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BERA Bites

Topical debates from the **BERA Blog**

Issue 4

Reimagining a curriculum for teacher knowledge

Edited & introduced by
Gerry Czerniawski
September 2019

Selected articles from the BERA Blog on key topics in education.

Featuring an introduction by the editors, and questions for discussion on each article.

A teaching and learning resource for education students and professionals.

The BERA Blog

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BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

About BERA

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is the home of educational research in the United Kingdom. We are a membership association committed to advancing knowledge of education by sustaining a strong and high quality educational research community.

Together with our members, BERA is working to:

- advance research quality
- build research capacity
- foster research engagement.

Since its inception in 1974, BERA has expanded into an internationally renowned association with both UK and non-UK based members. It strives to be inclusive of the diversity of educational research and scholarship, and welcomes members from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical orientations, methodological approaches, sectoral interests and institutional affiliations. It also encourages the development of productive relationships with other associations within and beyond the UK.

Aspiring to be the home of all educational researchers in the UK, BERA provides opportunities for everyone active in this field to contribute through its portfolio of distinguished publications, its world-class conference and other events, and its active peer community organised around 35 special interest groups. We also recognise excellence in educational research through our range of awards. In addition to our member-focussed activity, we aim to inform the development of policy and practice by promoting the best quality evidence produced by educational research.

About the BERA Blog

The BERA Blog was established to provide research-informed content on key educational issues in an accessible manner. Its aim is to produce and promote articles that attract policymakers, parents, teachers, educational leaders, members of school communities, politicians and anyone who is interested in education today. It also welcomes the submission of research-informed articles from across this community.

The blog is edited by a small team comprising academic representatives chosen by BERA's Academic Publications Committee and the BERA office. All content is approved for publication by one or more of this team. However, the views of the authors are their own, and the views expressed on the blog (and in this collection) are not the official views of BERA.

The Blog is currently curated by the editorial team of Gerry Czerniawski, Rachel Lofthouse and Alison Fox.

See bera.ac.uk/blog.

About BERA Bites

The BERA Bites series presents selected articles from the BERA blog on key topics in education, presented in an easily printable and digestible format to serve as teaching and learning resources for students and professionals in education. Each collection features an introduction by editors with expertise in the field, and each article includes questions for discussion, composed by the authors, prompting readers to further explore the ideas and arguments put forward in the original articles.

See bera.ac.uk/bera-bites.

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Editorial

Reimagining a curriculum for teacher knowledge

Gerry Czerniawski
University of East London

5 July 2019

On Saturday 23 February 2019 guest speakers from the four nations of the UK gathered at the De Vere Holborn Bars in London. The all-day event,[1] held by the British Curriculum Forum (BCF), provided an opportunity for educational professionals across different education systems and sectors to come together and reimagine a curriculum for teacher knowledge for the 21st century. The day enabled participants to engage with theoretical, innovative and practical aspects of the curriculum, and continue Lawrence Stenhouse's practice of curriculum research and development.

The articles included in this BERA Bites collection – first published as a series of articles on the BERA Blog[2] – give a flavour of that event's proceedings, and are written by some of the guest speakers and participants who took part in it.

Between 2010 and 2015 the governments of the four nations that comprise the UK reviewed national arrangements for teacher education. At the BCF event in February, a group of teacher educators working in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales came together to review the development of national and local curricula for early career support. The first blog in this collection, by **Moira Hulme**, **Linda Clarke**, **Gary Beauchamp** and **Beth Dickson**, discusses this development and considers the progress made in advancing professional learning in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

In the second article, **Beth Dickson** asks, 'What do teachers need to know to be able to teach, and how and when do teachers learn?' Her article considers responses to these questions, and offers starting points for the construction of a curriculum for teacher knowledge.

In 1938, John Dewey argued for the need for an approach to education based on a 'theory of experience'.

1 See https://www.bera.ac.uk/event/re-imagining-a-curriculum-for-teacher-knowledge

2 See https://www.bera.ac.uk/series/reimagining-a-curriculum-for-teacher-knowledge

In his article, **Kevin Smith** critically examines this argumentation and asks how we can and should differentiate between miseducative experiences and meaningful educative experiences for pupils and teachers alike.

