 1934 to test technical subjects (the University Entrance matriculation examination tested academic subjects), expanded to become a general examination for all Form 5 students from 1946. Despite these social liberal reforms, the essential characteristics of separate primary and secondary school systems persisted with differentiated subject instruction in the latter remaining a defining feature.

By the beginning of the 1950s, Keynesian educational reforms were undermining utilitarian economic views of primary school literacy instruction as early vocational or employment training (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). The abolition of the Proficiency Examination in 1937 allowed primary schools to adopt a more contemporary cognitive skills-based literacy pedagogy rather than having to mechanically 'coach' or 'drive' their pupils for examination success (Openshaw et al., 1993, p. 197). However they now became the site for intensive pedagogic debates about how best to teach literacy, as scientific approaches to teaching theory and practice measured by psychometric testing took hold. Educational theorists began to conceptualise literacy as cognitive skills-based expertise, distinct from literacy as the teaching of English language and literature (Soler, 2000).

At post-primary levels, universal access to Form 3 and the rejection of the narrow formalism of an academic grammar school curriculum encouraged the development of a comprehensive subject content-based curriculum, for which the requisite literacy skills were assumed to have been acquired at primary school. Secondary school teachers taught content knowledge, which was to be measured by the new School Certificate Examination. Cross-curricular pedagogic considerations of academic reading and writing featured only marginally in secondary schools and were often about how to cope with students with low literacy skills who were unable to integrate into secondary school, a discursive residue of the academic origins of post-primary education. As a consequence, adolescent or secondary school literacy was paid little heed by educational theorists and officials, teacher training institutions, in-service professional development, and in-school curriculum planners (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). It wasn't until the early 1970s as the economy faltered in the wake of oil shocks, rapidly declining export markets, rising unemployment, and social unrest, that adolescent literacy began to emerge as a policy consideration for curriculum planning in New Zealand.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I continue my genealogical analysis of the increasingly complex and competitive interplay of socio-economic and adolescent literacy discourses that variously rose, dominated and declined during the years 1970 to 2008. In this second section, I now turn to a discussion of the pedagogic discourses that shaped instructional

approaches to adolescent literacy which evolved within the wider socio-economic discourses discussed to this point.

## Section 2: A genealogical history of adolescent literacy pedagogies

### *Nineteenth century rote learning, and accurate copying*

Internationally, by the end of the nineteenth century, literacy learning was conceived in behaviourist terms as the accurate reproduction of an author's writing, memorised uncritically as knowledge, or of learning automated responses to spatial, visual and oral patterns occurring in text (Brown, 1994). Schooling was designed to get students to know these facts and procedures, and the teacher's job was to compartmentalise the knowledge, present it in an incrementally more complex linear fashion, and then "reward students' behaviours that mirror the reality presented by the teacher" (Scheurman, 1998, p. 6; Sawyer, 2006).

Soler's (2000) account of the 1904 and 1929 primary English syllabi illustrates the impact the behavioural stimulus-response theoretical perspective had on literacy pedagogic approaches, and reiterates how curriculum functioned as a technology of biopower to reproduce the hegemonic supremacy of English language, literature and culture in colonial early twentieth century New Zealand

> The 1904 syllabus described reading as an oral activity rather than a silent decoding of print. The importance of reading skills was linked to fluent oral reading and correct expression. [It] … stressed intonation, emphasis, and the delivery of free speech. … Composition was to be a vehicle to shape the cultured individual who knew the 'correct and ready use of their mother tongue'. (p. 2)

The 1929 English Syllabus confirmed the supreme position of English culture in literacy teaching and learning. Recitation of prose and poetry, in the form of correct pronunciation and oral expression that copied the standard English of the British monarchy, was prioritised by the Inspectorate into the 1930s. In their view, battling "against the evils of 'inaccurate', 'slipshod' and 'debased speech'" would mitigate the worst effects of "at least some of the careless habits which the street,

and perhaps home, have imposed on him", and help establish a "standard which will be always present to the child in afterlife" (Soler, 2000, p. 9, citing NZEDSI, 1928, p. 67). Writing or composition was accorded lesser value than reciting poetry and prose. The former "was seen as purely an imitative art where the pupils should have passages of appropriate authors clearly 'impressed upon their minds' through the reading of appropriate examples aloud and through the expert reading of the teacher" (Soler, 2000, p. 9, citing NZEDSI, 1928, p. 71).

Following the First World War, these principles of deterministic causal logic began to mesh with Taylorist social efficiency theories, which Giroux (1981) argues were grounded in deeper discourses of positivist scientific rationalism. He argues that behaviourial stimulus-response and social efficiency discourses represented an early scientific positivist methodology that externalised and objectified all human actions into universal and immutable laws, and discrete, measureable, reproducible and manipulable units. He argues that within earlier behaviourist discourses are the epistemic precursors for the more contemporary dominance of technocratic rationalist, neo-liberal approaches to literacy instruction, and more widely, to the scientific construction and management of curriculum, which I address in some detail in Chapters 4 to 6. In Foucauldian terms, the methodologies of early behaviourism and contemporary neo-liberal perspectives reach into all facets of human society through the technology of schooling. These are techniques of biopower that generate totalising forms of governmentality of the whole population because they reach into individual sub-consciousness as hegemonic truths. Universal literacy education in primary schools (A-M. O'Neill, 2013) thus becomes a powerful disciplinary technology to embed truth discourses that shape an individual's labour, and their social relationships, as instruments of a prosperous, efficient, and compliant capitalist society (Peters, 2007).

***Using skills and strategies to construct meaning***

Despite the dominance of behaviourial stimulus-response principles of learning until the post-Second World War years in literacy classrooms, progressive-liberal cognitive theories of learning and knowledge slowly gathered international momentum in Britain, Europe and the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, "Learning as Knowledge Acquisition" replaced "Learning as Response" as the dominant metaphor to describe

learning (Cullen, 2001). At the heart of this discursive challenge was a shift from learning as measurable compliance to pre-determined behaviours, to learning as a cognitive operation involving the processing of information (Cullen, 2001). The learner was a comparatively active agent in the instructional process, one who could construct new knowledge and integrate it into their existing knowledge (Mayer, 1998). This perspective was called cognitive constructivism.

The cognitive constructivist perspective implied that the learner acquires knowledge by purposefully reading and writing, and actively invokes cognitive processes to create new knowledge and understandings. The teacher, the textbook and the lecture are repositories of information the individual student processes – that is, acquires through applying the generic skills and strategies they are deliberately taught. The student, as an individual, engages in conscious, deliberate, and purposeful cognitive activity that makes sense of the knowledge they acquire (Cullen, 2001; Mayer, 1998).

Earlier in the 1920s, American educationists began to articulate a notion of reading as a cognitive strategic process. This varied according to the reader's purpose, the level of difficulty of the material the reader was required to understand, and a critical appreciation of the writer's purpose (Anders & Guzzetti, 2005). In 1925, a meeting of the American National Committee on Reading asserted that "each teacher who makes reading assignments is responsible to the direction and supervision of the reading and studying activities that are involved" (National Society for the Study of Education, 1925, p. 75, cited in Irvin, Buehl, & Klemp, 2003, p. 233). The slogan 'every teacher a teacher of reading' emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as academic momentum started to build for teaching reading in the content areas.

Discourses of literacy as cognitive processing that emerged in the thirty years after the Second World War did not, however, displace earlier behaviourist discourses. Rather, key tenets and principles of scientific rationalism and technocratic teacher practice (Giroux, 1981) were reconstituted as the scientific construction and the psychometric measurement and evaluation of student literacy learning as cognitive processing (A-M. O'Neill, 2013; Soler, 2000). By the end of 1950s, tests such as were designed to describe a chronological progression of distinct and measureable skills, the

improvement of which could be quantified and described against nationally normed statistical data[4]. Positive shifts that were revealed in reading test results were assumed to provide scientifically valid evidence of improvements in reading comprehension levels. In addition, learning outcomes (how successfully information has been processed into knowledge) and performance levels (how well the learner performs in the test) (Mayer, 1998) could be set against measureable progressive national targets and normative trajectories of progress, all within a context of a nationally standardised, technocratic construction of literacy pedagogy.

As this discussion has illustrated, two distinct discourses about literacy emerged through the 1950s in New Zealand schools. Literacy in New Zealand primary schools separated from English in secondary schools. On the one hand, literacy learning – acquiring increasingly complex cognitive skills and strategies with which to comprehend and write text – was confirmed as the responsibility of primary schools. On the other hand, a historically elitist, academic discourse of literacy as the academic study of English language and literature continued to dominate the secondary school English syllabus. Soler (2000) argues that this separation "in turn promoted a psychologically-derived, scientific, individualistic, and supposedly neutral, technocratic view of literacy instruction in the New Zealand primary school" (p. 33). Furthermore, its economic utility was reinforced: "in short, the ability to read well has become so important that both social competence, and full intellectual and emotional growth, depend upon it. To be inadequate as a reader is to be to some extent inadequate as a person, a citizen, and a worker" (Education Department, 1953, p. 1, cited in Soler, 2000, p. 33).

***Secondary school literacy, and the maintenance of tradition***

Subject specific reading skills for adolescents were viewed as those approaches learned at primary school that were applied to subject content texts. Despite the changes towards cognitive instructional methodologies at primary schools, a discourse of transferable prior knowledge remained defiant at secondary level whereby adolescent reading skills automatically transitioned into secondary schools as generic, repeatable,

[4] The New Zealand Council of Educational Research's Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) were designed as a result of the Currie Commission's recommendations in 1962.

and hierarchically transferrable skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). It was assumed these skills would evolve intuitively into necessarily more complex academic subject forms in the secondary school on the basis of thorough initial literacy instruction within the primary school. It was not the business of the secondary subject teacher therefore to focus deliberately on strategic literacy instruction (Tovani, 2004).

As I have argued in the first section of this chapter, secondary school syllabus and teaching approaches through the 1950s and 1960s continued to pursue academic achievement for the already capably literate student. The focus was on the transmission of subject content knowledge, leaving the capably literate individual student to construct their own textual understandings using previously acquired cognitive skills and strategies (Moje, 2006). Subject content knowledge continued to be the priority; teachers taught from the text to the test, and coached students in how to pass.

Failure to pass these subjects was interpreted as inadequate understandings of content knowledge. Those secondary school students who struggled to read and write in accordance with traditional academic demands were assigned to lower streamed classes where expectations and requirements were accordingly lower. These students studied technical or professional subjects that required less reading and writing, or were enrolled in remedial programmes that reproduced the primary school reading development model (Marshall, 2009).

This historical constitution of the secondary school as the location of academic disciplinary instruction confirmed English as the subject that measured cross-curricular literacy progress and achievement, despite the clear separation between literacy and English in primary school classrooms. It continued to pervade post-primary literacy thinking for much of the second half of the twentieth century. Students had to pass School Certificate English in order to pass the qualification, and until 2010, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) literacy achievement was measured using English achievement or unit standards. In this sense, the School Certificate English examination and early iterations of NCEA (Levels 1 and 2) have been the de facto public measure of minimal literacy standards for generations of New Zealand adolescent 15 year olds from the 1940s to the early 2000s.

Despite discourse shifts in literacy learning theory at primary schools towards cognitive constructivism, and a resistive discourse of traditional academic instruction at secondary schools, theoretical concerns emerged in the 1980s that the cognitive constructivist view isolated the individual from their peers, applied an overly rigid and prescriptive scientific rationale that de-socialised learning, and reduced it to compliance with a set of universal principles (Scheurman, 1998). As a consequence, discourses of learning theory broadened the scope of their inquiry to the learner's social environment inside and outside the classroom to understand how it influenced their learning, and their predisposition to learn.

***Adolescent literacy as social constructivism***

International literacy research began to explore the broader notion that knowledge construction was substantially influenced by the learner's interaction with their environment. It was theorised that the individual's social context, in which their cognitive activity took place, was the prime determinant of how they would construct their knowledge. This view still required individualised cognitive activity, but was not to be understood primarily in terms of cognitive activity happening "within the head of an isolated learner" (Sawyer, 2006). Rather, knowledge was hypothesised as socially constructed by the learner located within a socio-cultural environment or context, the characteristics of which significantly influenced how successfully they learned what was required of them. Although the teacher remains a pivotal presence in the classroom, the pedagogy that underpins and drives their practice has substantially shifted from transmitter (behaviourist) to manager (knowledge acquisition) to facilitator (individual constructivism) to collaborator (social constructivism) (Scheurman, 1998).

The emergence of a social constructivist discourse challenged the idea of literacy as generic and as applied reading skills and strategies, regardless of the nature of the content, text type, or affective variables. Research began to argue that affective or environmental variables such as purposeful intent, prior knowledge and experience, reader interest in content material, reader motivation, and self-efficacy were mediating factors between the text and the reader's comprehension. Consequently, conceptual understandings about adolescent reading began to shift to a more holistic, socially located and transactional one of text-reader interaction, from which emerges the

student's skills to make meaning from text, and to use text to create meaning (Anders & Guzzetti, 2005; Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000).

***Socio-cultural theory, and adolescent literacy***

Since the 1990s, adolescent literacy academic research has expanded to include the wider dimensions of the socio-cultural educational theory and practice. Researchers generally conceptualise adolescent literacy as a socially constructed phenomenon that includes consideration of the cultural features around peer interactions in the classroom, student-teacher-text interaction, teacher and student cultural beliefs and practices, and the literacy demands of students' out-of-school activities (Alverman, 2001; Jetton & Dole, 2004; Moje et al., 2000). In other words, researchers are increasingly acknowledging the salience of multiple literacies that adolescents use daily within a wide range of social contexts or 'communities of practice' (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001).

Adolescent literacy, in its broadest sense, is now conceived as a multi-discursive construct that involves more than skills and strategies designed to support academic achievement. It has broadened beyond the acquisition by individuals of generically based reading skills and strategies, to view literacy as language used productively (speaking, writing and presenting) and receptively (reading, listening and viewing) (Wilson, 2009), in a wide range of in-school and beyond-school social contexts. These include highly idiosyncratic contexts such as sports and leisure clubs, hobbies, part-time employment, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and special interest blogs.

However, New Zealand's most recent adolescent literacy policy continues to invoke a largely traditional academic discourse of raising and measuring shifts in individual students' achievement in high schools by strengthening their subject content literacy skills (Ministry of Education, 2002b, 2004; Wilson, 2009).

***Adolescent literacy, and academic success at high school***

In 1970 Harold Herber, in "Teaching Reading in the Content Areas", argued that instructional aids for students reading subject content texts were different from those

skills and strategies taught within a generic basal reader programme (Ryder & Graves, 2003). This inferred that academic subjects have their own particular literacies or ways of constructing and presenting knowledge that students must master in order to succeed. In other words, Herber (1970) was suggesting that academic high school literacy involves a subject-based multi-disciplinary view of academic literacy.

This early argument is echoed in more recent American adolescent literacy research (Alverman, 2001; C. Lee & Spratley, 2010; Moje, 2006; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), which argues that secondary schools privilege academic literacy in the form of a range of written subject texts constructed according to their particular discourse or knowledge conventions. Students are required to reproduce subject content knowledge independently using the subject's discourse. That is, to be an historian is to be able to read, write and think in accordance with discourse conventions of the subject. Good and Brophy (2002) and Jetton and Dole (2004) argue that for students at post-primary (and indeed tertiary) levels, academic literacy conceived as subject discourses helps explain why literacy is a particular challenge, and for some students an impenetrable barrier, to working successfully in subject domains. Luke (1995/96) uses Fairclough's application of Gramscian models of hegemony to demonstrate how powerful academic subject discourses are, and why it is imperative that students at all levels master them. Failure to do so locks students out of further substantive learning and academic progress in that subject (p. 20).

As subject knowledge becomes increasingly demanding, and more technically sophisticated, so too does its discursive representation in texts used in subject classes at secondary school (C. Lee & Spratley, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan 2008). Subject texts quickly become increasingly complex, less personally relevant, and conceptually denser (Jetton & Dole, 2004). They are written by subject experts to communicate complex and important information to students they assume will possess the requisite literacy skills to comprehend intuitively and to construct new knowledge. Where discourse comprehension and use are fragile, explicit literacy teaching of literacy strategies is required. Irvin et al. (2003) and Wilson and NcNaughton (2009) suggest that deeper student engagement with subject content and textbooks will result from explicit instruction from the teacher about how to choose the appropriate skills and strategies to

understand subject domain texts. However, at the very time when such literacy instruction is required, the levels of explicit classroom-based, domain content literacy instruction diminishes, despite the need for students to "understand, interpret and use demanding subject matter texts if they are to grow and develop academically" (Jetton & Dole, 2004, p. 15).

***Why is literacy as subject content discourse important in New Zealand?***

A significant challenge for New Zealand secondary school subject teachers are those students with sufficient skills and strategies to decode and comprehend text at literal or surface levels, but who are ill-equipped for increasingly complex subject reading and writing tasks demanded by subject discourse conventions (McDonald & Thornley, 2005). Within the New Zealand context, this literacy achievement gap becomes apparent firstly in the transition from Year 8 into Year 9 where students are expected to cross the threshold into the specialist registers and discourses of disciplinary knowledge contained in written subject texts and in teachers' oral instructional discourse (Luke & Woods, 2009). The second threshold is the transition of students into deeper subject studies for NCEA Levels 1-3. McDonald and Thornley (2005) argue that students possess the essential foundational literacy skills to comprehend and respond at literal levels to gain an 'Achieved' grade at NCEA Level 1. However, many of this group are unable to master the demands of disciplinary discourse to read and write analytically or evaluatively to achieve higher grades.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed genealogically the historical socio-economic and pedagogical discourses around literacy policy and practice. Firstly I traced the competition for dominance of a number of ideological tensions and pedagogic debates about literacy education that are embedded in the evolution of New Zealand's public primary and secondary school systems, and more specifically the place of literacy teaching within them. I have suggested that in primary and secondary sectors, literacy was the site for a series of ongoing discursive clashes. As I have traced in this chapter, these have occurred between conservative and progressive social and economic forces, between conservative formalist educational practitioners, scientific technocrats and

social efficiency proponents; and between the roles of primary schools as literacy educators and secondary schools as content specialist teachers.

Secondly, I discussed the historical development of theories of teaching and learning that chart the historical emergence, or *Entstehung*, of alternate pedagogic discourses about what literacy education is for, who should be responsible for it, who should receive it, and how it should be taught. Narrow early twentieth century behaviourial and social efficiency perspectives gave way to cognitive constructivist theories, which in turn evolved into broader contemporary socio-cultural perspectives, which have incrementally influenced New Zealand's instructional approaches to literacy instruction. I have suggested that the rise of scientifically premised discourses of literacy learning theory, pedagogy and practice in the 1950s substantially changed primary school approaches to literacy learning and teaching. Conversely, secondary schools in the same period maintained their traditional roles as locations for formal, academic subject content learning, the awarding of qualifications, and for preparing students for transition to work. It is only recently that, as a consequence of wider socio-economic factors, a distinctive pedagogy of adolescent literacy has emerged to challenge deeper resistant discursive conventions of literacy instruction in secondary schools.

However, despite this apparent duality of purpose, two deeper discursive themes have exerted a consistent pervasive influence over literacy policy construction, and its implementation in primary and secondary schools. Firstly, literacy theory, teaching and learning have been oriented progressively towards a positivist scientific rationality that has elevated cognitive theories that technocratically describe effective literacy instruction. Secondly, literacy has consistently functioned as disciplining instruments of both the Left and the Right to advance particular beliefs, values, and truths that constitute their social visions. Where discursive 'jolts and surprises' have 'erupted', they necessarily have reconciled the contradictions and tensions inherent in discourses of adolescent literacy as an instrument of academic achievement, a means to procure national credentials, a force for egalitarian social change, or as a source of literate labour to meet capitalism's requirement for continuous national economic growth, and autonomous self-sufficient individuals.

In Chapter 4, I focus my genealogical analysis on the rise of neo-liberalism and its challenge to a declining Keynesian consensus that had dominated social policy since the 1940s. I explore how New Zealand has been an active participant in international educational neo-liberal reforms, and in the alignment of curriculum and literacy to serve the demands of economic globalisation. Furthermore, I examine how the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD), in particular, has reconceptualised and rationalised adolescent literacy as instruments to embed neo-liberal capitalism, and to enable New Zealand to integrate and compete in the global economy.

