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‘Changing Agendas in Teacher Education’

## Re-viewing the Place of Children’s Literature in Teacher Eductaion Programs

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*Abstract*

Given the changing nature of texts and the shifting emphasis in educational policy, it seems timely to re-view the place of children’s literature in the primary English program. The paper considers the significance of knowledge of ‘literary literacy’ as well as, and also as a complement to, ‘functional literacy’ in English in the primary school. In turn, it raises questions about the roles of children’s literature in teacher education programs in 2002.

The paper explores the discourses of theory, policy and practice that might formulate teacher education students’ perceptions of children’s literature. It considers how older discourses seem to persist and merge with the new and how these competing realities might impact on teachers, both preservice and practising. It focuses on the influence of educational politics, ideological shifts and curriculum changes in establishing an appropriate knowledge base. This information, it will be argued, can be significant in enhancing the tertiary instruction available in the education of primary teachers.

Finally, the paper invites questions about what might inform the focus of tertiary programs for primary teachers of English and how the relationship between scholarship and curriculum might be enhanced.

*People don’t just read; they read something (Meek 1997: 271)*

### **The Foundations of the Study**

By way of background, my areas of interest in teacher education are in literacy and literary studies. I felt I needed to test the assumptions I had about teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature and the role they thought it should play in primary English programs.

Given the changing nature of texts and the shifting emphasis in educational policy, it seems timely to take a fresh look, to re-view the place of children’s literature in the primary English program. This, in turn, raises questions about the place of children’s literature in teacher education programs in 2002. Hence the title of my paper. Meek’s words perhaps best reflect the essence of the argument that I wish to put forward.

Historically, both continuities and discontinuities have marked the roles that children's literature has played in the primary English classroom.

There are significant continuities of policy and pedagogy that emerge. Throughout its history, English policy, identified through reports and syllabus statements, has acknowledged the significance of literature in English teaching. Pedagogical continuities have been equally powerful. While changes in approach to the importance of enjoyment of learning and the rise of child-centredness have suggested pedagogical changes, there is still a strong sense of pedagogical continuity in the dominant, explicit, systematic role it is assumed that a teacher should take.

There are also discontinuities that illuminate the impact of the broader social, cultural, economic and political contexts (Green & Beavis [eds] 1996). For example, there has been a shift of emphasis from an understanding and a reproducing of language to a designing and communicating of language. As Kress (1999: 468) expresses it, 'From competence in use we have moved to competence in design'. This shift challenges what subject English is, and, in turn, demands a new theory of text. While literature has always figured significantly in English teaching, there has been ambivalence as to what literature *means* in the primary school. For example, with the rise of child-centredness, literature and reading as components of English merged so that children were encouraged to take responsibility for reading 'real' literary texts rather than completing teacher-devised activities. Recent concerns surrounding literacy crises have challenged that autonomy. Another example may be found in what is meant by the term 'literature'. Children's literature has undergone enormous changes in the past century: initially, in the creation of literature especially for children and, more recently, in the development of sophisticated genres such as the picture book and young adult literature, much of which reflects postmodernist thinking.

How today's teachers find a pedagogical solution to such changing perspectives; how they view the 'literature lesson'; what attitudes they hold towards reading and literature; and what roles they see children's literature playing in classroom teaching, and finally how significant are tertiary programs in helping teachers use literature in an informed way—these were all questions which informed this study.

### **Answering the Questions**

To explore these questions, I used a survey and interviews.

The survey was chosen as a means of gaining elementary information from a population of 289 teacher education students (both internal and external from a regional university in NEW South Wales) and included both preservice and practising teachers.

The survey was a 58 item questionnaire which drew items from a number of earlier surveys on teaching literature, including the cross-national survey of Purves, Foshay and Hansson (1973), the Australian UNESCO Seminar Survey (1973), and the Australian national *Children's Choice Project* (Bunbury 1995), (carried out in 80s but not published until 1995) but ultimately became a new instrument to meet the specific needs of the research problem at hand.

The items in Section One (1–9) were largely demographic questions about the participants.

The items in Section Two (10–21) were designed to explore the participants' attitude to reading and to literature. Some simply dealt with reader *interest* (items 10–14) and others asked questions that reflected the reader's ability to respond to text through *transference* involving empathising and analogising (items 15–21).