The recent climate protests involving youngsters going on 'strike' provides the stimulus for **Laura Colucci-Gray**'s reflection on the nature of curriculum. She reminds us that as early as 1975, Lawrence Stenhouse referred to curriculum as a 'stick to beat the teachers with', capturing the teachers' fundamental problem of ensuring that students attain well on tests (which determine their right to progress in education) while at the same time preventing the exertion of both children's and their own freedom and judgment. Collucci-Gray's thought provoking article challenges its readers to consider broader interpretations of all things curricula – that being educated and being able to act and live well in one's environment require new thinking about the nature of the educational relationship, and about how such relationships are enacted in multiple contexts that we share with others.

Martin Mills acknowledges that a number of premises underpin his think-piece about 'reimagining a curriculum for social justice'. They include the assumptions that we need an education system with broad purposes – one that is committed, beyond academic outcomes, to benefitting society and individual wellbeing – and that a rich, socially just curriculum is central to that. In his article he draws on the work of Nancy Fraser (2010) to suggest what this curriculum might look like.

At the start of her article, **Rachel Lofthouse** argues that as changes in the curriculum appear on the horizon it is essential for teachers and school leaders to engage critically and constructively with the opportunities and tensions that emerge. Teachers are used to making both reactive and proactive decisions, and those needed to put curriculum into action are no exception. Rachel's article is based on her workshop, 'Using coaching and mentoring to focus on the curriculum in action', delivered at the BCF event in February 2019.

Sharon Jones argues that in these troubling times, connecting and the curriculum are crucial. As a teacher educator in Northern Ireland she has become increasingly aware that connecting and learning go hand in hand, and that this has important implications for curriculum in both schools and teacher education. In her compelling article she shares her reflections about connecting

learning, connecting times and cultures, and connecting people.

For the final article of this collection we asked **Sarah Seleznyov**, director of the London South Teaching School Alliance,[3] to offer her reflections on the day's contributions as a member of the audience. Her article concludes with three thought-provoking questions that capture the implications of many of the discussions generated at this event.

1. Since effective curriculum development relies on a continually developing workforce, how do we achieve continuity in learning from initial teacher training through to longstanding teachers?
2. How can we enable teachers to develop a deep understanding of curriculum 'intent' so that they can get the curriculum right for our pupils and their community?
3. How can we provide opportunities for teachers to work together with pupils to develop exciting curricula that fuse both knowledge and knowing, and which promote both social justice and global awareness?

The above authors were participants at the BCF event in London in February 2019. However, to complement this BERA Bites collection we also wanted to include other significant articles written about the curriculum published in the BERA Blog in recent months. We therefore include a magnificent two-parter from **Mary James** that examines the 30-year history of the national curriculum in England. **Yana Manyukhina** and **Dominic Wyse** argue that we have much to learn from our neighbours in Ireland (on both sides of the border), Scotland and Wales on inclusive processes in curriculum development. Their article poses the question, 'What type of curriculum works best: knowledge-based, skills-oriented or learner centred?' Finally, **Mark Priestley** and **Stavroula Philippou**, editors of the *Curriculum Journal*, provide an edited version of their first editorial for the journal, in May 2019 – a thought-provoking piece on current trends, nationally and internationally, in curriculum research and scholarship.

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3 https://www.londonsouthtsa.org.uk

While you read these blog posts, you might also think about your own contexts or research. Perhaps you would like to contribute a post to the BERA Blog, or perhaps when you are next at a conference or professional development event you might come across someone who you could encourage to write for us (see bera.ac.uk/submission-policy for details on how to submit).

Please consider interesting methodological aspects, issues and approaches that would be worth reporting more widely, as well as the content of studies. As the BERA Blog team and their colleagues develop these resources we welcome feedback that can help us improve their quality and accessibility.

About the British Curriculum Forum

The British Curriculum Forum (BCF) aims to bring together everyone with an interest in collaborative curriculum, research and development.