# Chapter 4

# The impact of international and domestic economic discourses on adolescent literacy policy

## Introduction

In the first part of Chapter 3, I analysed how adolescent literacy in New Zealand was a consistent yet evolving presence within a variety of wider socio-economic discourses between 1870 and 1970. The second section of the chapter traced the discursive origins of contemporary adolescent literacy pedagogic discourses, understood as advanced discipline (or subject) literacy instructional approaches. In this chapter I address my second inquiry stream that focuses on the impact of international and domestic economic interests on adolescent literacy discourse formations as the 1970s drew to a close. I begin by explaining the relationship between the neo-liberal economic reforms initiated by the Fourth Labour Government (1984-1990), and the role that education, curriculum, and literacy plays within them. I then analyse the discursive influence New Zealand's membership of the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) has had on the construction of national adolescent literacy policies. I argue that since the mid-1970s, the OECD's neo-liberal worldview has become a hegemonic force within New Zealand's education policy development, and its policy conceptualisation and curricular implementation of adolescent literacy in secondary schools.

I argue that since the mid-1980s, adolescent literacy policies have increasingly become an educational response to global capitalist policy imperatives, and as such have subjugated Keynesian social democratic progressivism of earlier decades. Contemporary adolescent literacy policy is primarily designed to meet global capital's demand for portable skills, and literate labour units who are in a cycle of continuous training, to drive New Zealand's market-led economy to compete successfully in globalising transnational markets.

Specifically I examine three concepts that underpin the OECD's neo-liberal conceptualisation of literacy: human capital theory as private good, the development and articulation of literacy as part of an individual's suite of *key competencies*, and the introduction of international literacy tests of mathematical, scientific and reading

comprehension for the cyclical international measurement and comparison of standards of literacy achievement. I draw links between these concepts and the wider issues of globalisation and neo-liberal economic ideology and their representation in the revised New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Finally I suggest that despite the broader and more complex international contexts within which contemporary education policy making takes place, literacy policies reproduce and reinforce thematically similar historical discourses, that is beliefs, values and truths, that influenced State literacy policy making in nineteenth century colonial New Zealand, and were threaded through national literacy debates in successive Labour and National governments throughout the twentieth century.

**The neo-liberal reform of New Zealand society**

In 1984 New Zealand's new Labour Government embarked on a radical neo-liberal reform agenda whose aim was not only to restructure an economy in crisis but to profoundly reshape social, cultural and political relationships that, according to Adams (2005), amounted to "a radical reconceptualisation by those in power of what society should be like" (p. 4). The totalising nature of these reforms, as a form of governmentality, is implicit in their aim to privatise the individual within atomised, competitive and entrepreneurial cultures, which the State indirectly controls using an ensemble of economic rationalist technologies as a form of governmentality (Codd, 1998). A-M. O'Neill (2005), J. O'Neill (2005a, 2005b) and Peters and Marshall (2004) argue that the individual's social identity and relationship with the State were fundamentally altered. A-M. O'Neill (2005) argues that the reforms amounted to a major structural adjustment that aimed to embed individualism and an enterprise culture as the dominant discourse of governmentality in New Zealand. It is a neo-liberal discourse that promoted and expanded individual enterprise within a competitive free market, whose aim was to pervade all spheres of public and private life. The reconstruction was paradigmatic in its magnitude because it "required changes to some of the most basic notions we have about ourselves and our world, including what it means to be and act as an individual, the nature of the social world we live in, the ways we relate to each other and the fundamental purpose of living" (A-M. O'Neill, 2005, p. 76). It was a reform whose totalising intent went far beyond educational and curriculum

change, but was "a total change in culture. It involves a penetration into the very basis of human nature, a reformulation of the relations between the individual and society, based on the use and promotion of new forms of governmentality or rationality of the State" (Peters & Marshall, 2004, p. 109). The State is engaged in the deployment of non-coercive biopower technologies to actively construct, regulate, standardise and manage human behaviour that reach down to the level of individual in order paradoxically to seek control of whole populations. Neo-liberalism is thus a totalising form of governmentality, wherein the State contrives to sustain the requisite discursive conditions for entrepreneurial and contractual economic relationships to emerge, which in turn regenerate themselves as self-disciplining taken-for-granted, common sense ways of being (Olssen et al., 2004).

As a consequence of this totalising objective, neo-liberal transformations profoundly affected education in New Zealand in that it subordinated education to an economic utility that would no longer directly contribute to "the maintenance of social democracy through building communities of literate and informed citizens" (Codd, 2005a, p. 3). Neo-liberalism was hostile to Keynesian notions of social democracy, citizen rights, collective responsibility and national identity. Rather, neo-liberalism "in contrast … emphasises individual rights to property ownership, legal protection and market freedom, within an environment of enterprise and competition" (Codd, 2005a, p. 5). The important characteristics of this society were: an unrelenting pursuit of national economic progress and prosperity, constructed as the private accumulation of wealth and property; the marketisation of social institutions and practices; and the re-constitution of social relationships as individuals conceived as independent, competitive, economic units. The broader social and cultural roles of curriculum, and education more generally, were ignored or re-interpreted in order to support this generative function (G. Lee et al., 2004;Peters & Marshall, 2004).

**The OECD, education, and the generation of human capital**

Since the mid-1980s, New Zealand educational policy, especially with respect to literacy, has regularly referenced the Geneva-based Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (hereafter OECD). The OECD developed out of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation in 1961 into a supranational, non-governmental

organisation (NGO) that advocates neo-liberal laissez-faire economics, competitive and entrepreneurial individualism, economic, political and cultural globalisation, and the creation of international social and cultural policies that sustain and embed global capitalism (Adams, 2005; Lingard, 2000; Morrow & Torres, 2000; Spring, 1998). It advocates global policies that individual sovereign states can implement to respond to the demands of globalisation, in particular the availability of skilled labour to work flexibly in changing local, regional and international economic environments. In this context, education and in particular adolescent literacy are retheorised as a public investment in human capital, conceived as a private good owned by the autonomous and competitive individual.

Human capital theory and economic globalisation both converge within the OECD's economic instrumentalist views of education, and focus on global adolescent literacy policies (Lingard, 2000, 2010; Spring, 1998). Spring (1998) argues that the OECD sees education as a social investment for economic returns – the greater the educational investment, the higher the probability that more skilled human capital is available to generate economic growth. This, he argues, is assumed to enhance a nation's competitive edge, productivity, and flexibility to participate in the global knowledge economy.

Economic globalisation, and the implementation of neo-liberal marketisation and managerialist practices have, in Lingard's (2000) view, re-defined education as an instrument of economic internationalism, rather than bordered economic nationalism. Education policy, Lingard claims, is now a "re-articulated micro-version of human capital theory linked to the changing structure of the economies and labor markets in the postindustrialised nations of the globe" (pp. 84-85). Education and curriculum are primarily instruments of national economic policy, whose role is to supply human capital formed as flexible, skilled, and educable labour for an economy competing within a globalised neo-liberal free market system.

This view is reiterated by Marginson (1997), in his analysis of evolving discourses within the OECD about the relationship between neo-liberal economic theory, individualism, human capital theory and education. He argues that in 1986, the OECD

were advocating that education should form in individuals "the capacities for coping with change and turning it to advantage, continuous improvement, entrepreneurial judgement, and business imagination and innovation, and to provide opportunities, incentives and sanctions that would propel those individual actors into action" (p. 112, citing OECD Secretariat memo, 1986, pp. 6-12).

Further, Marginson (1997, pp. 113-117) argues that the OECD's 1987 "*Structural Adjustment and Economic Performance*" document demanded that education systems must graduate skilled, flexible and responsive workers. It cited factors such as the declining rates of participation in late secondary and tertiary institutions, persistently high rates of unemployment, and the rise in credentialism as a result of intense labour market competition (see also Spring, 1998), as systemic barriers to economic growth that specific adjustments to education could rectify. In essence students should be educated in schools reformed to generate and enculturate exactly the values they need to prosper in a capitalist, marketised society.

Olssen et al. (2004) argue that the neo-liberal revision of human capital theory underpins the OECD's conception of adolescent literacy, the skills required for lifelong learning, and the appropriate curriculum structures. They argue that the OECD has reconstructed the concept of human capital theory to align it more closely with neo-liberal ideology. Olssen et al. explain that education is seen as a key determinant of economic productivity and competitive advantage. Without on-going investment in education in the form of on-going training and credentialisation, the individual's capital value to the economy will deteriorate because they will not have the requisite skill levels and performance capacity for productive work in a competitive global economy. An economy could sustain long-term damage if the capabilities of its workforce became gradually obsolete, or redundant, in the face of rapidly changing economic and technological contexts (pp. 149-150).

**Literacy crisis and neo-liberal policy-making**

Researchers (Luke, 2004; Marshall, 2009; Smith, 2000) have argued that an important pre-condition of neo-liberal reform is the construction of a public perception of an impending or actual crisis. For example, Marshall (2009) argues that the American No

Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards policy emerged out of an alarmist discourse of a national literacy crisis that predicted economic slippage and decline, which in turn would lead to social disharmony and impoverishment, anxieties similar to those that resonated within New Zealand's literacy policy discourses between the 1870s and the 1950s.

In New Zealand, rhetorical discourses of an educational crisis, teacher criticism and ineptitude, and alarm at declining curriculum and literacy standards, emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was against a background of stark economic decline since the 1970s that, by 1984, amounted to a social and economic crisis, and deep misgivings about New Zealand's future capacity to compete economically (Codd, 1990; Codd et al., 1990).

Later, through the 1990s, a discourse of an education system in crisis remerged and gathered rhetorical momentum as organisations such as the Business Round Table claimed that teachers and schools were inept and unable to produce literate children (Smith, 2000). Magazines such as *North and South* (June 1993), and *The Listener* (July 1995) published statistics they claim showed primary school teachers were incapable of teaching their students to read due to damaging academic debates between whole language and phonics proponents (Openshaw, 2007). In 1998, media outlets were claiming that "47% of unemployed 14- to 19-year-olds had no formal qualifications; one-third of school leavers went straight from school onto the unemployment benefit with no postsecondary education", and polytechnics and universities struggled with students' basic literacy standards (Openshaw, 2007, p. 12).

The rhetorical discourse had now evolved into a broader neo-liberal assault on teacher performance. It linked the damage inadequate teacher performance was causing to New Zealand's poor economic performance to its long-term viability as a participant in the global capitalist economy. Left to themselves, teachers were deemed not good enough to graduate sufficiently literate students to meet the labour demands of New Zealand's neo-liberal capitalist economy. It is within this context that the Education Review Office campaigned vigorously for further accountability mechanisms in the form of circumscribed curriculum reviews, the increased use of standardised national literacy

testing, the introduction of linear literacy progressions, and eventually national standards (A-M. O'Neill, 2013). The ideological imperative underlying this dominant neo-liberal economic accountability discourse was to return education, and specifically the curriculum, to the instrumental role of producing workers skilled for industrial and technological work, and to make sure that teachers would make this happen (A-M. O'Neill, 2004; J. O'Neill, 2005a, 2005b).

**Literacy policy, numbers, and global measurement**

New Zealand schools have, through the Ministry of Education, participated in four international literacy testing programmes: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012); the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 1994/95, 1998/99, 2002/03, 2006/07), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2005/06, 2010/11), and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS 1996) (see www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data_collections).

Of these four, PISA and IALS were developed by the OECD and sat in member countries and an increasing number of non-member countries. Literacy was chosen as a common assessment focus because it was built around cognitive operations (i.e., skills and strategies) associated with explicit theories of task difficulty (Murray, 2003). These operations are characteristically similar across cultural and political boundaries, a factor that helped overcome barriers presented by idiosyncratic national subject content area curriculums (Rychen & Salganik, 2003, p. 52). According to Murray (2003), PISA "seeks to profile the level and social distribution of reading literacy competence for a single age group of students near the end of their compulsory schooling (15-years-old)" (p. 135). IALS results help generate data "to improve our [i.e., OECD researchers'], understanding of the relative importance of literacy skills to rates of economic growth, productivity growth, and technical innovation and to identify areas where literacy skills deficits might constitute a barrier to optimal performance in these areas" (p. 139). In addition, socio-cultural "non-school and school related" (p. 135) data is collected in the testing process to allow OECD researchers to analyse how relationships between educational, social and cultural factors in participating countries combine to influence

the achievement of literacy competencies[5]. In other words, international literacy data is used to measure, compare and report how effectively national schooling systems prepare students and sustain adults to work productively in national and international labour markets.

Within the Australian context, the statistical analysis of the results of international literacy tests and state testing have become high stakes because they feed the "current fetish for outcome measurements" (Lingard, 2010, p. 135) and the neo-liberal pre-occupation with external accountability. Citing Bernstein's (1971) sociology of the curriculum, Lingard (2010) argues that the data exemplify a dominant wider international educational policy discourse about neo-liberalism and marketisation that positions education, and adolescent literacy specifically, almost exclusively as tools of national economic progress and globalisation. He claims that the statistical evaluation of literacy outcomes, and the global comparisons of national school performance that it allows, are driving the development of a national "policy-as-numbers" (p. 135) approach; that is, national literacy policies based on what the statistics empirically suggest.

Lingard (2010) argues that OECD international testing has "economised" (p. 136) education. In his view, education has been commodified by attributing to schooling the central purpose of producing the requisite quantity and quality of human capital for the nation. Human capital (measured as literacy outcomes) has become the engine room of national economic competitiveness within the international neo-liberal globalising economy. Thus, the discourses that inform national education policy and adolescent literacy are economically instrumentalist in form and substance. Literacy is primarily a tool to boost economic activity and individual prosperity, and to help shape the individual as a self-sufficient and autonomous entrepreneur.

Moreover, global literacy testing that is compatible with national approaches helps constitute a policy platform for globalised literacy education and educational governance, and is the new measure of policy effectiveness (Moss, 2012). International

[5] See below for a discussion on literacy competencies within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

literacy testing has become a "global eye", a tool with which the OECD can reach into nation states to create a "national eye" (Lingard, 2010, p. 136, citing Nova & Yariv-Mashal, 2003), which reflexively acts to help create global educational policy alignments with the OECD's own globalising neo-liberal economic paradigm.

**The OECD conceptualisation of literacy as global competencies**

The OECD defines reading literacy as "an individual's capacity to: understand, use, reflect on and engage with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society" (OECD, 2009, p. 14). In PISA then, the OECD has established internationally comparative standards or benchmarks (i.e., an international credentialing tool), which measures "the extent to which near the end of compulsory schooling [students] have acquired the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society" (OECD, 2005, p. 3). National leaders are exhorted to draw policy information and directions from these tests as a measure of how much human capital educational investment has generated in 15 year olds preparing for employment and further education beyond secondary school. In this way, PISA's role as an international tool of framing discourses around national educational policy, and as a tool to advance the OECD's underlying neo-liberal economic beliefs, are reproduced and reinforced by the cyclic regularity with which it (and other tests) are completed within New Zealand.

In 1997 the OECD identified four key competencies: problem-solving and critical thinking, effective communication, awareness of social, political, cultural and liberal democratic values, and high self-perception and self-confidence. These were reduced to three in the DeSeCo Report (OECD, 2005) – use tools interactively, interact in heterogonous groups, and act autonomously. The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) reconstitutes them as five competencies – participating and contributing, managing self, thinking, using language, symbols and text, and relating to others (pp. 12-13). Human capital theory was a key conceptual framework within which key competencies were developed. As Gilomen (2003), an OECD researcher, explains,

> Economic competitiveness and productivity are major themes in all societies. Human capital theory describes a direct link between key competencies (acquired through investments in education) and access to

> gainful employment and resources (a major dimension of individual quality of life), the productivity of businesses and companies, and the economic performance of a society. … Economic productivity thus constitutes a key element in the frame of reference for key competencies. (p. 128)

Rychen and Salganik (2003), who led the competency development work on behalf of the OECD, conceptualise adolescent literacy as a component part of a suite of competencies. Within the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), adolescent literacy is recognised primarily as a component of the competency 'Using Language, Symbols and Texts'. Rychen and Salganik (2003) claim that the competently literate adolescent has the "ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilisation of psycho-social pre-requisites" (p. 43). In other words, when faced with unfamiliar and challenging texts, they describe competently literate students as being able to independently bring attributes and intellectual resources, such as cognitive reading skills and strategies, prior knowledge, motivation, values and self-efficacy, to engage with the text in order to purposefully construct meaning with as little recourse as possible to outside support. Thus the ultimate objective of a competency-based approach to literacy education is to develop autonomous, independent literate learners.

Ostensibly, this competency discourse sits alongside the pedagogic discourses that underpin contemporary teaching and learning approaches in adolescent classrooms – the development of the critically literate, self-sustaining, independent learner (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 9) that I discussed in Chapter 3. It implies that there is a discourse consensus around the conceptual nature of adolescent literacy and the cognitive literacy resources that individuals should possess. However, this apparent consensus sits within a wider dominant discourse about what literacy is for. As Gilomen (2003) argues, investment in literacy education builds an individual's competencies to access gainful employment, to develop the financial and intellectual resources for higher education, and leads to further economic self-investment for lifelong learning, the social benefits of which are productivity gains, increased wealth, and economic growth (pp. 120-122, 128). In other words, despite initial policy and pedagogic similarities, the OECD discourse of adolescent literacy dominates macro-level policy making levels. It

articulates a global instrumentalist view of literacy as a means to develop particular forms of human capital, theorised as competencies, necessary for the advancement of a particular economic view of society, that of a competitive, individualistic, entrepreneurial, and globally integrated capitalist state.

**International literacy measurement tools: The New Zealand context**

Lingard's (2010) 'policy-as-numbers' trend can be seen in Openshaw and Walshaw's (2010) account of New Zealand's policy move to literacy national standards. New Zealand's PISA results of 2000 and 2003 showed that Māori and Pasifika achievement were well below international norms, despite the relatively high average marks achieved by New Zealand 15 year olds overall. PISA results from testing in subsequent years – 2006 and 2009 – confirmed this trend. Data from the 2001 PIRLS testing became available in 2004 and replicated PISA's findings about low levels of Māori and Pasifika literacy achievement at Year 5. The adult literacy data gleaned from the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey, and made available in 2003, suggested that one in five adults had poor literacy skills.

The regular availability of international statistical literacy data, against which New Zealand could measure its own literacy achievement, combined with on-going public and employer concerns about low standards (see for example Ministry of Education, 2002a, pp. 8-9), encouraged the new Labour Government's Minister of Education Trevor Mallard to introduce a range of policy initiatives. These included funds to develop asTTle (more recently e-asTTle), a nationally standardised, computerised literacy test, whose text items would be calibrated to New Zealand Curriculum Framework levels, and to introduce minimum literacy and numeracy standards at NCEA Level 1.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education embarked upon an intensive period of professional development in secondary schools starting with awareness workshops for school principals, school literacy leaders, and local subject association leaders, one of which I attended as Assistant Principal and school Literacy Leader. In addition, "funding for up to twenty secondary schools a year for three years (sixty schools)" was made available to "help schools to focus on cross-curricular literacy" (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p.

7). In 2004, I joined Massey University's Centre for Educational Development (CED) as an English and Literacy Adviser, with a specific responsibility to facilitate two of these year-long literacy professional development programmes. Since 2006, the Ministry of Education has implemented national secondary school literacy professional development programmes via university professional development organisations, delivered through Ministry of Education School Support Services (SSS) contracts. In Massey University's lower North Island region, the CED was contracted to facilitate two three-year iterations of adolescent literacy professional development: the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP 2006-08), which I explore more deeply in Chapter 6, and the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP 2009-2011). I was the regional adolescent literacy facilitator for the CED mid-central region for both contracts.

Changes and refinements to New Zealand's literacy policy during this time reflected the influence of international assessment discourses that favoured quantitative over qualitative data to measure national and local shifts in student achievement. Before 2005, adolescent literacy professional development was generally available to all who wished to use it. After that, Ministry of Education policy, as reflected in the shape of the Secondary Literacy Project, explicitly prioritised the raising of Māori and Pasifika achievement, within lower decile schools, that have comparatively high numbers of Māori and Pasifika students on their rolls (Wilson, 2009, p. 1). The objective was, and continues to be, to close the literacy achievement gap with Pākehā/European students, the success of which will be measured and legitimised by international quantitative testing tools, such as PISA, and New Zealand developed tools, such as e-asTTle.

**PISA, global competencies, and human capital**

PISA 2009 Assessment Framework explanatory notes (OECD, 2009) reiterate the relationship between literacy competencies, human capital theory and economic productivity. Reflecting the OECD's emphasis on the individual's responsibility to contribute to society's effective functioning, the authors cite Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) and Smith, Mikulecky, Kibby, and Dreher (2000) to argue that reading literacy, as well as being a foundation for achievement in subject areas, is also "a prerequisite for successful participation in most areas of adult life" (OECD, 2009, p. 21).