Section Three of the questionnaire dealt with roles participants believed children's literature plays in the primary classroom and considered the participants' ideological motivation and goals. The goals were adopted and adapted from the Purves, Foshay and Hansson (1973) study. Six items considered two possible intrinsic goals related to cultural heritage and literary appreciation and four items dealt with extrinsic goals of literacy standards, moral values, and emotional and intellectual growth.

Section Four asked questions about the preferred nature of further literary training to enhance teachers' ability to teach literature.

A quantitative analysis of the survey was undertaken using two statistical analysis packages: SPSS 6.1 for the Power Macintosh, and the Australian Council of Educational Research's QUEST software (Adams & Khoo, 1996) which is an implementation of the Rasch latent trait scaling model. This model allows for the conversion of ordinal scores into linear scores to interpret data (Wright & Linacre, 1989). It provided a fine-grained method of analysing Likert scale data of constructs and thus was useful in analysis of participants' attitude to reading and literature and to using children's literature in the classroom.

In order to address some of the limitations of the survey, the interviews of eight teachers developed further some of the ideas explored in the survey and considered other ideas that had been generated by responses to the open-ended questions. The interviews also provided an opportunity to focus more specifically on the classroom, as well as on the teacher as learner.

**Table 1: Demographic information on 8 interviewees**

Type of school	Government	5
	Nongovernment	3
Location	Urban	2
	Rural	6
Teaching experience	0–10 years	2
	11+ years	6
Educational background	Teachers' certificate	2
	B.Ed., BA, DipEd, M.Ed	6
Role	Classroom teacher	5
	Administrator	2
	Librarian	1
Grade	Infants	4
	Primary	4

## Observations Drawn from the Survey and Interviews

### *Attitudes to reading and literature*

It had been hoped that those questions in the survey which asked about the time spent reading and the responses to reading, in general, and literature, in particular, would give some insight into the respondents' ideological perspectives on which they might build their approach to the use of children's literature in the classroom. Firstly, the amount of time spent reading for study and leisure appeared low where 40% of respondents spent less than one hour a day reading for study and 55% spent less than one hour a day reading for pleasure. Secondly, while 75% of respondents acknowledged an interest in reading, the figure fell to 63% for an enjoyment of reading **literature**.

While it might be considered acceptable that only 7% of respondents claimed they did not enjoy reading and 11% did not enjoy reading literature, it must be a matter of concern that these respondents are at present or soon to be teachers of reading! It raises questions

about the role tertiary programs should take to enhance an enjoyment and understanding of reading and literature.

### *Approaches to teaching English*

Three main observations might be made from the responses on views on teaching English. Firstly, in spite of the current emphasis on testing of comprehension in New South Wales through the Basic Skills Tests, there was little support for testing as a means of developing readers. Secondly, respondents saw the treatment of literature as mainly involving oral reading by the teacher, language related exercises and silent reading, while group discussion of literature and literary interpretation or criticism were considered relatively unimportant. Thirdly, questions (18, 20 and 21) related to various theories of literary criticism, based on structuralism, narratology, post-structuralism, and in turn, phenomenology were given little support perhaps confirming The Children’s Choice (Bunbury [ed.]1995:159) project’s view that most teachers have not developed clearly articulated theories.

### *Goals for using literature*

Both the survey and interviews showed that teachers see literature as serving a diversity of purposes in the classroom. Both also revealed that teachers saw the discourse of literacy development as a fundamental value of children’s literature. It focused on offering meaningful reading, the introduction of a diversity of texts, and an understanding of text structures.

The Children’s Choice project’s results offer some useful comparisons for this study (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison of two study’s goals of teaching literature**

<b>Children’s Choice Project</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>This Study</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Language ability (extrinsic)	1	Item 31. Literacy standards (extrinsic)	3
Self understanding (extrinsic)	2	Item 33. Emotional growth (extrinsic)	5
Analytical skills (extrinsic)	4	Item 34. Intellectual growth (extrinsic)	1
Response to events (extrinsic)	5	Item 32. Moral standards (extrinsic)	6
Literary taste (intrinsic)	3	Item 30. Literary appreciation (intrinsic)	2
Cultural heritage(intrinsic)	5	Item 29. Cultural heritage(intrinsic)	4
Literary forms (intrinsic)	7	Deleted	
Literary history (intrinsic)	8	Deleted	

While the Children's Choice project ranked **language ability** first, my study showed teachers' preference for **intellectual growth** and **literary appreciation** as being the two most important goals. These goals were seen as being conveyed through an aesthetic discourse where literature provided models of text, of effective language use, of social interaction and of how life should be lived. Yet, goals of emotional growth and moral standards, which had ranked lower in the survey, seemed to be noticeable in the interviews, reflected in the teachers' favouring of an ethical discourse of personal growth.