Through events, awards and grants, the BCF supports communication and collaboration in the study and practical implementation of the curriculum in schools, colleges and wider educational settings. Connecting schools, colleges, universities and others, its work promotes the study of theoretical, innovative and practical aspects of the curriculum, drawing on a rich history spanning more than 40 years, and continuing the tradition of research and development founded by Laurence Stenhouse.

The British Curriculum Forum is the successor to the British Curriculum Foundation, which was incorporated into BERA in 2014. The BCF has been in existence for over 40 years, and was previously known as the Association for the Study of Curriculum.

The BCF aims to:

- promote the study of theoretical, innovative and practical aspects of the curriculum
- provide an authoritative medium through which the opinions of teachers and others may be expressed on matters of the curriculum
- provide means of communication amongst all those concerned with the study of the curriculum and/or its practical implementation
- enable BERA to connect with schools
- enable practitioners to engage with research.

For more information see bera.ac.uk/community/british-curriculum-forum.

1. Remaking the curriculum of early-career teacher education

Beth Dickson, Gary Beauchamp,
Moira Hulme & Linda Clarke

5 July 2019

Between 2010 and 2015 the governments of the four nations that comprise the UK reviewed national arrangements for teacher education (Donaldson, 2011; Sahlberg, Munn, & Furlong, 2012; Tabberer, 2013; Furlong, 2015; Carter, 2015). At the British Curriculum Forum event in February 2019, teacher educators working in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales came together to review the development of national and local curricula for early career support. It was clear that strategies to strengthen teacher learning are a key feature of national education agendas, but the direction and pace of change varies. As attention in England turns to the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019), in this BERA Blog post we consider the progress made in advancing professional learning in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Scotland

There is a growing realisation in Scotland that a curriculum for teacher learning needs to be career-long, not just for the initial phase. *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2011) acknowledged that career-long teacher education is key for implementing the OECD's recommendation, in *Improving Schools in Scotland*, that curricular responsibility moves 'beyond system management in a new dynamic nearer to teaching and learning' across a 'strengthened "middle" of school and local authority networks' (OECD, 2015, p.10). The *Evaluation of the Impact of Implementation of TSF* report (Black, Bowen, Murray, & Zubairi, 2016) reported a cultural shift in attitudes towards professional learning, with a greater link to student learning rather than going on a course. *A Plan for Scotland* (Scottish Government, 2016a) pledged money for teachers' professional learning at master's level, but the *Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education* (2016b) strategy's understanding of teacher learning centred mainly on initial teacher education (ITE), with leadership for teacher learning a less obvious focus. This was balanced by the *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2019* (Scottish Government, 2018),

which developed a 'new national model of professional learning'.

While intermittent progress is being made in structuring career-long learning, the scholarly foundations on which that progress is based are not entirely evident. Unless the binary between ITE and career-long education is more clearly recognised, the powerful assumptions associated with it may disrupt the construction of an efficient and coherent career-long curriculum for teacher learning in Scotland.

Northern Ireland

The final report of the international review panel that conducted the most recent review of ITE in Northern Ireland (Sahlberg, Broadfoot, Coolahan, Furlong, & Kirk, 2014) encountered considerable local political opposition, centred on concerns about proposed infrastructural change and restructuring of ITE programmes, including the length of those programmes. The collapse of the devolved executive and assembly for Northern Ireland in January 2017 means that that such ambitious changes are very unlikely to occur in the near future on the northern side of what is becoming an increasingly contentious border.

The report, *Learning Leaders: A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning* (DE, 2016), has implications for ITE and induction, reflecting aspirations for more coherent career-long learning – most distinctively, building teachers' leadership capacity at all levels, starting with the leadership of student teachers. The inconsistent operationalisation of a 'three I' model (initial, induction and in-service) led to discrepancies between those few newly qualified teachers who obtained permanent, full-time posts and the larger number of ITE graduates who gained temporary, part-time employment (Abbott, Moran & Clarke, 2009). The recent creation of the singular Education Authority in 2015, and the concomitant disruption, threatened to create even more inequality in how new teachers fared. However, the Learning Leaders strategy hints at a more substantial involvement for ITE providers in teacher induction, suggesting that student teachers will have a formal link with a higher education institution throughout their induction year, and if appropriate, beyond (DE, 2016, p. 23). Nevertheless, the final line of the strategy document is that 'the pace of change will match available resources', indicating a potentially insurmountable hurdle in the current economic climate.