The authors of the OECD (2009) framework warn of the potential economic and social costs of *individuals* possessing low levels of literacy competence. Reflecting a deeper individualistic conception of society, they argue that those with below average skills will find it increasingly difficult to earn above average wages in global economies where the restructuring of jobs favours those who have acquired higher levels of education and skills. Such workers have little hope of fully participating in increasingly complex societies where individuals are required to take on additional responsibility for different aspects of their lives: from planning their careers, to nurturing and guiding their children, to navigating healthcare systems, to assuming more responsibility for their financial future. The non-economic returns from literacy in the form of enhanced personal well-being and greater social cohesion are as important as the economic and labour-market returns (OECD, 2009, p. 21).

The negative consequences for the *nation state* of *individual* low literacy competencies are explicitly articulated with reference to levels of human capital, economic progress and international competitiveness. Citing Coulombe, Trembly, and Marchand (2004), the OECD (2009) states:

> Reading literacy skills matter not just for individuals, but for economies as a whole. Policy makers and others are coming to recognise that in modern societies, human capital – the sum of what the individuals in an economy know and can do – may be the most important form of capital. Economists have for many years developed models showing generally that a country's education levels are a predictor of its economic growth potential. … Surveys [of which PISA's Reading Literacy is one], in turn, allow us to make more credible inferences about the connection between human capital and national economic growth. In a recent study, several Canadian economists analysed links between literacy levels and economic performance over a long period. They found that the average literacy level of a nation's population is a better predictor of economic growth than educational achievement. (pp. 21-22)

Within this complex discourse of neo-liberal global capitalism, national curriculum policies, especially literacy policies, are re-aligned or reformed to prioritise

competencies as a private good, to sustain an individual's lifelong employment and economic success, which when aggregated nationally contribute to a cohesive, well-functioning society. Adolescent literacy is conceptualised as global generic competencies constructed as measureable cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, organised within a standardised curriculum design, and informed by OECD educational policy frameworks, for which human capital theory is a core tenet. Educational governance policy, driven from the Ministry of Education, requires schools and universities to reproduce practices, values, attitudes and knowledge structures that embed this complex discourse as a dominant truth regime (i.e. make them hegemonic). Consequently, schools have been restructured according to new discursive practices, in particular the inclusion of performativity and accountability practices, a standardised outcomes-driven curriculum, national literacy standards policies, NCEA literacy regulations, league tables, the development of national testing tools, and the regular use of international literacy measurement tests against which international comparisons of national performance can be made.

**The OECD and the New Zealand Curriculum**

The introduction, vision and competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, Ministry of Education, 2007) reflect the legacy of the 1990s neo-liberal educational reforms and reveal the extent to which the OECD's promotion of neo-liberal discourses about secondary education, curriculum structures, competencies, and lifelong learning have colonised New Zealand's national curriculum statements. For example, Karen Sewell, then Secretary of Education, describes the central role of curriculum as "developing New Zealanders' capacities to be lifelong learners, to participate effectively in a rapidly changing global environment, to develop the competencies they need for study, work and lifelong learning, in order to realise their potential and participate productively in society" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 6).

In her foreword to the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007), Sewell writes:

> The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education. It takes as its starting point a vision of our young people as lifelong learners who are confident and creative, connected, and actively involved. … It defines five key competencies that are critical to

> sustained learning and effective participation in society and that underline the emphasis on lifelong learning. … [The NZC is] a framework designed to ensure that all young New Zealanders are equipped with the knowledge, competencies, and values they will need to be successful citizens in the twenty-first century. (p. 4)

About curriculum policy discourse at the time, Codd (2005b) said: "much of the recent political rhetoric is about the role of education in creating the knowledge based economy and preparing young people for the globalisation of markets" (p. 17). In other words, economic objectives, explained in terms of developing individual human capital during and beyond the period of compulsory schooling, emerged officially as the primary political objective of public education, and literacy in particular, in New Zealand. "The State's role [in New Zealand] is to invest in curriculum and learning that improves the overall productive capacity of its citizens" (Codd, 1993, p. 78).

Codd (1993, 2005b) and Holme (2004) imply that the OECD's policy paradigm rejects literacy as an instrument for critiquing power, or for seeking social reform through the power of collective action in ways that can lead to social change, dissent, or opposition to established norms. Holme (2004) argues that literacy is about an individual's economic functionality and productive capacity:

> … we can link a concept of functionality to the politicisation of literacy [and the] mobilisation of human capacity-building. Yet, finally, functionality is less about social revolution than about fostering an expansion of socio-economic activity through individual capacity development. It is not about changing the status quo. (p. 15)

Neo-liberal economic and globalisation discourses about literacy and education dominate the New Zealand Curriculum at the expense of alternative social progressivist discourses that see literacy as a key instrument of social critique, change and transformation. Radical emancipatory or utopian discourses such as those of Paolo Friere and Jurgen Habermas, which regard literacy as a means of social and political empowerment, as a necessary pre-condition for transformative social action, or as a defence against political oppression and abuse of power, have diminished influence over

educational literacy policy. The discourses of scientific and technocratic rationalism, neo-liberal capitalism, and globalisation assume a dominant, if not hegemonic influence over curriculum policy, and adolescent literacy policy in particular.[6]

As Peters and Marshall (2004) and A-M. O'Neill (2005) argue, neo-liberalism has not merely grafted an economic imperative onto an existing Keynesian form of social consensus about the necessity of literacy and learning generally. Rather, neo-liberalism has systematically reconstituted the individual's identity as an ideologically compliant yet economically competitive, entrepreneurial production unit, and a lone actor in a free market whose primary function is to contribute to national prosperity. The more literate the individual is, the greater the human capital they bring to the market, the higher the financial returns for the nation state, and the more integrated society becomes into the global capitalist system.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have genealogically analysed the impact of neo-liberal international economic discourses on New Zealand education in the mid-1970s, and the effects of these discourses on rationales for literacy education in New Zealand secondary schools. I have argued that the OECD has been a significant generator of powerful global neo-liberal educational discourses that are represented as global literacy policy reference frameworks and international comparative literacy testing of adolescents and adults.

New Zealand's conceptualisation of adolescent literacy at policy and practice levels is directly related to these wider OECD economic and educational discourses. Adolescent literacy is now conceptualised as a publicly taught private good, or form of owned human capital. It is an instrument for sustaining the lifelong capacity of the individual to sustain an identity as an autonomous actor, competitive entrepreneur, and enterprising individual within the wider capitalist globalising economy. In addition, high literacy levels achieved at school help inoculate the State from supporting those whose diminished economic capacities, or human capital, restrain national economic growth

[6] In Chapter 5, I analyse the development and implementation of the National English Syllabus Committee's (NESC) reforms as a case study of the ascendancy and decline of a socially progressive, humanistic language and literacy curriculum discourse for secondary schools, as neo-liberal educational reforms gathered momentum and intensity from the late 1980s onwards.

and wealth creation, and limit the social benefits the nation might enjoy. PISA international literacy testing has consistently identified Māori and Pasifika secondary school students as two groups who consistently underachieve against national adolescent literacy norms. This has the effect of limiting their individual private capacity to contribute to collective national economic progress, and towards whom, as a consequence, national adolescent professional development policies, in which I was involved, were increasingly directed in the 2000s. In addition, PISA testing has highlighted the absence of a New Zealand national literacy test, and confirmed for many the need for its development referencing the curriculum structures, levels and rationales that had been in place since the curriculum reforms of the early 1990s.

In Chapter 5, I adopt a case study approach to indicate how profound, immediate and thorough market-led neo-liberal reform of education and literacy was after the late 1980s. It was a discursive about-turn that repudiated much of the post-war Keynesian educational consensus. Beginning in 1970, I analyse how the work of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) represented both the culmination and final expression of the educational values of the Keynesian social contract. It enjoyed a relatively short period as the mandated English curriculum for Forms 3-5 before being quickly dismantled by the neo-liberal curriculum reforms of the 1990s. However its discursive legacy was substantial and is readily apparent in a range of contemporary cross-curricular documents and resource materials.

I also explore the concurrent work of Tom Nicholson's Learning across the Curriculum (LAC) professional development project in the Waikato region, as a second example of attempts by educators to introduce adolescent literacy pedagogies in secondary school locations. Like the NESC, it too was 'subjugated' or 'disqualified' as unofficial and naive knowledge (Olssen et al., 2004, pp. 43-44). I begin Chapter 5's case study analysis in the 1970s, and complete it as the discursive strength of NESC and LAC weakened as neo-liberal education reforms rose to dominate the educational policy, pedagogy and teacher practice landscapes from the late 1980s onwards. Their emergence and decline is analysed within the wider national and international education discursive turns in the 1970s and 1980s that I discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

# Chapter 5
# Competing discourses of language and literacy: Child-centred social progressivism or neo-liberal economic instrumentalism

## Introduction

Economic imperatives that emphasise high literacy skills as a pre-condition for private enterprise capitalism and national progress has been a resilient and continuous presence in New Zealand literacy policy making discourses since the early 1870s. However, as my discussion in Chapters 3 and 4 indicates, for much of twentieth century, adolescent literacy was an inconspicuous, if not dormant, discourse that was subservient to a deeper hegemonic discursive formation of literacy instruction as the responsibility of New Zealand primary schools, and subject or discipline content academic learning for secondary schools. Post-Second World War beliefs affirmed that if adolescent literacy were anyone's responsibility at secondary school, then it was the English Department who should teach students how to read and write for cross-curricular academic achievement or vocational training.

In the next two chapters, I address the major third inquiry stream of my thesis. I examine the extent to which New Zealand's recent approaches to adolescent literacy have been discursively modelled on international neo-liberal policy scenarios, with a focus on the instrumental role of international adolescent literacy testing and the application of economic rationalism to adolescent literacy professional development processes. In this chapter, I explore how international social progressive, child-centred discourses within the context of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) and qualifications reforms began to challenge New Zealand's post-war secondary literacy teaching orthodoxies. I analyse how national education language and literacy policies represented as incremental strategies and projects, rather than an over-arching long-term policy framework (Timperley & Parr, 2009), initiated the gradual emergence of a distinct adolescent literacy discourse in the 2000s.

The initial National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) reform, begun in 1970, and a later Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) project (1981/2-1987) were informed by

international, socially liberal pedagogic concepts of language and literacy instruction as a form of human behaviour. They were centred on the needs of the student that would help nurture a just, progressive, and inclusive society. Initially, these concepts challenged the dichotomous view of literacy in secondary schools as either skills training for the many who would leave for employment or apprenticeships, or as academic preparation for the few who passed examinations to transition to university study. Later, in the 1980s these conceptual assumptions clashed with globalising neo-liberal education agendas that sought to sequester language and literacy as a particular form of economic instrumentalism. Language and literacy were reconstituted as instruments with which to monitor and regulate the effectiveness of national schooling systems to produce students who were autonomous, self-sufficient individuals able to operate in a marketised, competitive, and entrepreneurial economy.

In this chapter, I argue that the NESC and LAC projects were socially progressive national educational reforms that, notwithstanding the overwhelming advance of neo-liberalism from the late 1980s onwards, successfully helped shape enduring discourses of adolescent policy and practice. In addition to primary and secondary documentary sources, I draw on the experiences of two key educationists who were involved in the projects to instantiate these complex pedagogic and ideological discursive tensions as the Department and, later, the Ministry of Education sought to embed adolescent literacy into teacher consciousness and practice.

## Section 1: Language, literacy, and syllabus reform

### *Historical background*

In 1945 the Education (Post Primary Instruction) Regulations were gazetted, setting out the core curriculum for Forms 3-5 (Years 9-11), including English. The regulations followed the recommendations of the Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944) a year earlier. In 1946, a revised national syllabus for English language teaching in primary schools was published. Together, the 1945 Regulations and 1946 primary English syllabus "set the course for the teaching of English in New Zealand primary and secondary schools for over a quarter of a century" (Catherwood et al., 1990, p. 176).

Secondary school English teachers had historically enjoyed less freedom than their primary colleagues to plan and integrate language into learning programmes. The professional freedoms of the secondary school sector were restrained by a number of factors. Firstly, and most importantly, was the "washback effect of assessment on the curriculum, [whereby] public examinations prescriptions in English have been powerful determinants of the New Zealand senior school English curriculum" (Catherwood et al., 1990, p. 176). Secondly, the widespread use of British authored texts uniformly reproduced a British approach to the English subject curriculum that discouraged any indigenous English curriculum development. Finally, English was for all candidates, a compulsory School Certificate and University Entrance subject they had to pass in order to be awarded the qualifications (Catherwood et al., 1990, pp. 177-178). Passing School Certificate English was the de facto literacy benchmark for all subjects, and signalled that students, having completed compulsory schooling, were competently literate for post-secondary employment and training. English as a subject was discursively regarded as the instructional context for cross-curricular literacy learning that supported the academic success of all students in other subjects as well. In other words, passing English for School Certificate and University Entrance was discursively naturalised in teacher practice, as constituting evidence of transferrable cross-curricular literacy skills to enable students to progress to appropriate academic, vocational or employment opportunities.

The Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944) had set up two discursive tensions for secondary English teaching; on the one hand, teaching was a socially liberal, humanistic, student-centred, holistic practice that was accessible to all. On the other, secondary schools needed to comply with the Report's recommendation for prescriptions for a hierarchical, competitive national examination system. The position of English as a compulsory subject in Forms 5 and 6 (or Years 11 and 12) exacerbated this fundamental tension.

***A national collaborative response to teacher discontent***

This tension was to resurface as an issue at the 1966 annual PPTA conference, as delegates discussed amendments to the School Certificate examination. The debate broadened into a wider consideration of the priorities, objectives and work of secondary

education generally, with particular reference to the adequacy of the current examination system. In response, the secondary school teacher union the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) collaborated with the Department of Education and education academics to undertake "world enquiry [research] … to understand better the ways in which children grow, and more especially to understand how the kind of education they receive can help or hinder growth" (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 1969, p. xiii).

The PPTA's subsequent report, *Education in Change* (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 1969), adopted an explicit discourse that linked education to personal growth and social progress. It made clear its belief that education contributed significantly to the collective good through holistic, progressive, and reflective student-centred educational practice. It distanced itself from an austere, economic instrumentalist perspective:

> In the past education has most often been thought of as a narrow form of "training" which children accepted in the hope of obtaining specific material rewards. Today many people are beginning to see that education is much more than that: it forms a major part of the process of individual and social growth and should be self-motivating because its rewards are inherent. This report is directed towards the development of a concept of self-motivated learning. (p. xiv)

The report argued that education nurtures the innate urge to enquire; it helps the individual to realise their potential, to act in ways that help others to grow, and to develop the individual's capacity "to develop his [sic] abilities and insights to the fullest extent, and on his desire to reflect deeply on the nature and effects of his behaviour" (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 1969, p. 1). Knowing how language works to create and communicate knowledge was central to this vision.

The PPTA's reports, and persistent teacher criticism of the Thomas Report's English curriculum, were the catalysts for curriculum change in secondary school English. In August 1969, the Director of Education invited a group of teachers, teachers' college lecturers and Education Department officers to a conference at Lopdell House in

Auckland to examine the current secondary syllabus and to prepare guidelines for its revision. One guideline requested that a revision committee should be set up to continue the work of the Lopdell House Conference. The Minister of Education, A. E. Kinsella, quickly agreed to this, appointing the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) in February 1970 (Aitken, 1976; Catherwood et al., 1990; Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). Its terms of reference were to revise the English syllabus for Forms 3-5, to begin work on the preparation of a Form 1-4 Handbook, and to revise the School Certificate English prescription (Department of Education, 1972, p. 4; Aitken, 1976, p. 95)

At the end of the 1960s, New Zealand's educational landscape embodied struggles between conflicting traditionalist and progressivist discourses. Traditional discourses of teaching and learning were being challenged by optimistic international and national social liberal discourses that promoted education as a transformative agent of personal growth and social change through progressivist and communitarian restructuring of curriculum, teacher practice, and pedagogic theory (Department of Education, 1972; Locke, 2004b). These discourses were challenging traditional teacher-centred transmission models, colonial discourses of English as a curriculum, and the relevance of immediate post-war national examinations, to contemporary understandings of language and learning.

In the following section, I analyse the important discursive characteristics of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) project launched in 1970. The project's remit was to critically examine the state of the School Certificate English examination, and English teaching and learning in Forms 3-5 (Years 9-11). I refer extensively to an interview conducted for this thesis on 26 October 2012, with a now retired Department of Education official ('Interviewee A') who was deeply involved in the project from beginning to end.

***Literacy as multi-modal learning through language***

While ostensibly confined to considering English in Forms 3-5, the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) viewed language learning as a key factor for effective student engagement and academic success in all subjects across the curriculum. The Committee drew upon international perspectives to frame their conceptual approach. By

the late 1960s, New Zealand English teachers were reading reports from a month-long Anglo-American seminar of English teachers held in Dartmouth, USA in 1966 (Catherwood et al., 1990; Locke 2004b). More significantly, the Committee later drew on the radical research of Basil Bernstein that contributed to the influential Bullock Report, *A Language for Life* (Department of Education and Science, 1975), in the United Kingdom (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010). For the NESC, Bullock's work was pivotal: "I got a copy of this for every member of the Committee … that became our bible with the English Committee … it's what determined the direction" (Interviewee A).

The NESC placed considerable importance on the broader aims of the *Education in Change* report (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 1969), which, they argued, required skilled language learning across the curriculum to realise. Catherwood et al. (1990) observed that the report

> … included the following aim: to help young people develop fully as individuals and as members of society by encouraging the growth of the urge to enquire, concern for others, and the desire for self-respect. The Committee believed this aim was compatible with emerging theory about the nature and significance of language development in adolescents, and decided to adopt it. (p. 181)

The central tenet of the NESC's conceptual framework – that language underpinned human growth and potential and successful student learning – was developed between 1970 and 1975. The 1972 *Draft Statement of Aims* (Department of Education, 1972, pp. 5-15) articulated the Committee's beliefs, drawn from the *Education in Change* conference and report (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 1969), about the centrality of language not only to human development and behaviour, but also to meeting the educational aims of secondary schooling. It conceived of language as behavioural modes that extended beyond written language (as reading and writing) to oral and visual aspects of communication to address the dominance of the former in English teaching. Oracy was an important developmental pre-cursor and on-going contributor to literacy (Department of Education, 1983a). It involved listening and speaking as receptive and productive language modes respectively. Learning about

visual language, however, was more complex. The NESC argued that an understanding of the receptive and productive modes of visual language would develop a critical awareness of how visual media shape and communicate messages[7] (Department of Education, 1972, 1983a).

The NESC was developing a major epistemological shift in the form of a radical and complex language learning approach applicable to learning not just in English, but to all subjects in the secondary school curriculum (Catherwood et al., 1990). The *Statement of Aims*, both the draft 1972 and final 1983 versions, attempted to reach beyond English to advocate that language learning should be at the heart of all subject studies. It challenged schools to establish a whole school language policy and undertake language programme planning (Department of Education, 1972, pp. 9, 13-14; Department of Education, 1983a, pp. 16-17).

For many English teachers it posed considerable challenges to conventional thinking that had guided their practice reliably since the Second World War. For non-English teachers, it suggested that English teachers were abdicating their responsibility "for the provision of a basic competence in written English" (Aitken 1976, p. 103; Interviewee A), reflecting the hegemonic belief that cross-curricular literacy instruction and standards were the sole responsibility of English teachers.

The discursive reach of the NESC reforms went beyond English teaching. They initiated a long-term challenge to traditional concepts of subjects and teachers as primarily repositories of content knowledge. They advocated that language learning led to deeper subject content understandings, and importantly were pre-cursors to later adolescent literacy policy and project work during the first decade of this century.

***Professional development, and an alternative national discourse***

The NESC did not emerge out of considered Department of Education strategic policies or programmes, nor was it a direct result of the National Government's education policy agenda. Rather it represented a response by senior Departmental officers to widening

[7] In summary:
Receptive language behaviours: listening (oral), watching (visual), viewing (visual), reading (written).
Productive language behaviours: speaking (oral), moving (visual), shaping (visual), writing (written).

teacher discontent with secondary schooling noted above. This was made keener by the emergence of international progressive reformist pedagogies. In 1969 the response was little more than an idea about what could be done. Interviewee A recalls that, "I was given a single sheet of paper which had the School Certificate syllabus on it and Jim Ross (Assistant Director General of Education) said we want you to revise this, from this single sheet of paper".