### *Knowledge of children's texts*

While there were some perceptive choices, on the whole the responses on selecting books were dated with little mention of texts published since 1992. The lack of recency of choice of texts perhaps reflects texts that the respondents would have experienced themselves as children rather than as teachers. The choices were disappointing, given the diverse quality literature that has been published in the last ten years.

Respondents' reasons for choices of texts tended to reflect their recognition of literature as creative and imaginative but they also tended to see the potential of intellectual growth that literature offered. On this basis, they would agree with Langer (1995: 158) when she says that 'although literary reasoning is both creative and imaginative, it is also intellectual in a particular kind of way'.

### *Influences on teachers' pedagogy*

A number of discourses together with policy and technological change impact on teachers' pedagogy.

Whether the teachers were practising or preservice, their views on the roles of children's literature in the classroom drew on many discourses, and in some cases, were dominated by one discourse. Four discourses of subject English were identified and labelled borrowing Morgan's terms (1997:17) of aesthetic, ethical, rhetorical and political. Those who adopted an aesthetic or cultural heritage approach saw literature as providing a rich foundation of knowledge of the past that could give a reader a sense of his/her place in society. Those teachers who saw literature as a means of promoting an understanding of oneself and the world adopted an ethical or personal growth model. Those who adopted a rhetorical or functional linguistic approach saw children's literature as a useful tool to demonstrate text types and analyse language and structures of text. Those who drew on a political discourse explored notions of critical literacy, considering how texts construct readers and readings. For some, one or more discourses were contestatory.

No matter what their ideological stance, all teachers' pedagogies were driven by a sense of 'transformation', that from illiteracy to literacy, from socially inept to socially acceptable, from ignorance to moral rectitude, and so on.

The NSW English K-6 Syllabus (1998) was understandably influential as it was embodied in a policy document that all teachers had to address, yet, not all saw this as a dominant discourse. The Syllabus and technological changes, on the one hand, and changes in print culture of children's literature and programmed reading materials, on the other, were all influential. These factors affected what kind of knowledge these teachers believed they needed. The rapid changes created a need for instant knowledge of how to develop a pedagogical framework for new curricula and to develop some criteria for selection of print materials. Such urgency has the potential to cloud the significance of developing a knowledge of literature and literary theory.

While some teachers in the interviews alluded to 'taking an idea and explaining it in depth', 'becoming critically aware' and 'empowering students with skills to manipulate language', there was little attempt to explain how pedagogical routines would be established to achieve these outcomes. None of the teachers seemed to have a clear notion of poststructural views or an understanding of how to develop critical and resistant readings. While all saw the importance of showing how text types served a variety of purposes, few seemed to understand the broader notions of how texts construct 'subject positions' and 'reading positions' (Kress 1985).

### **Issues, Challenges And Future Directions For Professional Practice In Primary English Teaching And Teacher Education**

The Children's Choice project had found that only 31.3% of practising primary school teachers had received any training in children's literature during their undergraduate programs. Only 13.1% had received any inservice training in children's literature since graduating. In my survey, only 13.5% of respondents had undertaken a course unit in children's literature. Questions must be raised about the amount and level of training in children's literature available for preservice and inservice teacher education students.

#### **Issues and Challenges**

There are perhaps two main issues that invite discussion

- *The importance of expanding teachers' knowledge of children's literature and literary theory*
- *The significance of developing positive attitudes to reading and to literature*

### *Expanding teachers' knowledge of children's literature and literary theory*

Any developments of teacher education programs should probably address at least three aspects: a knowledge of texts, the development of a pedagogy of English and literature, and the recognition of clearly articulated theories.