Wales

Reform of ITE and early-career support is situated within, and inevitably influenced by, much wider-scale reform of the education system in Wales and the official status of the Welsh language in a bilingual country. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales manages and allocates numbers on ITE programmes, and professional standards are set by the Education Workforce Wales (EWC). Currently, ITE is provided by three regional 'centres', with two of the three being separate universities working in collaboration (students are enrolled at each university rather than the 'centre'). Following reviews of ITE by Tabberer (2013) and Furlong (2015), and of the school curriculum by Donaldson (2015), the former minister for education made the decision that Wales will now have:

- a completely new, school-pioneer-led curriculum
- five new professional standards for teaching and leadership for teachers from the EWC
- a new National Academy for Educational Leadership
- newly validated teacher training programmes from September 2019.

These new programmes are the result of an open tendering process, whereby universities had to either form new alliances or bid directly against existing collaborators for their existing programmes. While this revitalisation of ITE programmes may result in innovative practice to teach a pioneering curriculum, the scale and breadth of these changes suggest that education in Wales – including ITE, early-career and in-service teachers – 'is approaching a fulcrum where it tips away from its past and into an unknown, but distinctive, future' (Beauchamp & Jephcote, 2016, p.123).

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Questions for discussion

1. To what extent will trainee teachers from one country be prepared for, and accepted by, schools in other countries within the UK?
2. To what extent can we prepare teachers for, and support them through, times of political uncertainty in the UK and beyond?
3. What will be the impact of increasing the diversity of training options and curriculum on university ITE choices?

2. What do teachers need to know to be able to teach? How and when do teachers learn?

Beth Dickson
University of Glasgow

8 July 2019

What do teachers need to know to be able to teach? How and when do teachers learn? By considering responses to these questions we can offer starting points for the construction of a curriculum for teacher knowledge.

What?

Arguably, teachers need two kinds of knowledge: declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is propositional, and includes information and propositions. Teachers have declarative knowledge of, among many other things, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, disciplines, pedagogical content and child development. Procedural knowledge, on the other hand, consists of knowing how to do something.

To complicate matters, reflection, enquiry and learning to be a professional are forms of knowledge, key to teaching, which have a declarative core and a procedural practice. The declarative core may be taught in a series of lectures, but only when knowing about reflection becomes 'reflecting' are the advantages of this knowledge generated. The same is true for enquiry and professionalism.

However, the issue is even more complex. Firstly, the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge seems neat only because the level of abstraction is so high. Even those content-rich knowledges mentioned above do not contain all that needs to be known. Secondly, the concept of a 'teacher knowledge base' is a contested one. Some regard it as being impossible to specify (Kincheloe 2004; Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley 2006). Thirdly, the distinction gives rise to misunderstanding because it appears to express underlying assumptions about 'theory–practice divides' which occur in space and time. Spatially, theory is associated with university/college, and practice with school. In time, theory is more associated with the initial stage and less with continuing learning. Fourthly, although the two types of knowledge and their

interrelationships are complex, governments tend to believe that teaching is common sense. In 2006, some frustrated teacher educators argued, 'it is not possible to find an objectivist [that is, declarative] knowledge-base for teacher education and [practitioners should] recognise that the one that is currently policed in England by Ofsted is a fiction enforced by political fiat' (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2006, p.50).

How?

Such easy assumptions mask the sophistication of how teachers know. Pre-service teachers do take their first steps in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in schools where there is a repeated and intensive focus on the learning cycle. Their progress through this spiral is informed by discussing their practice with more experienced teachers. Eventually, pre-service teachers know how to reflect more deeply on their classroom practice: 'Do these pupils actually understand what I am teaching?'