Two significant factors gave the NESC the capacity to construct and promote, from an 'idea', a radical new national pedagogy that would reconstruct English teachers' discourse knowledge and practice, usher in internal assessment for School Certificate English, and lay the seeds for literacy professional development thereafter. Openshaw and Walshaw (2010, p. 73) note that "this radically new approach to language teaching, does not appear to have encountered strong resistance from either inside or outside education". The absence of resistance to such a radical position is related firstly to the close relationship the NESC enjoyed with the Director General of Education (Bill Renwick) and his Deputy (Jim Ross). The second factor was the biopower implicit in the ability of committee members to build long-term relationships and structures with teachers across the country[8]. Active consultation and consensus building, and the generous provisioning of professional development and time to undertake this work, were potent biopower techniques that helped to develop an alternative naturalistic ground-up national discourse that was widely, though not wholly, adopted as a significant improvement to existing national discourses of secondary school English.

***Advocacy and protection***

The support of the Director General of Education, Bill Renwick, was central to the establishment and the success of the NESC. Following Ross's initial approach, Interviewee A completed a number of school visits in mid-1969 and formed the view that the issues involved were greater than a revision of the School Certificate examination. Ross won Renwick's approval for Interviewee A to bring together a stakeholder group at Lopdell House in August 1969. Later, Renwick advocated

[8] As I explain in Chapter 2, the Foucauldian concept of biopower argues that state agencies, in this case the Department of Education, successfully deployed non-coercive disciplinary techniques to subjectively reshape the individual to voluntarily comply with new discursive policy norms.

successfully for the group's recommendations at Ministerial level, and Kinsella signed it off in November of that year.

Renwick's continued encouragement and trust in the NESC's language for learning direction were pivotal to its initial survival and to its long-term success. Initially, according to Interviewee A, Renwick was taken by surprise by the NESC's radical turn: "[Renwick] … was perturbed because he … didn't expect this sort of questioning to come up … because he hadn't thought of it [English] that way". However, Renwick continued to support the NESC work but wanted to monitor developments closely. "Once Bill Renwick understood where I was going, he said I want to keep a close watch on this, but I like what you are doing. So that, as a Director General, and having his support, that was good." Renwick appointed Jim Ross to this monitoring task: "Jim Ross was closer to the work, he had to keep an eye on it. … He was happy to let me go, because he was supported by Bill Renwick".

In the later 1970s and early 1980s, in the project's trialling and professional development phases, Renwick and Ross insulated the NESC from the interference of successive conservative ministers. They argued for and protected the work against the opposition of a number of National Party Education Ministers, of whom Merv Wellington was the most aggressive (Interviewee A, personal communication, 22 November 2012). In his autobiography, Wellington (1985, p. 60) wrote that "In English, the old disciplines of spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, no longer carry the premium they once did. Employers … are exasperated by young people with a shoddy or indifferent grasp of these areas". This "grammar lad" dismissed the NESC work as "rubbish" (Interviewee A). However, Labour's Education spokesman, Russell Marshall, was empathetic and voiced his support for the programme until its finish in 1983/84. A new mandated discourse about English and literacy emerged, in part, because Renwick and Ross had successfully ring-fenced the work from political interference, particularly the conservative opposition of Merv Wellington, and the doubts of earlier National education ministers. In circumstances where wider conservative background discourses were gathering, Interviewee A concedes that "we [NESC] were lucky to finish the job".

***Consultation and professional development***

The second significant factor to contribute to the successful and radical discursive reconstruction of the English curriculum was the ability of the NESC to enact a long-term complex strategy to embed this alternative discourse as naturalised pedagogic knowledge. The Department of Education was consistently generous in its resourcing for the NESC project (Interviewee A). NESC members, for example, could travel the country to lead in-service professional development, visit a large number of schools, reach and engage with practising teachers, and publish a wide variety of support materials.

The long-term national strategy, as a complex technology of biopower, involved a number of elements that evolved over the life of the project. The most effective element was the intensive nation-wide contact NESC members had with teachers, schools, and principals, especially between 1970 and 1975. In its first two years, the NESC co-ordinated regional meetings, published NESC newsletters, background papers and resource material, and conducted demonstration lessons to introduce teachers to the general principles of language learning, and how these might present as classroom practice. By the end of 1972, the Committee had widely discussed with approximately 4,000 English teachers how English could best be taught and learned, in ways that promoted the opening up of what was previously private professional practice to collegial reflexive inquiry (Catherwood et al., 1990). In Aitken's (1976) view, the process was a powerful mechanism that helped lay the discursive foundations for an alternative national model of curriculum development in which teachers across the country actively co-constructed their pedagogic knowledge, dispositions and practices. They were, in effect, involved in a subjective reorientation away from traditional orthodoxies towards a gradual, natural adoption of modernised paradigmatic approaches to teaching and learning in secondary school English.

Between 1973 and 1975, following the *Draft Statement of Aims* (Department of Education, 1972), the Committee undertook further extensive sector consultation. The NESC ran in-service courses across the country to discuss implementation of the *Draft Statement of Aims* and the implications for teachers and for class and school programmes. The Department of Education distributed draft resource materials between

1975 and 1978 to all secondary schools about multi-modal language as learning which further supplemented the intensive national in-service work.[9] In 1978, the NESC passed their work over to the Department of Education for formal evaluation and Ministerial sign-off. This process was completed in May 1982. The following year the Minister of Education announced his formal approval of a new syllabus in English Forms 3-5, set out as the NESC final *Statement of Aims* (Department of Education, 1983a) and it was mandated as the official curriculum in 1984 (Catherwood et al., 1990).

***Devolving responsibility, and developing professional identity***

The decentralisation of in-service support to geographically defined District English Committees was the second powerful factor to contribute to the successful construction of an alternative subject English discourse. By the end of 1976, 28 district committees, involving 300 teacher leaders, had been established, funded by the Department of Education to extend the NESC's national in-service work to local sites. The Committees' work was supported by national meetings for regional teacher leaders until the end of 1978. Catherwood et al. (1990) and Interviewee A both argue that the success of the regional committees' work to naturalise the NESC's national discourse into local teacher consciousness, is reflected in the emergence of a collective professional identity for New Zealand English teachers, hitherto largely absent compared with other subjects. The regional NESC teacher committees evolved into the more formalised New Zealand Association of Teachers of English (NZATE), whose inaugural conference was held in Wellington in May 1981. The NZATE reinforced and helped embed the NESC language for learning discourse in its later curriculum work, because many of its members were earlier involved in the process of curriculum development in English during the National English Syllabus Committee Project (Catherwood et al., 1990, p. 196).

***Critical responses to discursive change***

The NESC work was not without its critics. Interviewee A regularly received critical correspondence from teacher conservatives who were contemptuous of the NESC

[9] In 1983, following the official mandating of the NESC *Statement of Aims*, the Department formalised the draft resources as a series of booklets distributed to schools, that initially concentrated on writing, reading and speaking and listening. Later booklets discussed the planning of language programmes and approaches to literature (Department of Education, 1983b, p. 3). Together these constituted the Department of Education's *Resource Book, English: Forms 3-5*.

position of English, not as content but as a subject of language learning processes. For example, the Canterbury English Teachers' Association (CETA) minutes record the regular and protracted debates between teachers, following a 1972 meeting addressed by Russell Aitken from the Department's Curriculum Development Unit. Aitken argued that, in accordance with the *Draft Statement of Aims* (Department of Education, 1972), language was "a medium for learning, not an object to be learnt" (cited in Fowler, 2005, p. 2). The debates continued to feature on the CETA agendas as late as 1976. Interviewee A described single sex boys' schools as the most critical of the NESC's work. Single sex girls' schools, in his view, were less strident whereas co-educational schools were largely supportive. Universities remained indifferent to the reforms because the NESC work did not include the University Entrance syllabus at Form 6 (Year 12). This was a reflection of the University Entrance Board's view that Forms 6 and 7 (Years 12 and 13) were preparation years for university study, whose curriculum programmes should remain under the control of the University Entrance Board.

However, a number of factors accorded the NESC reforms significant national legitimacy. First, the NESC project received sustained support at the highest levels of the Department of Education. Second, the persuasive biopower exercised by the strategically complex professional development programme began to non-coercively reconstitute teacher discourse from the ground up. Finally, teacher discontent with the consequences of the Thomas Report recommendations (Department of Education, 1944) had a catalytic effect on levels of engagement with this alternative approach. These three factors cumulatively blunted the rhetorical impact of conservative opponents. As the project grew in intensity, conservative discourses declined. A new discourse of English as learning through language gathered momentum to become hegemonically dominant. What started as an idea in the minds of senior Department of Education officials, then elaborated as a radical pedagogic discourse understood and shared by a small committee in the early 1970s, had by the mid-1980s matured and essentially naturalised itself as emerging teacher pedagogy. Importantly, the project established itself as an enduring influence on subsequent national curricula and the later Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) and adolescent literacy projects. In the following section, I trace the discursive legacy of the NESC work within the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) project, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF, Ministry

of Education, 1993), and national curriculum reforms between 1990 and 1997. I refer where appropriate to personal communication with Fran Edwards, a literacy adviser working at the time in Waikato secondary schools, delivering LAC (later retitled Learning through Language) professional development contracts on behalf of Waikato University School of Education's School Support Service.

**Section 2: The NESC's discursive legacy**

***Language Across the Curriculum***

The NESC reforms influenced approaches the Department of Education (after 1987, the Ministry of Education) took towards understanding learning and literacy as a multi-modal dynamic language experience. Language learning was viewed as being more than grammar and syntax; rather it was a vital key to unlock successful content instruction across the curriculum. Underpinned by the NESC language reforms, a language across the curriculum discourse gradually gathered discursive momentum as the NESC project concluded at the end of 1986.

Interviewee A increasingly regarded his work as a cross-curricular project. In his view, teachers across the curriculum needed to understand how language worked discursively in subjects, and students needed to learn how to purposefully comprehend and use a variety of language modalities for success. The Department of Education's initial 1972 draft and later 1983 official *Statement of Aims* set out this pedagogic approach in wider generic terms, advocating for schools to adopt cross-curricular 'School Language Policies' that would lever other subjects into language-centred classroom practices. In addition, regular and informal contact was maintained between NESC leaders and the Department of Education Curriculum Division's secondary subject leaders. Most were supportive of the project's ideas and concepts, and included language for learning statements in their curriculum documents (Interviewee A). However, the challenge remained to translate official support at national level into everyday cross-curricular classroom practice.

The impact of the NESC language work within the Department of Education and the Curriculum Division is evident in Tom Nicholson's research project report *Reading and*

*Learning in the Junior Secondary School* (Nicholson, 1987). Supported by Waikato University secondary school reading advisers, the project focused on the cross-curricular language barriers faced by Year 9 and 10 students. It was a response to concerns about the low reading comprehension skills of junior secondary students expressed since the early 1980s by school principals through letters to the press, and by primary reading advisers who had personal links into junior secondary teaching (Edwards, personal communication, 23 January 2013; Nicholson, 1987). The recommendations addendum to the Project's final report reproduces the NESC discourse of language and learning as oral and written communication, and reiterates the need for school policy language initiatives:

> All subject teachers have to take responsibility for ensuring that their students develop the necessary skills of reading, writing and discussion. … Although the research focussed on reading tasks, the links between students' discussion, teachers' explanations, writing, and reading are very clear. (Nicholson, 1987, n.p.)

Further, it recommended that policies should be established to organise in-service professional development to assist teachers to understand Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) and reading, to establish a representative "language and reading development group" (Nicholson, 1987, n.p.), and to raise the status of the school librarian's role. In Edwards' view, the NESC project and the English *Statement of Aims* (Department of Education, 1983a) "articulated and 'validated' [sic] what Nicholson's project was uncovering" (Edwards, personal communication, 23 January 2013). As a measure of its discursive impact, the NESC language philosophy conceptually underpinned Nicholson's advocacy of LAC, only three years after the former was mandated as the official English curriculum in Forms 3-5 (Years 9-11).

***The decline of LAC discursive strength***

The initial success of the NESC project to embed a reconceptualised understanding of English teaching and learning in secondary schools, along with the reproduction of this discourse in the LAC project, might suggest that this discourse had become embedded in secondary school policy and practice. While this might have been the policy ideal, during the 1980s, wider neo-liberal economic forces began to concurrently exert an

ideological influence over educational policy priorities and directions. The economic discursive orientation had two effects: first, Nicholson's (1987) report and its application in classrooms were ignored as new ideological priorities emerged, and second, NESC beliefs and values that underpinned its holistic learning through language philosophy were repudiated in favour of an individualistic, fragmented, outcomes-based English, and literacy, curriculum.

Despite the Nicholson (1987) report's strong advocacy of LAC, the project's findings and recommendations were largely forgotten as an evidential base for further national language across the curriculum policies. After 1987, Edwards argues the research papers, findings and the Nicholson report "sat gathering dust in the Ed. Dept [sic] for years" (personal communication, 23 January 2013). The project report's publication was the final act signalling the official end of the LAC project at a national level. Regional supporters for the LAC work (renamed Learning through Language) in the Waikato and Auckland University School Support Services tried to maintain the LAC momentum into the 1990s (Limbrick & Ladbrooke, 2002).

Increasingly powerful neo-liberal educational discourses began to redefine the Nicholson Report (1987) as something to be ignored, subjugated, or not worth considering (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 1993). Shearer (n.d.) argues that Labour and National governments' neo-liberal educational reforms between 1987 and 1997 focused on major administrative restructuring of school management systems. In his opinion, Treasury's neo-liberal, techno-rationalist curriculum restructuring policies took little account of policy issues that lay behind curriculum development and in particular the role of language for learning, or literacy, across the curriculum. Edwards (personal communication, 23 January 2013) suggests that the consolidation of post-1987 neo-liberal educational discourses within official state policies reduced the LAC work and any discursive leverage it may have possessed to change teacher practice, to a small number of enthusiastic northern regional School Support Services (SSS) centres whose managers artfully, and quietly, resourced the work. In other words, proponents of a more aggressive neo-liberal discourse neutralised concerns about curriculum and learning issues, such as adolescent literacy professional development, on the grounds

that they were inconsistent with, and ill-suited to, wider curriculum reforms and therefore able to be ignored.

A number of difficulties associated with traditional secondary school structures and beliefs also presented persistent barriers to the adoption of LAC approaches. May and Wright (2007) and Edwards (personal communication, 23 January 2013) both argue that the continued structural demarcation as subject curricula and senior school subject examinations, the privileging of content learning over pedagogic process, the enduring belief that students should already have the literacy skills, and the absence of pedagogic theory with which to make sense of suggested literacy practice, cumulatively led teachers to dismiss language across the curriculum as a useable, and useful, literacy pedagogy. In short, LAC failed to reach down into classrooms as an identifiable part of teacher practice (English, 2002). As Edwards concedes, the rhetorical effect of LAC outweighed its discursive strength, because "LAC was commonly heard, but only in a few schools was it evidenced in effective practice" (personal communication, 23 January 2013).

In Foucauldian terms, despite its endorsement in curriculum statements, teachers failed to embed LAC in secondary school classrooms as a naturalised instructional approach or pedagogy across the New Zealand secondary school sector. In the face of stronger and more complex neo-liberal economic discourses, the absence of sustainable longer term school-based implementation policies at practitioner levels, and the hegemonic strength of traditional discursive beliefs about siloed content-based subject teaching and learning in secondary schools, cumulatively undermined LAC as a dominant literacy pedagogic policy discourse capable of reorienting secondary teacher beliefs and practices towards cross-curricular language-centred instructional approaches.

***Resilient literacy discourses within neo-liberal curriculum reform***

Ironically, despite the decline of literacy discourses at national, regional, and classroom levels, official national curricula continued to reflect the LAC and NESC language learning imprint. Between 1992 and 1997, seven subject curricula were progressively published containing statements about the importance of language learning in content areas, using the NESC reforms' vocabulary and nomenclature.

Subject curricula other than English began to describe content area language learning as the skilled use of written, visual and oral modalities[10]. By the end of the 1990s, subject curricula, as forms of state policy and pedagogic beliefs and values, acknowledged the clear links between language, learning and knowledge building, introduced by the NESC reforms and reinforced in the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) approaches. The clear implication was that teachers should teach their students how to learn and communicate knowledge and information, using multi-modal language behaviours, adapted to a subject's particular discursive, or epistemological, requirements.

Of particular relevance is the 1994 English in the New Zealand Curriculum (ENZC, Ministry of Education, 1994) because of its dual role as a national subject and literacy curriculum. It was published following a discursively contentious and ideologically charged development and consultation process. Two earlier National Government education policies, the National Achievement Initiative (Ministry of Education, 1991) and the subsequent establishment of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), imposed a set of structural parameters that established clear achievement standards at eight levels that subdivided the years of compulsory schooling (Locke, n.d.). Each level had dedicated achievement objectives or descriptors of what students were expected to achieve at that level, fragmented across oral, written and visual language modes, in order to be fully language literate. Margaret Bendall (1994a), the English Curriculum draft co-ordinator, expressed her deep misgivings about working with this model that "none of us would have chosen" (p. 14), a neo-liberal model some considered to be "indefensible in educational terms, inimical to learning,

[10] For example, the science curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1995) required students to write using oral, visual, graphic, symbolic, diagrammatic, and modelling modes of communication to share and report scientific findings. In the social studies curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 51), students would learn "to communicate confidently and competently by listening, speaking, reading and writing, to analyse and respond to information in graphs, tables, charts or percentages, [and] to develop skills of discrimination and analysis in relation to media, and to aural and visual messages from other sources". The mathematics curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1992) acknowledged the particular language challenges of learning mathematics and the need for students to master the subject's language features: "Mathematics is a coherent, consistent, and growing body of concepts which makes use of specific language and skills to model, analyse, and interpret the world. Mathematics provides a means of communication which is powerful, concise, and unambiguous" (p. 7). The mathematics achievement aims included developing "the skills and confidence to use their [students'] own language, and the language of mathematics, to express mathematical ideas [and] the knowledge and skills to interpret written presentations of mathematics" (p. 9).

and merely supplies politicians with all the machinery for making simplistic judgements of the effectiveness of teachers and schools" (p. 14).

Despite these structural impediments, the 1994 iteration reproduced the NESC's language as learning conceptual framework and reinforced its underlying socially progressive philosophies (Bendall, 1994b). The primary role of the English curriculum was to develop students to become "fully literate in English as a language [where] students need to develop skills as readers, listeners and viewers, writers, speakers and presenters, because those are our skills" (Bendall, 1994b, p. 44).

The final published curriculum represented an uncomfortable compromise, if not tension, between two conflicting discourses about the role of literacy in society. One the one hand it substantially reproduced the humanistic values and holistic learning perspectives of the Bullock Report (Department of Education and Science, 1975) and the NESC's Statements of Aims (Department of Education, 1983a). On the other, its overarching ideological purpose was to partition and fragment into a prescribed techno-rationalist structure, how and what students should learn, how progress should be measured, and how achievement should be defined, in the service of the economy. This structure could also address perceived problems of teacher competence, and falling educational standards by calibrating teacher performance and curriculum accountability mechanisms to students' expected progress through the framework's eight levels of progression (H. Lee et al., 2004).

In doing so, it set the structural and achievement level precedents for the later development of New Zealand Ministry of Education national literacy assessment tools. For example, the New Zealand English Curriculum Exemplar Project (2001) (see http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/index_e.html), the English Assessment Resource Bank (see http://arb.nzcer.org.nz/searchenglish.php), the Literacy Learning Progressions (see http://www.literacyprogressions.tki.org.nz/) and the Literacy National Standards (see http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Reading-and-writing-standards) were built upon the neo-liberal discursive foundations of the 1994 English Curriculum. Its discursive legacy, as a measure of its enduring biopower, is apparent in the structure, nomenclature, language, and standards upon which a number

of national literacy assessment tools based their assessment methods, and diagnostic and reporting approaches.

**Conclusion**

During the years 1970 to 1985, the Department of Education initiated a series of curriculum reform projects that were driven by opposing ideologies. The NESC project (Forms 3-5/Years 9-11) from 1970 to 1983 radically reconceptualised English and literacy from canonical literature study and analysis, and of language as grammar, syntax and punctuation, to the exploration of language as a source of personal growth and as dynamically integrated multi-modal human behaviours. English teaching centred on the needs of the students and addressed their language learning in integrated and holistic ways in order to develop the fully literate citizen. The NESC progressivist language discourse conceptually validated the LAC professional development work, and was echoed in the NZCF-driven curriculum reforms of the first half of the 1990s.