#### *A knowledge of texts*

As Thomson (1987: 246) puts it so well: 'It is essential that teachers are well acquainted with children's and adolescent literature, as well as the reading tastes and development stages of their students, so they can help them to find books that will be read with pleasure and promote growth'.

Not only do teachers need a knowledge of texts but they need to be aware of the social and literary criteria for the selection of children's literature. Langer (1995: 56) says literature involves readers gaining 'envisionment', that is, an understanding about text and developing the ability to explore 'horizons of possibilities' (1995: 26) where literature and life meld. If respondents, as teachers, are to achieve this in their classrooms, I would argue they must first explore the ethos that literature is thought-provoking, a view that was not clearly supported in the survey. If they are to offer meaningful literary studies, they need to understand the significance of social context and multiple perspectives of interpretation (Langer 1995: 56). We would do well to heed Luke's criticism of teacher education and inservice programs (1994:33) that 'expound the glories of "quality" children's literature without mentioning, much less exploring, how children's literature constructs versions of cultural contexts and social possibilities'.

How texts are perceived has shifted throughout the history of subject English. The tension between skills-based and child-centred curriculum in the primary classroom has driven approaches to subject English for the past one hundred years. In turn, this challenges what type of text is 'appropriate' to best implement each approach. Both basal readers and children's literature have been used as text. Both construct and reflect versions of the child's world.

For the **beginning reader**, commercially produced materials, particularly basal reader series, still seem to influence the reading curriculum. Basal readers had their foundation in the nineteenth century when books were rare and when teachers were largely untrained. Yet, as the surveys and interviews revealed, such reader series still persist in a time when teachers are extensively trained. While the religious and nationalistic themes that dominated the early basal readers may have gone, they still are characterised by controlled

language. That teachers continue to favour these readers were shown in both the responses of individual cases in the survey and in the interviews. A possible reason for current support of these readers might be summed up in one teacher's comment (John's): 'You don't have to work out text difficulty. It is done for you.' The practice of reading has the potential to shape a particular view of reading. If texts selected for classroom reading are bland 'tool' books that offer no social construction, no engagement for the reader, then the value of text might be lost. In turn, texts should allow readers to read from chosen points, empowering them to establish their own views. There needs to be teacher awareness of the importance of text selection, in that some texts can impede learning through incoherent structure and stilted language.

Selection of texts for **confident readers** must also take account of shifts in thinking about texts. It is important to consider the nature of texts and the purposes they might serve. It is still necessary to understand 'reproduction' of content and form but also to embrace 'representation' that involves skill in design and creativity. Kress (1999: 468) suggests that a new theory of texts should embrace three categories—'aesthetically valued texts', 'culturally salient texts' and 'mundane texts'—to satisfy both 'reproduction' and 'representation' goals of a new theory and new practice. Thomson (1998: 14), too, believes that a new model should recognise that texts serve different purposes and that 'some texts are more complex and profound than others'.

### *The development of a pedagogy of English and literature*

What has been revealed is that there appears to be a lack of clear identity of what English is and what purpose it should serve. This raises the question of whether there is a need for a new discourse to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. Any new discourse or model must recognise a number of factors: firstly, that literacy is complex; secondly, that any forms of assessment must acknowledge this complexity and respond to critical and cultural paradigms; and thirdly, that teaching methods need to respond to a particular model. Such a new model must embrace notions of both the 'modern' and the 'postmodern'. The modern, with its faith in the individual as being able to shape the world and where all is rational, has been challenged by the postmodern. This is not to say that modernism and postmodernism should be seen as binary opposites but, rather, that the latter addresses the changing social conditions of the new millenium, where there is a need to acknowledge a multiplicity of meanings rather than one patriarchal narration, and to recognise the related foregrounding of popular ('low') culture over high culture. Postmodernism has a complex interaction with the modern, accepting some aspects and rejecting others. The first step in planning subject English is to recognise those factors and then to consider what is appropriate in a curriculum to meet this age.

### *The recognition of clearly articulated theories*

The impact of scholarship on curriculum is hard to determine. In this study, no distinct models emerged although most participants adopted an acknowledgement of perspectives that drive the current primary English Syllabus. The Purves, Foshay and Hansson's study (1973) of literature education in ten countries had shown that teachers were not always aware of the critical approaches they were teaching, a point that seems to be borne out in this study. While both teacher education students and teachers alike tried to adopt what Mountford (1996) calls an 'informed eclecticism', the majority seemed unaware of most reading and literary theories.