Although enquiry is often not perceived as being as urgent as 'learning how to teach', it often provides pre-service teachers with surprising results: for instance, pupils may not have grasped early explanations that the pre-service teacher thought were clear. That fracture in assumptions about what is happening is key to how teachers continue to learn. In *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (1975), Lawrence Stenhouse argued that curriculum development is properly the work of teachers enquiring in a structured and rigorous way into their own practice – an argument that has influenced the work of modern teacher educators such as Baumfield, Hall and Wall (2008).

> **'A curriculum for teacher knowledge should be career-long, with time built in to practice for continuing to know, reflect, enquire, ask new questions and provide imaginative responses, which in turn create a relevant curriculum for schools.'**

When?

Initial teacher education enables teachers to *start* a career which may last for three or four decades. Programmes of initial teacher education (ITE) cannot anticipate how society will change over that period, so they cannot provide beginning teachers with everything they will need to know during their career. It is argued that what teachers do learn in ITE

programmes is likely to 'wash out' in school (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Rather than learning from university/college, they then learn from practice in school. If there is no career-long knowledge curriculum for teachers in schools then practice may become routinised.

A curriculum for teacher knowledge should be career-long, with time built in to practice for continuing to know, reflect, enquire, ask new questions and provide imaginative responses, which in turn create a relevant curriculum for schools.

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Questions for discussion

1. What do you think teachers need to know to be able to teach?
2. If a pre-service or qualified teacher is going to learn only in school, what, other than classes to teach, might they need to help them learn?
3. Why might it be important for a teacher to develop critical knowledge and thinking skills as well as new declarative knowledge of, say, policy?

3. Are you experienced?

Kevin Smith
Cardiff University

9 July 2019

In 1938, John Dewey wrote *Experience and Education* to clarify misconceptions about the conceptualisation of 'progressive education'. In it, he argued for the need for an approach to education based on a 'theory of experience'. This emphasis on experience has been celebrated by some and vilified by others. For example, when referring to Dewey's views on experiential education and democratic living, Mortimer Adler – a contemporary of Dewey – argued that 'democracy has much more to fear from the mentality of its teachers than from the nihilism of Hitler' (Shapiro, 1995, p. 79).

Current criticisms, like Christodoulou's in *Seven Myths About Education* (2014), argue that Dewey opposed 'facts and understanding' (p. 16), and insinuate that Dewey dismissed knowledge, teacher expertise and authority. Christodoulou continues by saying that Dewey 'praised methods where the child's own inclinations and interests were allowed to determine the education process' (2014, p. 28), suggesting that learning activities were determined by pupils' unrestrained wants and desires.

However, even a quick scan of *Experience and Education* will show that Dewey was supremely concerned with both the acquisition of knowledge and carefully organised experiences managed by expert teachers. Here is just one example.

> *'No experience is educative that does not tend both to knowledge of more facts and entertaining of more ideas and to a better, a more orderly, arrangement of them. It is not true that organization is a principle foreign to experience.'*
>
> (Dewey, 1938, p. 82)

Subsequent misinterpretations of Dewey have led to the word 'experience' becoming an embattled term in today's educational discourse (Alexander, 1987), but an honest engagement with Dewey's theory of experience can provide educators with useful questions about how to create meaningful educational experiences.

Dewey's theory of experience is part of his attempt to move beyond the dualism of objectivism and relativism. In *Experience and Education*, he sets out two criteria for experience: continuity and interaction. The principle of continuity rests on the

assumption that ‘every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences’ (1938, p. 35). For Dewey, a continuity of experience leads to growth, but not all experiences are equal. Differentiating educative experiences from miseducative ones requires teachers’ expertise in ensuring pupils experience the right kind of growth (or growth in the right direction).