Despite the presence of a learning through language discourse in curriculum documents, it is the NESC that successfully naturalised itself into teacher practice, due to the biopower effects implicit in the implementation work of the project. The LAC project, however, succumbed to wider, more aggressive and antagonistic neo-liberal educational and economic agendas, as well as systemic and structural obstacles that markedly reduced its importance and impact through the 1990s.

This is not to suggest that the NESC syllabus was left unscathed by the emergence of pervasive neo-liberal educational discourses. English underwent a second major reform in 1994, only 10 years after the mandating of the NESC Forms 3-5 syllabus. Like other subjects, English was reconstructed into eight levels, as an outcomes-based fragmented representation of neo-liberal education curriculum policy. Nevertheless it managed to retain the original NESC multi-modal language approaches, albeit substantially reconstituted. Further, the English curriculum, in its reformed 1994 iteration, continued its discursive role as the unofficial national literacy curriculum. In this role, its neo-liberal imprint was strengthened as it permeated and underpinned subsequent national literacy assessment tools used in primary and secondary schools, and became the basis of the National Literacy Project in 1999.

In the following chapter I continue my genealogical analysis of adolescent literacy policy and practice between 1999 and 2008. I analyse the complex discursive relationships between international educational and literacy policy agendas, between two iterations of adolescent literacy professional development projects, secondary school qualifications reform, and the ideologically motivated move to use literacy as an instrument to monitor, surveille, and measure teacher performance as a disciplinary technique ostensibly to raise student literacy progress and achievement.

# Chapter 6
# Neo-liberalism as a colonising discourse of adolescent literacy policy and practice

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analysed how socially liberal and progressive educational discourses underpinned the personal growth model and student-centred pedagogies adopted by the NESC reform project. NESC reformers had argued that language unlocked and nurtured the individual's potential for personal expression and growth, and enabled full engagement in the cultural and civic life of society. The reforms inextricably linked secondary school literacy, holistic assessment, personal growth, and well-being to broader nation building discourses that centred on an emerging New Zealand cultural identity, and collective social and economic progress.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, in the latter quarter of the twentieth century, neo-liberalism aggressively confronted long established Keynesian social progressive beliefs. In the years 1984 to 1999, complex and multi-dimensional neo-liberal reforms of New Zealand society reconstituted education and literacy, in particular, as skills to shape the individual as a micro-unit of human capital, able to compete in an entrepreneurial capitalist economy. Discourses of collective participation, national identity, and economic nationalism, gave way to those of competitive individualism, private wealth creation, and economic globalisation.

In this chapter, I continue my genealogical analysis of adolescent literacy discourses in New Zealand education during the period 1999 to 2008. The analysis is in two parts. First, I examine the complex relationship between international neo-liberal education policies, advocated by the OECD, and the adolescent literacy policies and practices of the Ministry of Education. I explore how OECD-mandated macro-economic neo-liberal discourses influenced and shaped the structures and requirements of adolescent literacy professional development projects. Second, I trace the discursive tensions apparent in the Ministry of Education's pedagogical understandings of adolescent literacy and the impact these had on the provision and direction taken by adolescent literacy project school advisers. My analysis draws on the perspectives of two literacy project

facilitators ('Interviewee B' and 'Interviewee C'), my experiences as a regional adolescent literacy project facilitator, and relevant primary and secondary documentation.

**Background ideological discourses**

The wider neo-liberal reforms of the 1990s ignited deeper anxieties about New Zealand secondary education's apparent inability to graduate students whose skills, especially literacy, were sufficient for continuous employment and further training, for contributing to economic prosperity, and for success as free market entrepreneurs (Olssen et al., 2004; Peters & Marshall, 2004). As I explained in Chapter 4, primary and secondary schools came under sustained criticism from media, employer representatives and business interests for allowing standards and achievement to fall, thereby endangering New Zealand's economic potential to compete in a globalising, competitive and capitalist economy (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010; Smith, 2000). As a consequence, the National Government initiated The New Zealand Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in October 1998, focusing on identifying desired literacy and numeracy outcomes, how individual and group progress towards them can be measured, and the identification of the best features of literacy pedagogy to support teacher practice (Alkema 2004; Ministry of Education, 2002a).

Despite favourable international comparisons with respect to literacy (Limbrick, 2000), a rhetoric of 'crisis' developed about low levels of literacy achievement, for which teachers, and their 'liberal' practices, were held responsible. Through the 1990s, there had been a concerted focus on raising standards of literacy achievement, which argued that answers lay in stipulating clear national student performance outcomes, national testing against curriculum norms, and more closely managing teachers' work, pedagogy, and professional development by introducing outputs-based performativity regimes and accountability processes (A-M. O'Neill, 2013). Drawing on the work of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and in particular the recommendations of its third and fourth educational mandates in the 1990s, domestic literacy policy started to discursively promote quantitative measurability alongside notions of teacher best practice, literacy as economic instrumentalism, and its expression within outcomes driven secondary school qualifications (H. Lee et al., 2004).

**The role of the OECD**

The wider policy responses implemented in New Zealand since 1990 had, in part, their discursive gestation in the work of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), an organisation whose espoused aim is to set future policy agendas for schools and universities of its member states. Importantly, CERI prioritises the collection and analysis of trans-national statistical data about education as a means of validating and advocating its policy agendas for implementation across member states (see http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/).

Despite the apparent neutrality of the language, CERI's aims mirror the OECD's commitment to neo-liberal capitalism, private entrepreneurialism, and economic globalisation. The OECD views education as pivotal to economic development because it generates the necessary human capital, as a private benefit, for the individual to compete in a deregulated, entrepreneurial market economy. Spring (1998) argues that literacy was an integral part of a wider, measurable performativity and accountability policy matrix designed to address the apparent inadequacy of schooling systems and their teachers to graduate students with the necessary forms of human capital. This included a focus on deriving education statistics from standardised international literacy testing. Statistical data contributes to global educational policy because it quantifiably relates adolescent literacy achievement (as a form of human capital) to school leavers graduating to employment, further learning and economic self-sufficiency, factors vital to producing desirable economic outcomes for social progress (Lingard, 2000).

**CERI, education mandates, and international literacy policy**

The policy architecture to support member states' neo-liberal educational reforms evolved, in part, out of a series of educational mandates confirmed and resourced by the OECD secretariat, and managed by CERI. The first and second mandates (1980-1985 and 1986-1991 respectively) adopted wide-ranging and at times vaguely defined policy research agendas. However, the agendas were considerably refined and sharpened in the work of the third and fourth mandates (1992-1996 and 1997-2001 respectively) whose work is particularly relevant. These mandates promoted international collaboration between OECD member countries in order to generate data from international literacy tests such as PISA, which in turn would inform transnational education policy

formation. As discussed in Chapter 4, literacy was an ideal vehicle by which these aims could be achieved. A key focus of CERI's third mandate was the reconceiving of literacy as universalised competencies that transcended regional or cultural constructions of text, curriculum and pedagogic practice and could be measured by international tests (Rychen & Salganik, 2003).

Since 2000, data has been gathered collaboratively from member and participating non-member countries'[11] 15 year olds using a standardised international literacy measurement tool, the Performance for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Telford & May, 2010). The OECD developed PISA as a suite of tests to measure reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. New Zealand was an early adopter. Since 2000, 15 year olds have participated in six international PISA literacy testing rounds, the data from which generate international rankings and comparisons, or 'proficiency levels'[12] with other OECD member countries. Lingard (2010) argues that gathering mathematical data to measure, monitor and assess the quality of schooling systems, and using competitive comparisons as a means to generate school improvement, are core neo-liberal discourses. This implies that teacher quality and schooling systems are inadequate, for which performance and surveillance regimes, competition between schools, and measurement are required antidotes. In Foucauldian terms, PISA constitutes a regulatory mechanism or disciplining technique of biopower, in that its data informs national education policy including national performance and accountability mechanisms. These in turn shape the practice of educational workers at local school levels. Thus national student literacy achievement data help discipline individual teacher subjectivity built upon national neo-liberal discursive formations that mature as common sense forms of governmentality.

CERI's fourth mandate explicitly linked globalisation and economic objectives to the purpose of education. Beginning in 1997, lifelong learning quickly emerged as a significant global discourse. It advocated that the individual should intentionally participate in a constant cycle of re- or new training in order to remain employable,

[11] In the 2009 OECD PISA testing round, for example, 65 countries participated of which 32 were non-OECD countries or economies.
[12] An example of how PISA results generate international league table rankings, or 'proficiency levels' can be seen on page 8 of the New Zealand 2009 PISA analysis (Telford & May, 2010).

adaptable, and resilient. Schools, and secondary schools in particular, were sites for nurturing these dispositions, now articulated as a micro version of human capital theory (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 2001, pp. 44, 50-53). This reinforced accountability discourses that teachers should be held to account for the quality of students who graduated to further academic or vocational training, or who entered the workforce. Within New Zealand, the rhetorical literacy crisis of the 1990s and the resultant decline in public confidence was the ideal pretext upon which to implant OECD achievement improvement discourses. The answer was to align adolescent literacy with neo-liberal belief systems: replicable literacy skills across multiple contexts, described as universal competencies embedded in the national curriculum (for example the NZC, Ministry of Education, 2007), reflected in credential reform towards standards-based assessment (NCEA is a case-in-point), measureable by mandated national and international testing tools (such as asTTle and PISA), which cumulatively act as regimes of school accountability and quality assurance. In other words, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new micro version of human capital theory, based in part on adolescent literacy as a universalised competency, was a significant conceptual driver and indicator for new accountability mechanisms to apply to national schooling systems and structures (Henry et al., 2001; Lingard, 2010; Moss, 2012).

In addition to an alternative micro articulation of human capital theory, vital for sustainable economic growth, CERI was positioning literacy as a universal and measureable performance indicator to respond to claims of low quality teaching and learning, and the demand to raise national educational outputs. By the end of the fourth mandate in 2001, CERI was advocating for national regulatory mechanisms (Alkema, 2004, p. 2) to generate and analyse achievement data to demonstrate shifts in student achievement. In New Zealand this was difficult because there was no single national Years 9 and 10 literacy testing tool such as a national examination, despite attempts in the latter half of the 1990s, particularly by the Education Review Office, to activate curriculum achievement objectives as national standards and robust national assessment against the New Zealand Curriculum Framework levels (A-M. O'Neill, 2013).

That notwithstanding, literacy testing began to be associated with evidencing quality teaching, linked to external accountability requirements. More deeply, quality assurance

regimes, evidenced by literacy standards achievement levels of 15 year olds, began to evolve as a disciplining form of governmentality in secondary schools, designed to reconstitute them as training regimes for entrepreneurial capitalism and as a necessary pre-condition for competitive global engagement.

In effect, literacy was being reshaped as a disciplinary instrument of neo-liberal governmentality. By 2000, neo-liberal policy began to colonise New Zealand literacy policy-making and school governance. As a form of biopower, these policies were driving a new economically grounded consensus about what, and for whom literacy was for, how student literacy performance should be described and measured, and why schools and teachers should be held accountable for that performance. As Henry et al. (2001, p. 53) argue, OECD discourses advocated a "new policy consensus, a consensus grounded in developing skills for a global, knowledge based economy, and new models of educational governance".

**Discourses of literacy, language, and assessment, 1999-2008**

The growing dominance of multiple neo-liberal literacy discourses at national and international levels, of a rhetoric of crisis that causally linked anxieties about future economic growth to current secondary school student literacy underachievement, and to doubts surrounding quality teacher practice, helped to generate a number of Ministry of Education literacy professional development initiatives in secondary schools (English, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2002a). These began with the Literacy Leadership Project in Years 9-13 in 2002 and ended with the final year of the second iteration of the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP) in 2011. This discursive analysis focuses on the first SLP iteration from 2006-2008.

The establishment of the Literacy Taskforce (Ministry of Education, 1999) was a key part of the National Government's response to national discourses of unease. Although the Taskforce focus was clearly on primary school and community literacy practice, some of its recommendations were adapted for secondary school settings. Between 2002 and 2005, three important strategic actions were initiated. Firstly, the Ministry of Education launched a literacy leadership project in 2002 that targeted secondary school principals. School Support Services (SSS) advisers and ex-principals delivered regional

literacy leadership workshops to secondary school principals and senior managers, supported by the *Literacy Leadership in New Zealand Schools Years 9-13* (Ministry of Education, 2002b) resource (English, 2002). Secondly, a number of one-year professional development projects were delivered through regional SSS offices between 2003 and 2005, under the title "Secondary School Literacy Initiative" (SSLI). I worked as an adviser in 2004 and 2005 in this project. Thirdly, in 2004, the Ministry of Education published the *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13: A Professional Learning Programme* (Ministry of Education, 2004) (ELS 9-13), which was an integrated resource package to support in-school professional development.

A working group of interested Ministry of Education officials was formed in 2001 to consider the implications of the task force report for secondary school literacy (Interviewee C; English, 2002). In the absence of an alternative theoretical pedagogy, the group adopted the NESC and later LAC conceptualisation of the 1990s, despite the latter's acknowledged failure to sustainably change teacher practices and beliefs (Edwards, personal communication, 23 January 2013; English, 2002). The ELS 9-13 (Ministry of Education, 2004) resource co-opted in-school LAC professional development approaches as its theoretical framework. Waikato and Auckland SSS advisers Fran Edwards, Sylvia Hill, and Ruth Penton's fifteen year old Learning Through Language professional development programmes was acknowledged as having contributed "significantly to the development of these materials" (Ministry of Education, 2004, Acknowledgements page). In other words, the ELS 9-13 resource package reinforced literacy learning as language strategy teaching and reproduced similar leadership and committee structures first advocated in the NESC's work in the early 1970s. As an adviser, armed with the full ELS 9-13 resource, I helped schools form cross-curricular literacy committees, led by a school literacy leader, and modelled strategies from the Teachers' Guide of the resource, arguing that subject content learning would naturally follow. Students were to practise language learning strategies to learn vocabulary, to prepare for reading, to read for deep understanding, to evaluate and record information, and to learn to write and communicate through texts (Ministry of Education, 2004, pp. 4, 14-15). I encouraged teachers to regularly try one or two from a bank of approximately 55 reading and writing strategies, categorised by purpose

and organised by chapter, from which teachers could purposefully select to help students engage with their subject's texts.

In discursive terms, these understandings had advanced little beyond New Zealand educators' adaptation of language and learning theorised initially by Bullock (Department of Education and Science, 1975) twenty five years earlier, adopted in the NESC reforms, mirrored in Nicholson's LAC research and project, and implemented by sympathetic adviser professionals in some regions of New Zealand. In the absence of an alternative conceptualisation, and despite the failure of LAC to embed itself discursively as norms of school policy and classroom teacher practice through the previous decade, NESC and more especially LAC literacy pedagogies continued as the theoretical construct upon which adolescent literacy was conceived and represented, until a significant discursive turn occurred in 2006. This was towards an understanding of adolescent literacy as pedagogic content knowledge that is constructed differently in different subjects, and for which students need knowledge and skills that generalisable language strategies were unable to provide.

## Multiple and competing discursive shifts

### *Reconceptualising LAC as disciplinary literacy*

The first iteration of the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP 2006-2008) evolved from the Secondary School Literacy Improvement (SSLI) project, and was again delivered regionally through university-based School Support Services. In early 2006, I was one of two Massey University SSS advisers responsible for the regional delivery of the SLP. I draw upon this experience, and those of my two interview subjects – two facilitators in the Project – to analyse the discursive shift away from an LAC informed conceptualisation. I locate the analysis of this shift within, and draw links with, wider powerful supranational discourses that exercised considerable influence over the shape and outcomes of the Project.

Informed by earlier secondary school literacy research (discussed in Chapter 4), and SSLI professional development work carried out in the early 2000s, Interviewees B and C concluded that generic literacy instruction from Years 1-8 was insufficient to meet the

literacy demands required for academic understandings and achievement within subject contexts at secondary school. In addition, literacy as language strategy instruction, with its reliance on strategy learning, seemed unable to address the unique discursive characteristics of subject texts, and appeared unintentionally reductive in its instructional effect[13]. The interviewees argued that this conceptualisation of literacy did not enhance teachers' literacy professional knowledge and skills as disciplinary literacy teachers. Rather, literacy was being reduced to a pick 'n mix practice – activities that teachers picked to mix into routine classroom work – as evidence they were 'doing literacy' (Interviewee C, and personal experience). In the absence of disciplinary Literacy Pedagogic Content Knowledge (LPCK), teachers and school literacy leaders were unable to understand the cognitive operations associated with deeper engagement with, and learning through, challenging disciplinary texts. Secondary school literacy, as it was discursively represented in professional development policies and resource documents to 2006, could not generate the disciplinary literacy professional knowledge necessary for teachers to make sense of the instructional skills and strategies they might apply in classes and to help students comprehend and use multiple forms of disciplinary texts. It seemed that a new binding theory was required to establish these pedagogical connections to enable teachers to validate the integration of these literacy instructional approaches into their practice, and help make sense of literacy in their subject areas.

The discursive shift entailed a move away from a British and Australian cross-curricular critical literacy language discourse based on generalisable strategies towards a concurrently emerging North American academic discourse of literacy as reading and writing located within content area classrooms (McDonald & Thornley, 2009), and grounded in disciplinary epistemological orthodoxy.

> In the United States, there was a strong emphasis on content area literacy, as opposed to Australia where the focus has remained on critical literacy. … So I think that the Ministry here, because of NCEA, took a view that you needed to be literate to be successful in the content areas. (Interviewee B)

[13] See also Shanahan and Shanahan (2008, pp. 43-46) for a succinct discussion on adolescent literacy learning as a model of advanced instruction and continuous progression.

American literacy researchers (Conley, 2012; Gunning, 2012; C. Lee & Spratley, 2010; Moje, 2006; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) theorise that this approach, variously labelled *disciplinary literacy*, *content area literacy*, *advanced literacy* and *academic literacy*, acknowledges the distinctive disciplinary epistemological structures that students must comprehend and use in order to achieve. These are hegemonic and validated literacies or epistemological conventions that C. Lee and Spratley (2010) describe as:

> … numerous academic concepts and modes of reasoning [for which] adolescents often need more sophisticated and specific kinds of literacy support for reading in content areas, or academic disciplines. [These advanced literacy skills extend to] … writing to explain ideas in ways that are consistent with norms of rhetoric and logic with each discipline, problem solving using the logistics of the disciplines [and] comprehending and composing digital media within the disciplines. (p. 2)

Students therefore need more complex skills to deal with the sophisticated and specialised literacy demands of subjects. This in turn requires teachers to explicitly teach text features and structures, language conventions, disciplinary norms of precision and accuracy, and higher level analytical and interpretive processes as they are instantiated in complex, unfamiliar, and challenging disciplinary texts (Jetton & Dole, 2004; Kilpin & Taylor, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

***Credential reform, and disciplinary adolescent literacy***

A second and influential factor in the discursive re-theorising of adolescent literacy policy was the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The fifth Labour Government elected in 1999 continued the previous National Party's reform of secondary school credentials. New NCEA achievement standards focused teachers on the thinking and literacy skills necessary for academic achievement in content areas (Interviewees B and C). Between 2002 and 2004, secondary teachers were introduced to an outcomes-driven, standards-based assessment regime, constructed as discrete and measureable units of knowledge[14]. From a literacy perspective, teachers

[14] A succinct history of the origins, development and implementation of NCEA is available at http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/understanding-ncea/history-of-ncea/

were confronted with conventional subject achievement standards whose achievement criteria, and exemplar support materials, emphasised the explicit application of progressively challenging cognitive understandings to content area information.

Academic literacy, conceived as cognitively demanding reading and writing skills, and knowledge of how these were discursively constructed in discipline areas, began to dominate NCEA teachers' professional discourse (personal experience, 2004-2007). There were substantial academic and practitioner misgivings, and outright opposition from higher decile schools, to the NCEA reforms (H. Lee et al., 2004). However, continued support for the NCEA roll-out from the Ministry of Education and PPTA (H. Lee et al., 2004) meant that most subject teachers were faced with revising their instructional approaches, and enhancing their pedagogic knowledge, in order to teach their students the required higher order thinking skills applied to subject content knowledge. These understandings would be evidenced explicitly and almost entirely in their written responses to their subjects' internal and external NCEA achievement standards.