If teachers are to be aware of what texts have to offer, knowledge of possible tools of measurement of critical approaches is valuable. It is important to understand a range of 'tools' or theories—of literacy, of literature and of curriculum—in order to develop 'skills' in critical literacy and literary criticism.

Both the interviews and the surveys suggested that preservice and practising teachers saw reading as the active pursuit of meaning. All were aware of the significance of 'textual practice' where texts are central to making meaning. Contemporary theories on reading and children's literature, focused on meaning, have the power to challenge dominant educational ideologies of literacy. Reader Response theory has enjoyed popularity for the past twenty years, but *social critical literary models* may provide us with a more valuable theory in that they go further to enhance political and social awareness. They take a culturally critical position emphasising the constructed nature of text.

### *Developing positive attitudes to reading and to literature*

Teachers' attitudes to reading and their perception of texts, it seems, influence their literacy practices. As the studies showed, they affected whether teachers saw texts as being used not only for the development of 'functional literacy' but also for 'literary literacy'. The nature of 'literary literacy,' as Meek suggests in the quote that began this paper, focuses attention not on the act of reading but on what is being read. No text is neutral. Each text must be interpreted in different ways. The role of 'literary literacy' is to show how to get inside the text and, in turn, 'to read ...the texts of our lives' (Scholes 1989: 19). It allows opportunity for what Langer (1995: 26) calls 'literary thinking'.

The current primary English syllabus in NSW is predicated on English as a literacy model. Literacy practices that focus exclusively on function provide a valuable foundation but run the risk of offering a narrow view of literacy. A 'literary literacy' model, it may

been argued, can enhance this model. Literacy practices that include literary literacy offer diverse cultural, social and linguistic experiences. Such practices can show that there are many ways of reading and that each text challenges those ways, offering diverse metacognitive and metalinguistic outcomes. They also have the potential to embrace a new literature culture where there has been a shift in the nature of both book texts and multimedia texts (Meek 1997: 260). How literary education is positioned in literacy education needs to be reconsidered.

### *Informing Teacher Education*

*How might teacher education respond to these issues and challenges?*

The study showed that most teachers valued children's literature but many admitted a limited knowledge of the literature itself. Most acknowledged a lack of understanding of theoretical perspectives but not all saw this as valuable knowledge. Many thought that the most important knowledge that tertiary programs could offer related to classroom application of children's literature. Little mention was given to an *understanding* of children's literature, perhaps reflecting a common perception that it does not need close study.

The Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000: 202), the most recent review of teacher education in New South Wales, noted that to establish 'quality' and excellence' in teaching, and to counter what the report sees as a 'malaise' in teaching and a 'standards vacuum', there should be two major developments: a review of teacher education programs and a stronger emphasis on continuing education. The report believes that teacher education is unsatisfactory in a number of ways. Firstly, it 'gives inadequate attention to equipping tomorrow's teachers with skills and outlook that emphasise how teaching will require them to be adaptive and flexible in their practice over their careers' (Ramsey 2000: 19). Secondly, it fails to make adequate connections between the content of the discipline and the pedagogy (Ramsey 2000: 35).

To deal with these criticisms, I would argue, teacher education programs in English should do two things: look to the past for legacies that hold value, and look to the demands of the contemporary world that include exploring notions of the postmodern. Historically, for example, the views of the Newbolt Report (1921: 82) are still valued, as was evident in the interviews and survey, where the literature lesson was seen as serving three purposes: offering an increased command of language, an acquisition of knowledge and an appreciation and enjoyment of literature. Other examples of key 'legacies' draw from Leavis where there is a belief in the cultural enrichment of literature, from Rosenblatt the

importance of sensitising the reader, from Whitehead a sense of the importance of critical reading, and from the Dartmouth conference a focus on literature as discussion.