> *‘Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into. The greater maturity of experience which should belong to the adult as educator puts him [sic] in a position to evaluate each experience of the young in a way in which the one having the less mature experience cannot do. It is then the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading. There is no point in his being more mature if, instead of using his greater insight to help organize the conditions of the experience of the immature, he throws away his insight. Failure to take the moving force of an experience into account so as to judge and direct it on the ground of what it is moving into means disloyalty to the principle of experience itself.’*
>
> (Dewey, 1938, p. 35)

In discussing ‘interaction’ – or ‘transaction’, as Dewey later called it – Biesta (2014) writes, ‘education is neither about getting the curriculum into the child nor about the child just doing anything, but about establishing a productive and meaningful connection between the two’ (p. 31). Similar to Freire (another regularly misunderstood theorist), Dewey’s concerns are largely epistemological, arguing that ‘traditional’ education fails to acknowledge relational aspects of knowledge construction – how pupils come to know the world both cognitively and socioculturally. Dewey was concerned with knowledge *and* the relationship between the knower and knowledge. He wrote that the problem with ‘traditional’ education was ‘not that it emphasized the external conditions that enter into the control of the experiences but that it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decide what kind of experience is had’ (1938, p. 42).

For Biesta (2014), Dewey’s work

> *‘…means the end of the idea of knowledge as a picture of reality and instead puts forward the suggestion that our knowledge is always about relationships between actions and consequences. While this does mean that knowledge is a construction, it is not a construction happening somewhere in our head, but a construction “in transaction”, which means that knowledge is both constructed and real.’*
>
> (Biesta, 2014, p. 44)

This view is not hostile to 'facts', 'knowledge' or teachers' authority or expertise – far from it. It does, however, require educators and pupils to consider 'knowing' beyond the limits of dualism: not, Biesta warns, as an 'über-truth' or metanarrative, but 'as an attempt to address a very specific problem' (2014, p. 45). In this case, the question could be about how to differentiate between miseducative experiences and meaningful, educative experiences for pupils and teachers alike.

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Questions for discussion

1. What does it mean to *know* something, or how do I understand the process of knowing?

2. How can one identify, or what are the properties of, an educative experience?

3. How do I co-ordinate curricular content and concerns with learners' experiences and goals?

4. A curriculum of relationships

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10 July 2019

The recent climate protests involving youngsters going on 'strike' provides the stimulus for this reflection on the nature of curriculum. In Latin, the word 'curriculum' is derived from the verb *currere*, indicating both something current and something that is 'to be delivered', preferably quickly, on racing horses on the way to Rome.

Translated to the world of education, curriculum is thus expected to deliver matters of importance, which may include the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are fundamental to survival in society: employment, economic security and ultimately, a safe planet to live on. It is apparent from recent 'strikes' that a breach of contract may have occurred between school curricula and children's rights to a good education – and that this breach of contract is taking place on a planetary scale.

Understanding curriculum in relation to children's rights has illustrious roots which go back to Kantian philosophy. Two well-known Kantian ideas – respect for the dignity of others, and the freedom and autonomy for each person to rationally determine the course of their own lives – have influenced legislation on children's additional needs, child protection and welfare, as well as broader theorising on adult–child relationships. According to these principles, children have a right to claim an education that prepares them to exert rational judgement over their own lives, but also a right to claim a healthy environment that will support their life-projects.

It is hard to argue against this. However, as MacAllister (2019) reminds us, rights-based understandings of both education and the environment depend on a combination of protection (that is, from physical or mental harm) and freedom (from abuses of power and/or mismanagement of Earth's resources), which are dependent upon the actions of some *others*, who may be parents, teachers and other members of society.

Arguably, such *otherness* is what lies at the root of the thorny issue of whether education is delivering for children – a question that we can also recognise in current theorising

about environmental issues. For example, the well-known 'tragedy of the commons' – originally defined by Hardin (1968) – encapsulates the problem of how to prevent abuse (and thus enabling freedom) over something that is fundamentally for the benefit and right of *everybody*.

So, the first response to this problem can be found in the proliferation of technocratic approaches to curriculum-making, visible in an emphasis on specified curricular content (in England and Sweden, for example), or curricular outcomes (as in Scotland). A similar trend is found in environmental studies, with the production of large databases listing key species and resources, and their relative price, so that the conservation 'curriculum' can be delivered. In the era of measurement and judgement, such approaches are often justified by the rhetoric of addressing questions of children's rights: ensuring that what is important is being delivered, and that all potential abusers are kept in check.

'Being educated and being able to act and live well in one's environment requires new thinking about the nature of the educational relationship, and how such relationships are enacted in multiple contexts.'