In two articles, one from 2002 predating the introduction of NCEA and the other in 2005, McDonald and Thornley analysed the important features of this evolving discourse of content area literacy, directly contextualised within the new NCEA credential environment. In their initial 2002 article, they analysed the extent to which required higher order thinking skills, and students' low levels of literacy independence, constituted barriers to academic success in senior high school levels:

> Recent national assessments at year eight (Flockton & Crooks, 2000) and PISA results at Year 11 (May 2001) suggest that significant numbers of students in New Zealand schools experience difficulty in making inferences from text without visual support. Further, these students also find dealing with ambiguities, evaluating text, locating, combining and sequencing information, and making high level inferences problematic. (McDonald & Thornley, 2002, p. 55)

After three years of NCEA Level 1 examinations, McDonald and Thornley's (2005) analysis of NCEA Level 1 achievement standards revealed that students were required

to undertake complex reading tasks and to present their findings in various ways, capabilities that "remained elusive for many who lacked the more complex skills required to explain, analyse, compare or evaluate" (pp. 10-11). They argued that literacy demands were different across different disciplines, and therefore texts, task demands, and required skills also differed across secondary school subjects, making essential the instruction of advanced literacy skills, differentiated by disciplinary instructional contexts. Moreover, they advocated that literacy instruction for NCEA success should begin in Year 9 in all subjects, supported by a literacy curriculum, with a focus on professional development for teachers on the advanced literacy skills implicit in their content areas.

***Adolescent literacy learning as academic achievement***

The new NCEA credential environment provided the relevant, practical context within which an adolescent literacy discursive formation could take hold. The formation explicitly associated deeper thinking with reading and writing, contextualised within the different epistemological constructs of senior disciplinary studies. It implied that students had to be able to think about text at literal and inferential levels, as inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. They also had to work within and to emulate in writing their discipline's discursive patterns in order to validate their learning of content knowledge (C. Lee & Spratley, 2010).

Further, this approach highlighted the position of the teacher as the disciplinary literacy expert. They were the person most qualified to teach their students the ways of disciplinary knowing and thinking, through purposeful and deep engagement with disciplinary texts, facilitated by strategically planned literacy-centred instruction. Strategies were re-defined as forms of behaviours readers intuitively applied to problem-solve in a variety of ways with multiple text types, to make meaning from text (McDonald & Thornley, 2002). While this did not repudiate the LAC strategy approach, the discursive turn took literacy learning beyond teacher selected language activities, to literacy as an advanced form of disciplinary knowledge and skills, as necessary to teach as content knowledge itself (C. Lee & Spratley, 2010; McDonald & Thornley, 2005). It was these capacities, as disciplinary literacy content knowledge, that would help

develop confident, independent students capable of learning from complex, unfamiliar, and demanding disciplinary texts.

***NCEA as OECD accountability and performance frameworks***

The NCEA achievement standard structure is also discursively linked to, and representative of, wider background neo-liberal OECD policy development objectives from CERI's third and fourth mandate. The partition of subjects into discrete stand-alone achievement standards, each individually assessable using their own criteria with their own credit value (Locke, 2004b), and calibrated against levels of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), emerged as the first nationally mandated common test of content knowledge learning and the underlying adolescent literacy skills (Alkema, 2004). It readily lent itself to the quantitative measurement of student achievement outcomes by standard: that is, who passed what standards with what achievement grades, at student, school and national cohort levels. By 2004, NCEA began to emerge as one of two indirect national measures of academic and disciplinary literacy achievement (Alkema, 2004, p. 7) - the only other being PISA - that was relevant to 15-18 year old adolescents in the secondary school sector.

Reflecting OECD/CERI mandate directions, NCEA achievement data became an important quantitative instrument of quality assurance, used to identify concerns about teacher or school inadequacy, the need for performance improvement, and as an instrument to promote schooling in an increasingly competitive market. It is ideologically symptomatic of a wider neo-liberal ideological response to the discursive rhetoric of inadequate teacher performance, the need for quantitative and therefore scientifically 'objective' national tools to measure teacher effectiveness, and the use of achievement data as a form of teacher accountability (Locke, 2004b).

***School improvement, raising teacher quality, and national assessment***

The analysis of student achievement data, and its centrality to successive governments' literacy improvement policies, inevitably emerged as a third key feature of the discursive shift in secondary or adolescent literacy discourses. In the 1990s, the primary sector had been subjected to a series of curriculum and assessment reforms involving a relentless drive towards institutionalising measurement practices for literacy and

numeracy, the effect of which was to reshape teacher identity and practice (A-M. O'Neill, 2013; J. O'Neill, 2005a, 2005b). By comparison, the secondary sector was subjected to less intense forms of reconstruction, as the qualifications system in Years 11-13 and traditional subject-based school structures continued to shield secondary schools from literacy assessment as forms of accountability and performativity discourses. It was the credentials themselves, rather than literacy achievement, that came under scrutiny.

Secondary schools' historical inexperience with gathering and analysing achievement data to track student – and teacher – performance gradually became apparent. Concerns about the inconsistent and at times ill-informed collection and use of student achievement data were regularly heard through 1990s. In response, the Ministry of Education established a number of assessment initiatives, public consultations, and published booklets for distribution to all schools[15] (Alkema, 2004).

At the same time, the Education Review Office (ERO) was actively establishing a broader assessment discourse advocating the use of curriculum levels, assessment objectives, learning outcomes, and levelling skills and knowledge against curriculum level achievement outcomes. ERO considered that the absence of NZCF referenced national literacy testing tools was a significant impediment to generating rigorous data. It argued for the development of standardised tools and forms of national testing (A-M. O'Neill, 2013). A consistent theme of teacher ineptitude and professional deficiency was explicit in this discourse (Marshall, 2009). Teachers were inept at collecting valid curricular and cross-curricular assessment information, and at undertaking meaningful analysis of data against the NZCF levels and specific curriculum achievement objectives, in order to drive and evidence improved student achievement. A-M. O'Neill (2013) argues that the perceived lack of reliable teacher professional expertise became a deliberate pretext for accelerating the development of national testing tools. Her argument is supported by Alkema's (2004) announcement heralding the imminent introduction of two new national literacy testing tools available for teacher use. The first was the Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle), described as diagnostic

[15] These included explanatory statements to support the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), the Assessment Policy to Practice (1994), The Green Paper: Assessment for Success in Primary Schools (1998) and Information for Better Learning (1999).

tools for assessing literacy and numeracy in English and Te Reo Māori for teachers of students in Years 5-10. The second was the New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars, a cross-curricular representation of "authentic students' work, richly annotated to illustrate learning, achievement and quality in relation to the levels in the national curriculum statements" (Alkema, 2004, p. 15). As explained in the previous chapter, the English curriculum exemplars were based on the 1994 English curriculum's concept of literacy as skilled multi-modal English language proficiency. As such, they exemplified literacy learning progressions, achievement, and quality for all students in Years 1-10.

Despite the introduction of new assessment tools that schools could voluntarily use, there was still no single mandated national test to generate national literacy achievement data in Years 9-13, let alone Years 9-10, where no qualification was in place. Many secondary schools used the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) for diagnostic literacy data at the beginning of each school year (Limbrick & Ladbrooke, 2002). Other tests such as Supplementary Tests for Assessment of Reading (STAR) for Years 7-9, the Essential Skills Assessment (ESA) suite of tests (Years 9 and 10), and early iterations of asTTle were also used. However, none adequately captured the complex matrix of students' literacy skills and knowledge in subject classrooms (Interviewee B). There was little standardised national consistency between tools, and the tools that were being used emphasised generic reading comprehension approaches and equated literacy with instruction in English classes (Interviewee B; McDonald & Thornley, 2009).

***Professional development: Global agendas, national policy, and regional practice***

The policy imperative was nonetheless clear. Professional development contracts let to School Support Services (SSS) required their advisers to challenge teachers' beliefs and expectations, which involved the "gathering, analysis, and use of high quality assessment data at the classroom level, and links to externally referenced benchmarks (Alkema, 2004, p. 12; Centre for Educational Development[16], 2005/2006). But with historically little experience in the collection, use and analysis of achievement data, secondary schools began to collect too much data, that was inadequately or inappropriately analysed, or was used to stream classes (Whitehead, May, & Wright,

[16] The Centre for Educational Development (CED) is the regional School Support Services Advisory unit of Massey University's former College (now Institute) of Education.

2004). Without a reliable and relevant secondary sector national data tool, regional SSS literacy facilitators in the Secondary Literacy Project (SLP) (2006-2008) were using a variety of different language comprehension tools to generate disciplinary literacy diagnostic information.

International comparative testing of primary and secondary students using PIRLS, TIMSS, and PISA[17] filled the void and exerted considerable policy influence. In the secondary sector, PISA evaluation seemed to deliver what national testing tools had yet to accomplish – statistically reliable literacy data that measured shifts in achievement against national (and international) norms, disaggregated and profiled for ethnicity, gender, skill, task type as well as socio-cultural information within which the data could be contextualised. Moreover, it benchmarked New Zealand's performance internationally with a large number of other first world or emerging economies.

Interviewees B and C identified the potential for PISA's tasks to underpin teacher professional development. It could inform teachers' LPCK, and help diagnostically to identify gaps in student literacy skills and knowledge. In their view, PISA was a means to identify not only "the presence of an under-achieving group, but [identified] a need to focus on what these kids can actually do and how easy would it be to teach them some new stuff" (Interviewee B).

However, this view began to diverge from that of Ministry of Education officials involved in the Project. Interviewees B and C felt that Ministry officials were keenly interested in PISA as a model for profiling improving national student literacy outcomes. They were keen to apply similar data analysis approaches to demonstrate the effectiveness of national professional development initiatives. These narrowing discourses of statistical instrumentalism started a discursive shift away from PISA as information to enhance teacher knowledge, to testing as a means to generate quantitative evidence of enhanced teacher quality and performance, demonstrated by improved student literacy achievement. Interviewee B felt that the indifference to PISA's instructional and formative assessment value represented a "missed

[17] PIRLS: Programme in International Reading Literacy Study.
TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.
PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.

opportunity" to develop the test's potential as a valuable diagnostic and pedagogic literacy tool. A growing outcomes-based accountability culture used data to measure contractual performance and it discursively framed effective professional development, and the value-for-money of public spending, as contractual quality assurance regimes (Lingard, 2010).

The Ministry of Education's Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP) was a case in point. The apparent success of the LPDP, especially the second iteration of the project (2006-2007), came increasingly to be viewed as the ideal model of literacy professional development (Interviewee C). This reflected a resurgence of a traditional and resilient discourse within the Ministry of Education of primary schools as the more appropriate location for effective literacy teaching. Problems that were identified by the SLP in secondary schools could be addressed in terms of improved practice in primary schools. Despite its initial adoption, in the face of a resurgent primary school literacy focus, disciplinary LPCK failed to take root as the dominant discursive formation underpinning the Ministry's adolescent literacy strategic planning (Interviewee C).

The LPDP model focused explicitly on evidence of outcomes, which included data to show improved student achievement, measured by asTTle reading and writing tests as the singular tool of choice, and through positive shifts in teacher LPCK and classroom practice. Assessment data recorded student achievement gains at higher than expected norms, especially for the lowest performing students (Timperley & Parr, 2009, p. 145). Such results were linked to increased teacher professional capability, as teachers transferred newly learnt literacy pedagogic knowledge and skills to classroom practice. The LPDP was regarded as highly effective because it generated quantitative evidence that successfully realised wider Ministry of Education policy goals of raising literacy achievement of New Zealand students, especially for under achieving students (Timperley & Parr, 2009, p. 149). Further, deeper discursive beliefs about teacher ineptitude as the core issue, seemed to be confirmed by data analysis that linked shifts in student achievement to the Project's intensive focus on managerially enhancing teacher capability and performance. Moreover, this was achievable at primary school which could 'vaccinate' students from any future literacy issues they might face at secondary school (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

By comparison the SLP was problematic. The LPDP success reinforced dominant primary school views of literacy instruction, which gradually de-prioritised the importance of adolescent literacy professional development. Interviewee C argues that this was one of a number of factors that contributed to the SLP's gradual discursive decline. Other factors were firstly that "No-one was around to hold on to the knowledge" (Interviewee C), because, despite initial enthusiasm for a disciplinary literacy approach (Interviewees B and C), constant changes in personnel attached to the project prevented adolescent literacy knowledge from embedding itself as institutional common sense and intellectual capital. Secondly, in Interviewee C's view, evaluation of the SLP contract was confused. The Ministry of Education pressured the Project to use asTTle, as the singular tool to generate standardised and aggregated national data, as the LPDP had. There was little national consistency with respect to which literacy tests were being used to collect achievement data within the various SSS regions and the Project was not in a position to insist on fealty to one assessment tool. Yet ironically the SLP was increasingly required to generate its own data, particularly in the latter 18 months, to show the effectiveness of its work in schools. In other words, compared with the LPDP, the SLP seemed unable to generate acceptably robust and reliable achievement data, using a single national standardised tool, to evidence the attainment of policy outcomes in the Project. Finally, Interviewee C suggests that in an environment dominated by the discursive entrenchment of historical primary school literacy paradigms (discussed in Chapter 3), understanding adolescent literacy in multiple disciplinary forms was regarded as simply too complex, a view he claims was exacerbated by on-going contractual tensions. Consequently, Ministry officials reverted to what they were familiar with and understood as literacy theory and practice, and how professional development could enhance it, in ways that directly met government policy goals and intentions.

By 2008, Interviewee C felt that the Ministry of Education had lost interest. Multiple factors cumulatively resulted in the decline of the SLP and adolescent literacy as a sustainable and naturalistic discourse of educational improvement and professional pedagogic growth in secondary schools. These included the hegemonic dominance of primary literacy instruction discourses and a corresponding lack of a holistic coherent theory about adolescent literacy to discursively underpin policy structures. This was in

part attributable to the absence of institutional knowledge and support due to Ministry personnel unfamiliar with the project revolving through SLP co-ordination roles. Finally, as a 'data-as-quality assurance' view took hold, coupled with difficulties experienced around the use of a nationally standardised assessment tool, the SLP was increasingly seen as unable to realise the ambitions of government policy as articulated in the contract's objectives and performance indicators.

**Conclusion**

The genesis of a discourse of adolescent literacy emerged out of the socially liberal and pedagogically radical reforms of the NESC project. The NESC had successfully reformed the discursive structures of subject English and had contributed to a wider understanding of the role of language in learning at secondary levels. This understanding supported the subsequent emergence of literacy as Language Across the Curriculum. However, unlike the NESC project, LAC failed to normalise itself as a pedagogic practice in teachers' work. Despite the enthusiastic efforts of SSS advisers and managers, it declined as a discursive force through the 1990s.

Simultaneously, international neo-liberal concepts of literacy as a form of economic instrumentalism and as a form of human capital necessary for global economic integration continued their hegemonic rise. During the 1990s, the OECD began to develop policy frameworks, conceptual understandings and ideologically based arguments that reconstructed literacy as a micro form of human capital, vital to the individual's lifelong learning potential and long term self-sufficiency. Literacy was the common currency that transcended political, geographical, and cultural idiosyncracies. Literacy data from PISA emerged as an important measure of the comparative effectiveness of education systems, schools and teachers to prepare students as self-sufficient private entrepreneurs able to compete in a globalising world economy.

Within New Zealand during the 1990s, the then National Government's response to a loss of confidence in the schooling system's ability to educate students for employment, further training, and academic study was the establishment of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (1997), of which the later components – SSLI (2003-2005) and SLP (2006-2008) – were focused on adolescent literacy professional development. The

SSLI, with no alternative pedagogic discourse available, resurrected the LAC approach to adolescent literacy learning, and wrapped them around the professional development resources published in 2004 to support the Initiative. However, the advocacy of a disciplinary or subject-based literacy discourse from 2006 rapidly reconceptualised professional development as the Secondary Literacy Project. The introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement in 2002 provided the catalyst for high levels of teacher interest and Ministry of Education officials initially welcomed its alternative pedagogic emphasis.

However, neo-liberal performativity and accountability discourses began to exert their influence. Echoing earlier misgivings about the potential (mis)use of the 1994 English curriculum, literacy data was re-conceived as evidence to validate contractual performance, measure performativity, and to report the successful realisation of government policy objectives. Given the particular devolved nature of the SLP professional development contract, adhering to accountability demands modelled in the differently constructed LPDP contract became increasingly problematic. In other words, the pedagogic and conceptual foci appear to have been significantly curtailed through the latter stages of the SLP. As data collection and analysis issues deepened, its discursive influence on Ministry of Education resource provisioning, and as a naturalising discourse for sustaining adolescent literacy as a long term policy commitment, began a gradual process of decline or *Herkunft*. In its place arose resurgent discourses of primary literacy education on the back of the apparent relative success of the LPDP, contextualised within neo-liberal ideological assumptions and regimes that were successfully colonising Ministry of Education approaches to literacy policy formation.

# Chapter 7
# A genealogical overview and evaluation

## Introduction

This thesis has sought to analyse the interplay of historical discourses about adolescent literacy in New Zealand education between 1870 and 2008, within a Foucauldian analytical framework of discourses as ascendant and descending truth knowledge regimes, technologies of biopower, and techniques of non-coercive discipline.

I have explored the material nature and historical oscillations of adolescent (or secondary school) literacy discourses within New Zealand education between 1870 and 2008. My research was framed by three research questions or 'streams' I set in Chapter 1. The first of these involved an analysis of the underlying historical beliefs and truths that have driven the direction of adolescent literacy education *within* New Zealand. Evolving and at times contentious knowledge-truth structures have competed for hegemonic governmentality over what literacy is, who and what it is for, and how it should be taught and learned. They reflect wider ideological perceptions of the instrumental role literacy plays as a driver of particular educational practices and structures. In turn, these perceptions reflect deeper beliefs about the State's role in shaping and evolving the national functions of primary and secondary education and, importantly, the subjective construction of teachers' professional identities within their schools.

The second stream analysed the material influences international discourses have exercised on domestic New Zealand adolescent literacy. Despite our geographic isolation, a complex matrix of overlapping and competing international social and economic discourses have exercised considerable influence over New Zealand adolescent literacy policies, pedagogy and practice. These have included truth generating discourses of colonial, class-based social conservatism, collectivist social democracy and social justice, classical and neo-liberalism economics and, more recently, economic globalisation. In particular, the progress in technological capability since the 1970s has given non-governmental organisations, such as the OECD, the strategic capacity to instrumentalise adolescent literacy as a technology of biopower that

transcends political borders, and to frame the educational policies of nation states. The OECD now exercises considerable global influence over the formation of national literacy policy models, and to promote to positions of dominance, the discursive formations that underpin them (Lingard, 2010; Moss, 2012). Adolescent literacy is emerging as a powerful process of governmentality.

The third stream of inquiry focused on the emergence of two contrasting approaches to adolescent literacy education in New Zealand between the years 1970 and 2008. The National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) and Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) projects were founded on socially progressive ideas and beliefs that were starkly at odds with a later neo-liberal, economic policy ensemble that shaped the Secondary School Literacy Initiative (SSLI) and Secondary Literacy Project (SLP). These projects are the material convergence points of multiple, competing, international and domestic, historical and contemporary adolescent literacy discourses.

**The genealogical narrative**

In this final chapter, I evaluate the influence of the historical interaction between these streams of inquiry on the development of adolescent literacy policy and practice in New Zealand. Reflecting the chronological sequence of my analysis in Chapters 3-6, I analyse why certain discourses, and not others, rose to dominate national approaches to adolescent literacy instruction as naturalistic, common sense knowledge and beliefs. I explore why these knowledge orthodoxies resiliently withstood challenges to their taken-for-granted truths, while the power of others declined as the influence of new discourses, or knowledge-power formations, grew to dominate cultural spaces. Or in Foucauldian terms, the chapter discusses how competing, period-specific, knowledge-truth systems about adolescent literacy acted as techniques and technologies of biopower, and processes of governmentality, to shape the subjective identities of individuals, and the truths and knowledge of groups and populations.