The study had found an element of confusion in teachers' attempts to develop a meaningful pedagogy as they are influenced by many competing forces. To prepare teachers to meet these demands, teacher education programs should consider contemporary needs and their place in a postmodern era. They need to adopt the spirit of postmodernism in celebrating and tolerating pluralism, recognising the multitude of voices and being able to deconstruct the contradictions and biases of traditional discourses of English and, in turn, reconstructing a new discourse. To empower the teacher and student teacher, Parker (1997: 146) suggests that they need to 'become deconstructive in their readings of educational texts, in their situating of received wisdom, in their creation of values, in their evaluation of courses and of the statements of bureaucrats and politicians'. Of course, it is important to be wary that adopting such an approach does achieve empowerment and not chaos, that teachers and student teachers fully understand the complexity of the task they are undertaking and the valuable contribution to the construction of the curriculum they are making. Such an approach would involve them in the deconstruction of a wide range of texts, from educational theories, principles of pedagogy, political treatise, government position papers, school and education authority policy statements.

The relationship between scholarship and curriculum needs to be addressed. The Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000: 35) had noted that 'university academics must make the connections between the content of the discipline and the pedagogy that enables the most effective learning to occur'. This view casts the role of the academic as a gatekeeper to select 'appropriate' content and pedagogy. This challenges the academic to be 'in touch' with the needs of the classroom. Stronger links need to be made with the employers and the profession to establish points of need and understanding.

The study's revelation of teachers' mixed views about the importance of professional development raised important questions about life-long learning. The Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000: 32) also showed concern that, at present, lifelong learning is not emphasised and teachers should be encouraged to learn to improve their standards. Professional development of teachers is a vexed issue. The problems are of two types: a 'malaise' in teachers unwilling to undertake further learning, and an employing body that seems reluctant to put money into professional development and 'recognise and reward teachers for their professional improvement' (Ramsey 2000: 83). The interviews revealed that teachers had focused on the new theoretical underpinnings of the Syllabus but tended to adopt a 'partial' view by incorporating only text types and grammar into their existing

programs. Thus, the interpretation of the Syllabus runs the danger of becoming rather *ad hoc* and incomplete. Indirectly, how literature is perceived is affected by such interpretations. Associated with general professional development, adequate inservices of new curriculum should, as the Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000: 83) suggests, include ‘the connection between curriculum and pedagogy’. The study highlights the need for this ‘connection’.

## Future Directions

The suggestion of future research might seem like a way of offering closure but, in fact, it forces further discussion of what kinds of reading teachers wish to encourage and in turn, what kinds of texts might be selected. The results of the research in this study suggest a number of ideas for research that might be developed. Firstly, it would be important to have research that identifies how primary English education dollars might most effectively be spent. Secondly, it would be useful to study how teachers’ views are influenced by their initial training and, lastly, related to this research, it would be valuable to consider what resources such as inservice programs or postgraduate qualifications are effective in allowing teachers to develop appropriate levels of knowledge.

In the first place, future directions to determine the most effective use of funding for the teaching of English might begin with an analysis of the interface between tertiary institutions, schools and employing bodies. Significant contributions could be made to the theory/practice nexus through members of English disciplines identifying the nature of subject English, literacy and, in turn, reading and text and recognising how these might be moderated by policy and media.

Secondly, an exploration of how teachers’ ideological perspectives are influenced by their early training would offer opportunities to review teacher education programs in English. Such a review might consider a number of factors: levels of student literacy, knowledge and attitude to reading, knowledge of literature and literary theory, and an understanding of policy and practice. Assumptions about teacher education students’ attitude to and knowledge of reading may be inaccurate. It is assumed, for example, that literature and literary reading are highly valued in our culture but, as this study has shown, this may not be a widely shared view. This study has raised questions as to how positive attitudes to reading and literature might best be achieved. As Applebee and Purves (1992: 745) suggest, an area of research that needs further attention is the issue of to what extent current scholarship in literary criticism can and should be part of the school curriculum. This would involve building an awareness of the diversity of theoretical perspectives and articulating a theory that would drive teachers’ work in the classroom. If we are to prepare

students for the twenty-first century where postmodernism infiltrates contemporary thinking and challenges the learner to deconstruct and control text, teacher education programs must review their pedagogical approaches and priorities. In such programs, teacher education students would need to develop new ways of thinking and become 'partners' in constructing their tertiary curriculum and, in turn, their classroom curriculum.