My analysis argues that the epistemic *a priori*, or foundational epistemological principle (explained in Chapter 2), of New Zealand adolescent literacy discourses can be explained by the discursive hegemony of post-Enlightenment scientific rationalism. It is a deeply embedded and enduring Enlightenment discourse that claims to be the

instrument of progress and rationalisation in all areas of human affairs (Lefstein, 2005). Applied to education, it underpins influential historical and contemporary discourses of educational management, literacy pedagogic theory, assessment and measurement, teacher effectiveness, and curriculum design, of which current neo-liberal policy ensembles are its most recent manifestation. The thesis has argued that scientific rationalism has been hegemonically threaded through discursive structures of adolescent literacy and practitioner identity in the period covered in this study, regardless of the contextual materiality of the time. To write a genealogical narrative of adolescent literacy in New Zealand between 1870 and 2008, then, is to trace the multiple ways that scientific rationalism has been a resilient technology of biopower and a naturalistic, taken-for-granted, process of governmentality in adolescent literacy discourses.

**Adolescent literacy paradigms in New Zealand, 1870-1935**

The years between the 1877 Education Act and the election of a reformist Labour Government in 1935 were dominated by a discursive alliance of classical liberal economics and Anglo-centric social conservatism. As I have argued in Chapter 3, literacy was an essential political instrument for reproducing and consolidating the primacy of colonial Anglo-centric socio-cultural beliefs and truths. These discourses argued that national progress required the maintenance of class structures and the control of social mobility. They provided the necessary social stability to develop a skilled yet compliant labour force, for the colony's classically liberal market economy. The rural and productive elites who constituted the colony's political class were therefore ideally positioned to generate, manage and implement social and educational policy that served their own dominant economic interests (Harker, 1990; Openshaw et al., 1993).

Conservative political leaders faced a serious dilemma. They were concerned by the threat uneducated youth posed to the country's moral fabric and social stability and to their ability to increase their own wealth. This was compounded by the potential for social disharmony of a generation sufficiently well-educated to challenge the established social order. Yet without improved educational provision, the creation of conditions to meet immigrants' aspirations for individual advancement and wealth creation, within a developing national economy, would be compromised. As I explained

in Chapter 3, the answer partly lay in the careful and cautious management of national education policy and provision, with a particular emphasis on literacy development in primary schools and the retention of the private provision of secondary and tertiary education that was restricted mainly to those socio-economic elites who could afford to pay the fees.

Prime Minister Richard Seddon's 1903 Secondary School Education is a discursive case-in-point. The Certificate of Proficiency was introduced as a national threshold even though the majority of students continued to leave school in Standards 4 or 5 (H. Lee. personal communication, October 2013) The qualification was designed to draft primary school leavers into manual labour or trades roles, and to identify those few who went on to secondary and tertiary education. The latter were typically those of the politically influential – urban mercantile middle classes or the rural wealthy – whose relative wealth and cultural capital gave them a clear competitive advantage, and reinforced their class-based social position.

Technical high schools were established in 1905 to train working class students to satisfy the labour demands of factory-based production. American efficiency discourses and behavioural theories of learning, all claiming the validation of scientific reason, supported these policy beliefs. Individuals, as units of production, were to be trained in appropriate institutions to reliably perform prescribed skills and tasks to optimise forms of production (H. Lee et al., 2004). By extension literacy education should therefore be sufficient only to prepare students for these worker roles, become economically self-sufficient, diligent, and reliable, and importantly to persuade them to accept these conditions as naturalistic, common-sensical, requisites for their own socio-economic well-being.

There was little opposition or popular outcry against these cautious legislative measures. Rather than being a technology of deeper social reform, the provision of schools and education access reinforced the existing socio-economic order as a mechanism for rationing opportunities for individual, economic advancement, and social improvement. Achievement did not challenge the existing social order; rather it was intrinsically dependent on it, because it was characterised as promotion within a

class system that reproduced the desirable, conservative socio-economic traditions of Imperial England.

From a Foucauldian perspective the policy and provision of education, particularly literacy skills implemented by political elites, was a potent technology of biopower. In the years after 1903, the Certificate of Proficiency discursively positioned literacy as a national threshold or standard for the individual to cross at the end of their compulsory primary school years. It was to be measured by standards testing each year and achieving that threshold shaped individual long-term identities as worker, tradesman, professional, or academic. Such identities were congruent with, and reinforced the country's dominant class structures and the political power of its economic elites. These discourses reflexively linked to a wider rhetoric of education that argued for conditions of social stability and cultural continuity as prerequisites for long-term nation building. Further, this rhetoric of order was vindicated by international efficiency discourses that scientifically rationalised approaches to labour and production, social organisation, and schooling systems. Reactions to these cautious educational reforms were limited to arguments of provision, accessibility, and expectations. That these did not challenge any underlying discursive economic and social beliefs, raise questions about their narrow instrumental rationality, nor challenge the existing social order, are a measure of the hegemonic dominance, or pervasive governmentality, that this complex discursive formation exercised in New Zealand society in the years 1870 to 1935.

**Watershed changes and discursive turns in New Zealand, 1935-1970**

The Great Depression (1929-1935) and the Second World War (1939-1945) represented a discursive watershed for literacy education generally in two ways: the first involved a series of political changes, and the second focused on the epistemological breaks with turn-of-the-century literacy learning discourses.

A series of reformist legislative acts, national reports, revised syllabi and examination systems were implemented between 1935 and 1946. The reforms represented a shift towards socially liberal, and educationally progressive discourses that emerged within broader Keynesian beliefs, that advocated the active and direct involvement of the State in nation building. They ushered in compulsory public secondary schooling until 15

years of age, set out new secondary school national subject syllabi and examination prescriptions, and established the subject specific School Certificate examination system, with English as the literacy skills benchmark. The secondary school fifth form (Year11) School Certificate examination replaced the generalised Standard 6 (Form 2/Year 8) Certificate of Proficiency as the national graduating standard for entry into the workforce or further academic study at senior secondary school.

In the tumultuous aftermath of the Second World War, with a focus on national reconstruction, national literacy teaching became a public education priority. The watershed break displaced earlier classical liberal discourses and class-based ideas of social stability with a Keynesian view of the State as a redistributive agency, directly involved in the equitable national provisioning and development of education in the service of collective nation building and economic development. Even so, the new redistributive consensus discursively positioned literacy as an instrument for nurturing the individual's skills or human capital necessary for contributing to this social democratic framing of post-war economic and social progress (Clark, 2005; McKenzie, 1992; Soler, 2000).

The application of scientific inquiry methodologies to learning and human behaviour heralded the second watershed change in post-war literacy education, especially in primary schools. In Chapter 3, I explained the epistemological shift about what literacy was and how and by whom it should be delivered. Mirroring positivist notions of knowledge construction, literacy education was characterised as individualised, skills-based, cognitively active processes, a view that contradicted earlier colonial discourses of English and literacy learning as the replication of imperial British language use, the study of British texts, and behaviourist theories of learning. Secondary schools though, as subject-based institutions, were to continue teaching English as the study of mainly British canonical texts and the accurate application of the rules of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation. By osmosis, students would naturally improve their generic adolescent literacy skills (Aitken, 1976; Catherwood et al., 1990).

The secondary syllabus reforms of the late 1940s entrenched these divergent roles. Scientifically developed, cognitive understandings of literacy learning consolidated

literacy instruction as a primary school practice. This reinforced perceptions of secondary school teachers' roles as subject content teachers, for whom the literacy learning should already have been completed. Secondary school teachers, including those who taught English, felt neither trained nor inclined to address literacy achievement issues. The discursive split cemented itself as systemic understandings of English as literary and language study separate from literacy as a scientifically constructed, linear process of skill and strategy acquisition to read, write, and comprehend text.

Importantly, these developments confirmed assumptions and beliefs about who was responsible for what role, and these became deeply embedded in the professional identities of teachers in each sector. In Chapter 3 I explained how the notion of secondary school as a site for dedicated literacy instruction to extend those skills taught in primary and intermediate years gained little discursive traction, and was restricted to remedial contexts that duplicated primary school instructional approaches. As I argued in Chapter 6, it wasn't until the late 1990s that neo-liberal international economic discourses began to direct New Zealand educational policy makers' attention to adolescent literacy pedagogies, and the relative levels of New Zealand secondary school student achievement against international norms. In particular, national and international literacy testing exposed low literacy achievement levels of Māori and Pasifika students that in turn generated wider, rhetorical concerns about declining educational standards and literacy skills and the risks posed to capitalist economic and social progress.

**The Keynesian reconstruction of adolescent literacy, 1970-1990**

Instrumentalist beliefs about literacy education adapted to the new Keynesian welfare consensus imperatives of the post-war years. Rather than being an instrument of self-interested economic management and social control by wealthy elites, literacy was reconceived as a social democratic instrument of economic regeneration and national revitalisation, framed as equality of opportunity for individuals guaranteed by equitable distribution of educational provision. Within the Keynesian redistributive state, high national literacy levels, accessible through free compulsory primary and secondary

education, were to nurture individual advancement unrestricted by class or geography, and to develop new forms of social cohesion and national identity.

In addition literacy as an instrument of social democratic, economic development was enhanced by the national introduction into primary school classrooms of progressivist teaching methods and, later, scientifically measureable literacy instruction. Scientific literacy testing broke the colonial, class-based hold of mastery of the Queen's English as the dominant discourse of the country's approach to literacy instruction (Soler, 2000). This approach was adopted by secondary schools but was reconstructed as remedial instruction of students failed by their primary schools, or as skills taught through literature and language instruction in English classrooms.

The National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) reforms implemented between 1970 and 1983 represented the culmination of the social democratic, language focused educational discourses that had gathered strength after the Second World War. The NESC reforms advocated a radical discursive reconstruction of language and literacy teaching in New Zealand secondary school English classrooms. As argued in Chapter 5, the NESC drew upon the progressive, child-centred Anglo-American discourses of the centrality of language learning to individual growth, enhancing community cohesion, and contributing to an independent national identity. Set out as a Forms 3-5 English syllabus, it challenged discourses of compliance to residual colonial orthodoxies, of technocratic teaching to the School Certificate examination, and of delivering standardised schemes of learning across all classes. Rather, it advocated that the teacher be given the professional freedom to involve their students in child-centred, flexible, formatively assessed programmes that reflected the emerging complexities of contemporary New Zealand society.

The significance of the NESC in a genealogical analysis of adolescent literacy policy and practice is threefold. Firstly, there were deep structural complementarities between influential international educational discourses, increased teacher activism against practices and beliefs about English teaching dating from the Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944), and the prominence of wider ideals about social justice and democracy implicit in the Keynesian social contract. These converged to

quickly establish the efficacy of the NESC syllabus project in the minds of a majority of English teachers. These structural convergences, and an extended and inclusive professional development programme through the 1970s, successfully acted as technologies of reflexive biopower that consensually reshaped secondary English teachers' subjective identities as teachers of the National English Syllabus Committee Draft and final Statement of Aims (Department of Education, 1972, 1983a). Further, despite later neo-liberal changes, its discursive strength influenced the smaller scale Literacy-across-the Curriculum project, and is apparent in the reformed curriculum documents of the 1990s and the current 2007 New Zealand Curriculum and English Learning Area. Significantly, the NESC was a powerful catalyst for institutionalising the professional identity of New Zealand English teachers in the form of their national organisation, the New Zealand Association of Teachers of English (NZATE) (Catherwood et al., 1990).

The second point of significance lies in the NESC's attempt to articulate what the term literacy meant in secondary school settings. Multi-modal language learning in all secondary subjects was about learning with and through language, because modes of language instantiated forms of academic content knowledge and were the very skills students needed for academic achievement across the curriculum. This discourse challenged the post-war dominance of literacy teaching as a primary school responsibility. Ironically, its identity as an English syllabus, rather than a secondary school literacy syllabus, and its ready adoption by English teachers, confirmed for non-English teachers that the responsibility for literacy for all subjects continued to reside with English teachers and the programmes of the English Department. Nonetheless, the NESC, and to a limited extent, the later Language across the Curriculum (LAC) project, introduced secondary school teachers to cross-curricular literacy and stamped a discursively resilient foot print onto later reconceptions of subject curricula, adolescent literacy policy, and teacher professional development.

That said, the NESC syllabus's successful challenge to traditionalist teaching discourses was largely confined to secondary English teachers and teaching in Forms 3-5, and to the logical addition of an alternative, more suitable internally assessed School Certificate English examination. That a similar approach, the LAC Project, had minimal

effect on non-English teachers, suggests that existing discourses of subject content teaching, measured by prescribed examination and taught accordingly, continued to exert its governmental hold over teacher identity. Secondary education continued its instrumentalist role as the site for nationally examined subject-based teaching, and as a national 'drafting' model for students to enter manual labour, vocational work, professional studies or academic careers (Edwards, personal communication, 23 January 2013; May & Wright, 2007).

Thirdly, as a genealogical presence, the NESC project represents the culmination of socially liberal, progressive pedagogic discourses applied to a conventional secondary school subject area. Ironically it is also the final Keynesian curricular challenge to the discursive rise of scientifically premised economic rationalist beliefs as the basis for curriculum design and programme formation. Where the latter advocates partitioning and compartmentalising knowledge artefacts, the NESC advocated a holistic, integrated, and eclectic approach to knowledge building; where rationalisation encourages scientific forms of standardisation and compliance, the NESC encouraged teacher independence and child-centred, flexible, and responsive programme planning; and where instrumentalist approaches required quantitative assessment to measure student achievement and teacher effectiveness, the NESC encouraged naturalistic, formative assessment and internal assessment of state examinations. It was a pedagogic model that focused on human growth and potential that implicitly rejected teaching as a technocratic practice, referenced against scientifically pre-determined, decontextualised, and standardised achievement norms; approaches that would quickly dominate discourses of curriculum design from 1990 onwards.

The NESC Statement of Aims (Department of Education, 1983a) was signed off as the official English curriculum in 1984, the same year that David Lange's Labour Party was swept to power. In a deeply paradoxical move, they began to dismantle the Keynesian social consensus, the values of which had influenced the discursive shape of the newly legislated English syllabus as a multi-modal language-as-learning literacy curriculum. The subordination of the NESC syllabus, and the burial of the LAC in the face of market-led neo-liberal economic reforms of education, starkly exposed the basic ideological tensions around the purpose of education.

**International and domestic neo-liberal influences**

The discussion thus far has argued that New Zealand literacy education between 1870 and the mid-1980s may be characterised as a contentious, multi-discursive landscape in which proponents of classical liberal economics, colonialism, and efficiency theories of social organisation, competed with social liberal, progressivist and holistic discourses for dominance of policy, pedagogy and teacher practice. These centred on broader tensions about the purpose of *schooling* as preparation for the workforce and an *education* for academic and civic leadership. Notwithstanding a brief but inspired challenge by the NESC English syllabus reforms driven by conceptions of teacher professionalism, what underpinned this complex discursive matrix was a common epistemic *a priori*: the hegemonic belief, as a self-evident or common-sense truth, that science and its rationalist mode of reasoning is fundamental to all forms of human progress. In the 1990s, neo-liberal economic rationalist reforms of education were the context in which the hegemonic dominance of scientific reason was unambiguously demonstrated.

After the 1984 election, the Labour Government's neo-liberal economic policy rose to colonise discursive spaces wherein it confronted and subjugated the Keynesian social democratic discourses of the previous forty years. Neo-liberal rhetoric accused public schooling systems of systemic ineffectiveness and inefficiency, and of being ill-equipped to prepare students for work in the new global capitalist world order. Against a background of rapid national economic dislocation and social upheaval, the rhetoric repudiated apparently unsuccessful Keynesian welfare policies, for which the only alternative was the enhanced 'scientific' management of the economy. Principles of economic rationalism, in the form of corporate business practices and the creation of a quasi-market, were applied to educational administration, curriculum design and purpose, and teacher practice (Codd, 1993; G. Lee et al., 2004; A-M. O'Neill, 2004; Peters & Marshall, 2004).

Economic rationalist reforms of education were already underway in countries such as England and the United States. Organisations such as the OECD were encouraging Western education systems to apply local forms of the same process. This involved a radical free market rationalisation, underpinned by corporate principles of

organisational efficiency, productivity improvement, and enhanced accountability using regulatory regimes to monitor levels of school and teacher performance within, and compliance to, this new educational order. Moreover, schools should be exposed to market forces of parental choice and competition for students. In addition to state forms of regulation, the market would be a disciplining technology of compliance as well as a driver of educational excellence, because the market would identify the best and worst performing schools, for which consumers would make the appropriate choices (Peters & Marshall, 2004). New Zealand's neo-liberal reforms started in earnest in 1987 with structural reforms of school governance and management, and intensified after the 1990 election when the new National Government focused on curriculum reform, school and teacher accountability regimes, and the development of national assessment and measurement resources.

As argued in Chapters 4 and 6, many of New Zealand's neo-liberal educational reforms were adapted from policy development work of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), whose remit was to actively promote educational models of neo-liberal economic policy as important instruments for the expansion of global capitalism. New Zealand's educational policy models closely followed OECD/CERI mandate recommendations to marketise schooling and to inculcate values of competitive individualism, private enterprise, and entrepreneurialism in the public schooling culture.

Literacy achievement, especially of adolescent 15 year olds, was at the instrumentalist core of these policy ambitions, and reflected the CERI economic model. At its simplest, literacy was a set of functional skills for employment, retraining and economic self-sufficiency. In more advanced forms, it was essential for higher education and the creation of technologically skilled, flexible, adaptable, and competitive entrepreneurs whose aggregated individual contributions would generate desirable forms of social progress. In other words, literacy was no longer an instrument to nurture the Keynesian principles of human capital as an instrument for participatory citizenship, and for developing collective social cohesion, critical democratic sensibilities, and a national economic identity. Rather, human capital was reconstituted as a private good, as the skills and dispositions, or competencies, the atomised individual required to compete

over the course of their lives in the enterprise society and globalising markets. Adolescent literacy discourses have been reconstituted as forms of national economic capital, owned and required by all individuals for successful engagement with the global capitalist economy. In other words, literacy was discursively promoted as essential to the successful corporatisation of society, itself a pre-requisite for successful national integration into the global economy (Henry et al., 2001). In Foucauldian terms, adolescent literacy began to serve wider discourses of market-led national economic progress and the irresistible move towards capitalist economic globalisation.

The principles of scientific rationalism offered the theoretical framework within which global policy mechanisms could develop to realise these ideological ambitions at the local (New Zealand) level. Neo-liberal proponents argued that economic rationalist reforms that promoted corporate business practice would improve the perceived systemic inefficiencies of the Keynesian distributive, centrally administered model. The reform of curriculum, qualifications and teacher practice, initiated after 1990, was the second and more comprehensive restructuring project. Earlier iterations of primary and secondary English and literacy syllabi were displaced by the implementation of the 1994 English Curriculum. This curriculum explicitly represented the discursive application of scientific rationalism, adapted for the promotion of a neo-liberal economic order in New Zealand.

Literacy learning and teaching within a national English Curriculum were reconceptualised as technocratic tasks. The process of national standardisation and benchmarking was an important pre-requisite of the long-term neo-liberal education project. In the absence of a dedicated national literacy curriculum and national literacy testing, the partitioned design of the English Curriculum offered a structure with which to quantitatively describe and track student literacy achievement, and to compare school and teacher performance in the educational market place. Under the rhetorical guise of improving student achievement by addressing problems of teacher effectiveness and improving educational efficiencies, two important technocratic thresholds were established: first, literacy structured within the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) and articulated in the English Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994) was a national instrument of micro human capital development,

required for active participation in the competitive enterprise culture. Second, the documents' structure permitted teacher and school performance to be regularly measured and monitored. In other words, curriculum reform became a valuable accountability technology with which to surveille and regulate educational performance in the service of the neo-liberal economy. In both respects, the New Zealand educational reforms mirrored the broader OECD's economic rationalist policy models, and in particular CERI's theorising of the role of education and literacy as drivers of globalising neo-liberal capitalism (Carpenter et al., 2012; Lam, 2001; Locke, 2004b).

**Neo-liberalism and New Zealand adolescent literacy discourses, 1990-2008**

In Chapter 6, I explored how the relationship between New Zealand's education policy reforms and OECD policy models gradually grew closer through the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. I also explained how the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) standardised the structure and design for all seven revised curriculum documents published and gazetted by the end of 1997, and set the design for later literacy resource development for primary and secondary schools (G. Lee et al., 2004).

A very significant factor in the relationship was, and continues to be, New Zealand's involvement in PISA international testing. The development of international literacy and numeracy testing were key objectives of CERI's third (1992-1996) and fourth (1997-2001) mandates. In Chapter 5, I argued that our consistent involvement in PISA testing cycles is significant for three reasons: it remedies the absence of a dedicated national test of 15 year old New Zealanders' literacy skills near the end of their compulsory schooling years; it provides a model of how the complex statistical analysis of achievement data can inform the development of adolescent literacy instruction, and lever changes to wider educational policy; and finally, as an international testing cycle, it tracks and compares shifts in New Zealand adolescent literacy achievement with a large number of other first and second world economies, on which the neo-liberal state can base judgements about the performance and effectiveness of teachers and schooling systems within and beyond New Zealand's borders (Moss, 2012).

The absence of a nationally standardised literacy test was highlighted as problematic in the mid-1990s. Business and employment groups, parent representative groups, conservative university academics, and sympathetic media mounted a vigorous rhetorical campaign claiming schools were graduating adolescents with poor literacy skills (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010; Smith, 2000). Teacher ineptitude, the lack of quality control and discipline that national testing could provide, systemic rigidity and ineffectiveness, and an archaic qualifications system, were blamed. In the absence of scientifically valid, locally originated quantifiable evidence upon which to base reasoned debate, the rhetoric caused considerable national angst, especially about the economic damage and lack of global competitiveness New Zealand would suffer in the longer term. The rhetoric argued that teachers and the schooling system were failing to give New Zealand adolescent students sufficient private human capital to contribute to national economic prosperity, notwithstanding the on-going market-led education reform programme. Shaken by popular unrest and the potential for a crisis of confidence, the National Government directly intervened in the school market. It intensified literacy policy initiatives, professional development and resource production in primary and secondary schools from the late 1990s onwards (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010; Smith, 2000).

The policy decision to intensify state intervention in neo-liberal education markets stems from the need to maintain neo-liberal levels of governmentality over education discourses. The apparent contradiction of this interventionist act has its discursive explanation in the logic of scientific rationalism. If scientific rationalism is the *a priori* episteme that advances human affairs, and contemporary neo-liberal reforms epitomise its economic rationalist approach to education, then a more-of-the-same policy approach is the only rational, indeed discursively logical response available. Rather than seek an alternative paradigmatic approach, the problem was the incompleteness of the reform project to date, not the contradictions or inadequacies of its underlying assumptions or policies. Hence, from the beginning of the 2000s, neo-liberal managerialist and accountability discourses that had driven the development of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) and the English Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994) now emerged from the centre as numerous curriculum improvement initiatives. As a consequence, literacy policy intensified the presence of

neo-liberal economic rationalist ideas within adolescent literacy in-service professional development, literacy resource development, and credential change.

The OECD's regular analysis of New Zealand PISA results validated for policy makers the potential benefits a single assessment tool could generate for nationally measuring and evaluating statistical student achievement data. Earlier curriculum standardisation reforms and accountability and regulatory mechanisms meant the measurement and assessment frameworks were already in place. Consequently, discourses underpinning literacy professional development, policy regulatory changes to school management and governance requirements, and the Education Review Office (ERO) school monitoring protocols, continued to advocate the regular gathering and quantitative analysis of secondary school student achievement data. Despite schools' and literacy advisers' inexperience with data analysis, and the absence of a national literacy testing tool, Ministry of Education policy began to direct schools to statistically analyse and report student literacy progress and achievement. The attempt in the mid-2000s to develop asTTle as a nationally normed literacy test, calibrated to the NZCF Levels 1-6 in the English curriculum, as well as adaptations of older literacy tests (e.g. the New Zealand Council for Educational Research's (NZCER) Progressive Achievement Tests), attests to the importance government policy placed upon the centralised national testing of primary and secondary school students. National literacy achievement data now acts as a powerful technology of school and teacher accountability, and more broadly is a measurement of national systemic effectiveness and a component part of a process of governmentality. In Foucauldian terms, international student literacy achievement data is instrumentalised as a technology of bio-power in that it shapes, reproduces and disciplines teacher identity, and the compliance of schooling systems and structures, to wider neo-liberal economic policy discourses within New Zealand's national education system.

The rise, or *Entstehung*, of a measurement discourse reached into national professional development policy and national contracts. Earlier professional development contracts had given school adviser practice a wide remit to tailor and respond to multiple school and teacher demands. However, the new managerialist environment prioritised and applied short term, value-for-money performance and accountability perspectives to

teacher professional development that aimed to improve student literacy achievement. These perspectives steadily reconstituted professional development contracts as shorter term business relationships characterised by rationale statements, multi-layered performance indicators, declared outcomes and outputs, and favoured forms of quantifiable evidence to demonstrate them. Contracts became adviser performance and accountability techniques which reduced the levels of professional autonomy implicit in earlier contracts. Quantitative reporting methods were used to demonstrate the achievement of contractual outcomes. Consequently increased importance was placed on testing students and analysing achievement data, and on quantitatively describing shifts in participating teachers' practice to validate adviser performance, and importantly to confirm that contractual outputs, as representations of government policy, had been successfully realised.

Genealogically, adolescent literacy professional development contracts are material artefacts of the neo-liberal beliefs and truths implicit in state literacy policies since the mid-2000s. Designed in accordance with notions of economic rationalism, the contracts represent a discursive rejection of professional learning as a dynamic reflexive process in favour of a commodity model that is finite, linear, prescribed, and quantitatively measureable against key outputs and outcomes. Thus, secondary literacy professional development contracts became a material point of convergence for an ensemble of neo-liberal policy techniques of regulation and surveillance. In Foucauldian terms, the literacy contract became a potent disciplining technology of adviser and teacher labour, as it focused their efforts on realising contractual outputs through quantitative measurement of student achievement, the analysis of which evidenced the performance qualities of advisers' professional development work to shift teacher adolescent literacy discourses.

The Secondary Literacy Project (SLP) contract (2006-2008) exemplifies the strength of the shift towards this measurability culture within adolescent literacy professional development. In its three-year life, the SLP was increasingly subjected to demands for standardised quantitative data in its written milestone and annual reports. This was despite the national co-ordination team being contractually required to work through the already established structures of university-based school support services (SSS)

contracts to reach into participating schools. Literacy advisers' work continued to reflect their regional practices, for which there was no agreed nationally standardised approach or tool to quantitatively assess the successful realisation of contract outcomes.

By contrast, the Literacy Professional Development Project (LPDP) was a much tighter contractual arrangement. The Ministry of Education had one contractor who directly employed their literacy advisers for the Project, a prescribed and finite programme to deliver, and a single measurement tool aligned to the LPDP's policy outputs, outcomes, and performance indicators. Within the context of an intensifying corporate approach to contract delivery, where efficiency, effectiveness and productivity gains dominated the contract structure and outputs, the LPDP began to discursively dominate Ministry of Education views about the exemplary features of cost effective, high impact, short term models of literacy professional development. In other words, the contract structure, its delivery mechanisms and its outputs were synchronously aligned for success, unlike the Secondary Literacy Project, which by comparison appeared expensive, unwieldy, and beyond disciplining accountabilities. Simply put, the Ministry of Education believed that the Literacy Professional Development Project represented better all-round value-for-money.

The epistemological consequences of this discursive struggle were considerable. Firstly, the apparent success of the Literacy Professional Development Project, compared to that of the Secondary Literacy Project, reasserted deeper historical beliefs about the role of primary and secondary schools in literacy education. Primary schools were the more appropriate site for literacy instruction whereas secondary schools remained best suited for subject content instruction, vocational and employment preparation and as the site for teaching national qualifications.

Secondly, the early epistemological gains made by the Secondary Literacy Project, partly driven by NCEA reforms, were eroded by a rotation of Ministry of Education personnel whose expertise and experience were within Year 1-8 primary school settings. In the absence of deeper theoretical understandings about why adolescent disciplinary literacy instruction could advance students' discipline or content area learning beyond Year 8, literacy education moved back to what was discursively familiar primary school

territory. In other words, primary schools were known epistemological and systemic entities that were better understood by Ministry officials with strong prior knowledge of primary school literacy learning. Secondary schools, disciplinary literacy learning and adolescent literacy generally were too unfamiliar, and their multi-subject teaching structures made literacy professional development too complex and potentially ineffective. In any case, NCEA English, much like School Certificate English before it, was available as the de facto standard for measuring literacy achievement at the end of three years of secondary schooling.

As Chapter 5 showed, adolescent literacy subject content instruction began to decline as a national pedagogic discourse by the end of 2008. Instead, in a shift reproducing earlier historical discourses, primary schools once again were seen as the natural location of literacy instruction, while secondary schools continued to teach individual subjects and the NCEA. Discourses of national standards-based literacy instruction for primary schools were beginning to dominate literacy policy in New Zealand education in 2008, a move that continues to strengthen the hegemony of scientific rationalism as the *a priori* episteme that historically underpins and continues to shape New Zealand literacy discourses despite its retreat at the secondary school level.

**Conclusion**

Adolescent literacy has been my nascent interest since the late 1990s and grew quickly into a professional focus once I became employed as a Literacy and English Adviser to secondary schools in 2004. That position, my earlier teaching experience, and the opportunity for postgraduate study fortuitously combined to give me the research opportunity to explore my own evolving professional interests and beliefs about education, literacy, and learning. A thesis was an opportunity to research the evolving position of adolescent literacy within the wider discursive history of New Zealand education. In particular I wanted explore, in the context of my own professional locations and experiences, why adolescent literacy rose to dominate, albeit briefly, secondary school discourses of teacher pedagogy, practice, and identity.

When I first wrote my thesis proposal, I held a number of ‘naïve’ assumptions about what literacy and its national provision were for. I am of the Keynesian generation,

educated within a primary and secondary school system that adhered to social democratic ideals of wealth redistribution, and access to quality schooling and educational opportunities irrespective of income or location. My Sixth Form University Entrance qualification paid for my university tuition fees, I was accepted for a Division C studentship for university study, and I met any further costs through readily available holiday employment. I attended Christchurch Teachers' College and then repaid the State in kind, in the form of a three-year teaching bond. I taught NESC English from 1979 onwards, ranging across the subject's opportunities. I cherished a 'truth' of New Zealand's social liberal democracy as expressions of deeper altruistic and progressive values of education, the worthiness of the individual and of the collective, and the virtues of an egalitarian society. Literacy was for enlightened and critical participation in civic society, for understanding the world and the human condition through an appreciation of literature, and for the benefits thoughtful and effective communication bring to socio-cultural cohesion. My proposal was an opportunity to explore the backstory behind these assumptions and the milestone moments I recounted in Chapter 1. Further, I wanted to understand what lay behind the creeping erosion of my professional autonomy as a teacher to educate the students in my classes, and to practise responsively as a Literacy Adviser to secondary schools.

My research has debunked many of these naïve and long cherished assumptions. At one level, adolescent literacy education may continue to aspire to social and aesthetic ideals. But I had certainly not reckoned on writing about literacy as a discursive expression of the hegemonic strength of scientific rationalism; as technologies of social control, surveillance and accountability; as technocratic instruments for maintaining socio-economic interests and beliefs; or more latterly as a model and mechanism for global educational policy making. Literacy is now powerfully bounded and shaped as a private good, an instrument of global capital and of the neo-liberal state, and as a surveillance technology for measuring teacher compliance to 'best' instructional practices. It is an outcome of prescribed national standards, qualifications, and international literacy testing regimes. Literacy has become a quantitative indicator of school effectiveness and teacher quality, within a context of market competition, league tables, and rhetorical anxieties that link teacher ineptitude, literacy underachievement, and economic failure.

The unfolding back-story of literacy, neo-liberalism and globalisation has given me a deeper understanding and theoretical knowledge about the symbolic importance of those milestone events in Chapter 1. Foucauldian ideas of biopower, governmentality and discourses as knowledge-power relations, along with the Gramscian concept of hegemony provided the analytical toolkit I have used to understand how a neo-liberal ensemble of economic and socio-political discourses have reconstructed the roles of schools, teachers, and the schooling system. This ensemble has markedly reduced teacher autonomy and reoriented teacher practice towards externally imposed managerial policies and regulation. I know now why that 1997 school ERO report was able to exert an irresistible influence on my work as HOD and senior manager in a secondary school, why it rejected my earlier experience of NESC teaching, and why the culture of measurement, and international literacy policy frameworks so compellingly shaped my work as an adviser.

A little over 500 years ago in 1597, Sir Francis Bacon argued that knowledge constituted a form of personal power. After completing the first full draft of this thesis it was hard to resist the conclusion that, rather than empowering me, my research had only succeeded in more roundly articulating why and how economic managerialist discourses of compliance, performativity and accountability now shape and manage and disempower me in my work. Knowing seemed insufficient to challenge the hegemonic dominance of neo-liberal educational discourses in New Zealand education, a dominance so totalising that there seemed no space left for communitarian, professionalist discourses of teacher practice and education policy. Where and how could such critique, challenge and advocacy for change take place?

I cannot however finish on so pessimistic a note. My thesis has explained why and how and with what effect international and national discourses of the Left and the Right, of classical, social and neo-liberal hues, have clashed for hegemonic dominance in New Zealand adolescent literacy education. Olssen et al. (2004) explain that Foucauldian analysis ironically becomes a form of social critique and change, once we ignore the global dimensions of discourses this thesis has explored, because to oppose them at these levels is futile. Rather than feel disempowered or overwhelmed by the global and totalising nature of current neo-liberal educational discourses, Foucault encourages us to

expose the local character of governmentality processes in the daily lives of teachers, literacy advisers and school managers. Critique, he argues, focuses on reactivating the local knowledges and experiences of these people and their groups that have been subjugated, relegated to obscurity, or deemed inadequate or poorly elaborated. Or to put it another way, a global genealogical understanding of adolescent literacy discourses empowers the individual to critique the everyday and the practical in local contexts. It is at these levels, Foucault reminds us, that critique has the potential to activate previously buried or ignored truths and knowledges about the socio-cultural benefits of adolescent literacy, so that they might re-emerge to centre stage to 'jolt' and 'surprise' communities into transformative action. That, it seems to me, is a sufficiently reassuring and optimistic note upon which to end this thesis.

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# Appendix 1: Massey University Human Ethics Committee notification

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

16 October 2012

Ken Kilpin
[redacted]

Dear Ken

**Re: Adolescent Literacy: A Discursive Analysis of Policy Approaches to Literacy Teaching and Learning in New Zealand Secondary Schools**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 3 October 2012.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

> *"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

J. O'Neill

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and**
**Director (Research Ethics)**

cc Prof Howard Lee
School of Educational Studies
**PN900**

Ms Anne-Marie O'Neill
School of Educational Studies
**PN900**

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
Graduate School of Education
**PN900**

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

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# Appendix 2: Oral interviews project information sheet

## *Adolescent Literacy:*
## *A discursive policy analysis of literacy teaching and learning in New Zealand secondary schools.*

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### Researcher(s) Introduction

My name is Mr. Ken Kilpin. The project, of which this interview is a part, is a research thesis for my Masters in Education (M.Ed) at Massey University's College of Education. The purpose for the project is to research the underlying ideas that have driven New Zealand's education policies in relation to adolescent literacy instruction in our secondary schools.

#### Project Description and Invitation

The research project is an historical overview. It analyses the dominant ideas which have shaped policy making at particular times with respect to literacy instruction in New Zealand secondary schools. These ideas are considered within the wider context of neo-liberal economics, globalisation, and the internationalisation of literacy policy, influences that have emerged since the mid-1970s.

I extend an invitation to you to participate in this research project. Your participation is in the form of a semi-structured interview – that is, an interview guided by leading questions, and which includes supplementary questions that arise in the course of our dialogue.

#### Participant Identification and Recruitment

Deleted to maintain anonymity of interviewee.

#### Project Procedures

The interview uses a semi-structured process that combines prepared written questions and supplementary questions that further inform or clarify initial responses.
As the interviewee, you:

- have received a copy of the prepared written questions prior to the interview (PDF)
- have received a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (PDF)
- are reminded of your right to withdraw consent to participate in the process
- are willing to participate in an audio recording of the interview,
- have received a Participant Consent Form – Individual agreeing to be recorded (PDF)

You are asked to assign the Participant Consent form – Individual and return it digitally or in hard copy.
After the interview, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw or edit your comments.
The procedure is scheduled to take between 60 and 90 minutes.

## Data Management

a) The data gained in the interview will contribute to the broader research goals of the thesis project, of analysing the discursive tensions around adolescent literacy policy.

b) The data will be copied from a Dictaphone to the researcher's computer for digital storage, and the original recordings will be kept securely in the researcher's home.

c) The data will be disposed of after five years i.e. November 2017

d) An executive summary, or full copy, of the thesis, in digital or paper copy form, will be offered to you upon completion of the project.

e) Given the small number of interviewees, I acknowledge that your contribution to my research may potentially lead to your identity being inferred within the educational policy community, and may potentially cause you unintended harm. As much as possible, your anonymity will be safeguarded by:

- using general descriptors and/or attribution phrases.
- providing an opportunity, subsequent to the interview, for you to edit the audio recording of your comments. This will allow you to reflectively consider what you wish to be used "on record', after which I will ask you to sign an approval form to use your comments.
- sending you a list of the quotations I plan to use in my thesis report, so that you can check I have accurately reproduced your comments.
- sending you parts of my narrative in which your comments are used, to check that I have accurately understood their intended meaning.

In these ways, the process seeks to minimise the chances of identification and any consequent unintended harmful effects.

## Participant's Rights

Please read these rights carefully.
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study interview at any time
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

## Project Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact me or one of the supervisors. Contact details are:


Mr. Ken Kilpin
[redacted]
k.g.kilpin@massey.ac.nz

Prof. Howard Lee
School of Educational Studies
College of Education
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Palmerston North
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## Compulsory Statements

1. **LOW RISK NOTIFICATIONS**
   **The following statement is compulsory and MUST be included:**

   "This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

   If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

**Ken Kilpin**

**Researcher**

# Appendix 3: Written interview project information sheet

## *Adolescent Literacy:*
## *A discursive policy analysis of literacy teaching and learning in New Zealand secondary schools.*

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### Researcher(s) Introduction

My name is Mr. Ken Kilpin. The project is a research thesis for my Masters in Education (M.Ed) at Massey University's Institute of Education. The purpose for the project is to research the underlying ideas that have driven New Zealand's education policies in relation to adolescent literacy instruction in our secondary schools.

#### Project Description and Invitation

The research project is an historical overview. It analyses the dominant ideas which have shaped policy making at particular times with respect to literacy instruction in New Zealand secondary schools. These ideas are considered within the wider context of neo-liberal economics, globalisation, and the internationalisation of literacy policy, influences that have emerged since the mid-1970s.

I extend an invitation to you to participate in this research project. Your participation is in the form of a set of questions for you to answer in writing.

#### Participant Identification and Recruitment

Deleted to maintain interviewee's anonymity,

#### Project Procedures

In this package you:

- have received a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (PDF)
- are reminded of your right to withdraw consent to participate in the process
- are willing to participate by responding in writing to the questions supplied (as a Word document),
- have received a Participant Consent Form – Individual agreeing to participate (PDF)

You are asked to assign the Participant Consent form – Individual and return it digitally or in hard copy.

## Data Management

a) The data gained your answers will contribute to the broader research goals of the thesis project, of analysing the discursive tensions around adolescent literacy policy.

b) The data will sit in the researcher's computer for digital storage, and a copy will be kept securely in the researcher's home files.

c) The data will be disposed of after five years i.e. November 2017

d) An executive summary, or full copy, of the thesis, in digital or paper copy form, will be offered to you upon completion of the project.

e) If you do not wish to be identified by name your anonymity will be safeguarded, as much as possible, by:

- using general descriptors and/or attribution phrases.
- providing a subsequent opportunity for you to edit your comments. This will allow you to reflectively consider what you wish to be used "on record'
- sending you a list of the quotations I plan to use in my thesis report, so that you can check I have accurately reproduced your comments.
- sending you parts of my narrative in which your comments are used, to check that I have accurately understood their intended meaning.

In these ways, the process seeks to minimise the chances of identification and any consequent unintended harmful effects.

## Participant's Rights

Please read these rights carefully.
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from responding at any time
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used **unless you give permission to the researcher**;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

**Project Contacts**

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact me or one of the supervisors. Contact details are:


Mr. Ken Kilpin
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## Compulsory Statements

**2.** **LOW RISK NOTIFICATIONS**

**The following statement is compulsory and MUST be included:**

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

**Ken Kilpin**

**Researcher**

# Appendix 4: Oral interviewees consent form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 www.massey.ac.nz

# Appendix 5: Written interviewee consent form

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet provided and understand the intent of the research. I understand that I am not obligated to respond to the supplied questions, and can withdraw my agreement to participate at any time. I am able to seek clarification about questions at any time.

1. I have read the information sheet and agree/do not agree to participate in this study

2. I consent/do not consent to my name being referenced in the body text and in the reference list.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name – printed** .....