Thirdly, as the interviews highlighted, teachers felt constrained by a lack of resources that might allow them to develop appropriate levels of scholarship. This study, together with the Children's Choice project, had found that there was little formal professional development of teachers or encouragement of further study, a point also made strongly in the Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000). This raises issues of how to resource inservice programs and postgraduate education in such a way that it is more accessible to teachers. It also raises issues of how to develop teachers' awareness of what knowledge might be valuable and how that knowledge might be accessed. For example, to keep abreast of current theoretical knowledge and the changes to children's literature are challenging. How to access information is also problematic. While there is much information available formally, through courses of study and informally, as on the Internet, the study showed that there is limited use made of it. Perhaps, there needs to be greater attention given to attracting students to postgraduate programs and exploring ways with the employing body of how such study might be rewarded.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers must balance theory, policy and practice, often working from a limited knowledge of theory and being confused by conflicting theoretical perspectives. It would seem that the task of tertiary teaching in this context is threefold: to further explore how curriculum change impacts on both content and pedagogy; to consider the interaction of the areas of theory, policy and practice; and to develop meaningful outcomes. If children's literature is to play a significant role in the future of subject English, a clear theory of education that incorporates a theory of reading, and of literature, must be articulated and translated into meaningful pedagogy.

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**‘Changing Agendas in Teacher Education’**

**RE-VIEWING THE  
PLACE OF CHILDREN’S  
LITERATURE IN  
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PROGRAMS**

**Bev Croker  
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## **QUESTIONS OF CONCERN**

**How do teachers find a pedagogical solution to teaching English in a climate of social, cultural, economic and political change?**

**How do primary teachers view the ‘literature lesson’?**

**What attitudes do they hold towards reading and literature?**

**What roles do they see children’s literature playing in classroom teaching?**

**How significant are tertiary programs in helping teachers use literature in an informed way?**

**Table 2: Comparison of goals of teaching literature**

<b>Children’s Choice Project</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>This Study</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>Language ability</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Literacy standards (extrinsic)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Self understanding</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Emotional growth (extrinsic)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Analytical skills</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Intellectual growth (extrinsic)</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Response to events</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Moral standards (extrinsic)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Literary taste</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Literary appreciation (intrinsic)</b>	
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Cultural heritage(intrinsic)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Literary forms</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Deleted</b>	
<b>Literary history</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Deleted</b>	

**Table 1: Demographic information on 8 interviewees**

<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Government</b> <b>Nongovernment</b>	<b>5</b> <b>3</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Urban</b> <b>Rural</b>	<b>2</b> <b>6</b>
<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>0–10 years</b> <b>11+ years</b>	<b>2</b> <b>6</b>
<b>Educational background</b>	<b>Teachers’ certificate</b> <b>B.Ed., BA, DipEd, M.Ed</b>	<b>2</b> <b>6</b>
<b>Role</b>	<b>Classroom teacher</b> <b>Administrator</b> <b>Librarian</b>	<b>5</b> <b>2</b> <b>1</b>
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Infants</b> <b>Primary</b>	<b>4</b> <b>4</b>

# DISCOURSES OF ENGLISH

## DISCOURSES OF ENGLISH

## SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERATURE

**Aesthetic or cultural-heritage model**

**Foundation of knowledge of the past**

**Ethical or personal growth model**

**Literature as a promotion of an understanding of self**

**Rhetorical or functional linguistic model**

**Literature as a tool to analyse language and structures of text**

**Political or critical model**

**Literature seen as constructing readers and readings**

## **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

- **The importance of expanding teachers' knowledge of children's literature and literary theory**
  
- **The significance of developing positive attitudes to reading and to literature**

# **RE-VIEWING THE PLACE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

*People don't just read; they read something (Meek 1997:271)*

## **THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Survey**

**Interviews**

**Observations**

**Attitudes to reading literature**

**Approaches to teaching English**

**Goals for using literature**

**Knowledge of children's texts**

**Influences on teaching pedagogy**

## **ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION**

**Issues and challenges**

**Expanding teachers' knowledge of children's literature and literary  
theory**

A knowledge of texts

The development of a pedagogy of English and literature

The recognition of clearly articulated theories

**Developing attitudes to reading and to literature**

**Informing teacher education**

**Future directions**

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