However, as targets and indicators continue to hold centre-stage in global educational policy, a lively debate continues to take place concerning the role of teachers. As early as 1975, Lawrence Stenhouse referred to curriculum as a 'stick to beat the teachers with', capturing the fundamental problem that teachers face: ensuring that students attain well on tests (which establish their right to progress in education) while at the same time preventing the exertion of both children's and their own freedom and judgement. This impossible condition reminds us once again that any contract established in education is not simply an economic transaction of material goods passing from one person to the *other*, but it involves the necessity of establishing meaningful and equitable relationships with each other, as individuals who care for, and are cared for by, others.

Being educated and being able to act and live well in one's environment will thus require new thinking about the nature of the educational relationship, and how such relationships are enacted in multiple contexts and, ultimately, in that Earth space that we share with *others*. A relational perspective on knowledge and education challenges traditional views of curriculum as the prescription of what children

ought to know and be able to do, by instead valuing dialogue among a multiplicity of cultural perspectives and *felt* experiences, with teachers and students confronting the real problems of their existence and their relationships (Grundy, 1987).

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Questions for discussion

1. How can we design and enact a 'curriculum of relationships' by taking account of a multiplicity of legitimate voices and experiences, humans and non-humans?
2. What methods and approaches can help us research and understand the multiplicity of relationships in which we are ourselves implicated?
3. How do we understand and express 'quality' of the educational process beyond measurement?

5. Towards an understanding of curricular justice

A provocation

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10 July 2019

There are a number of premises that underpin this think-piece about 'reimagining a curriculum for social justice'. They include the assumptions that we need an education system with broad purposes – committed to benefitting society and individual wellbeing beyond academic outcomes – and that a rich, socially just curriculum is central to that. I want to draw on the work of Nancy Fraser to suggest what this curriculum might look like.

For Nancy Fraser,

> *'justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction'.*
>
> (Fraser, 2010, p. 16)

Inhibiting this parity of participation are economic, cultural and political injustices. Such injustices are brought about through an unequal distribution of resources and social goods, by various forms of discrimination and through the denial of a voice in key decisions impacting upon one's life. The solutions are, respectively, redistribution, recognition and representation.

In a distributive sense, then, and taking a high-quality curriculum as a social good, a just arrangement is one in which all students experience the same quality social good. This can only come about through a common curriculum. This does not necessarily mean that curriculum content is identical in all locations, but that all students experience a curriculum with common features. Within such a curriculum, all young people will be exposed to important disciplinary concepts; will be challenged intellectually; will be introduced to new and wondrous knowledge that they would not otherwise have encountered; and will come to see that knowledge is socially and politically constructed. The place of the canon in this is, of course and as always, a matter for serious discussion in relation to social

justice. The work of Michael Young (2008) on powerful knowledges, and of Raewyn Connell (1993) on curricular justice, are good starting points for such discussions.

> **'In a distributive sense, taking a high-quality curriculum as a social good, a just arrangement is one in which all students experience the same quality social good. This can only come about through a common curriculum.'**

A just curriculum is also one that does not erase difference, but has 'recognition' as a central tenet. Such a curriculum belongs in the kind of common school described by Fielding and Moss which, they argue, 'starts from a profound respect for otherness and singularity and a desire to experiment, to create new knowledge and new projects… [and has] a distinctive identity and [is] a place that welcomes and nourishes diversity' (2011, p. 88). A common high-quality curriculum, then, would regard 'recognition' and the importance of making the curriculum meaningful to young people as a central concern of curricular justice. In so doing it would draw and build upon the background knowledges of the students and their communities; it would acknowledge the ways in which culture shapes worldviews (for example, did Britain 'discover' or 'invade' what are now Australia, the North Americas and New Zealand); and it would make connections to the world beyond the classroom – often through the use of problem-based assessment. It would also not shy away from contentious issues, despite occasional backlashes – one only has to think of the various reactions to teaching about LGBT+ issues and attempts to address homophobia through the curriculum to see how such backlashes can make life difficult for teachers and their schools.

A socially just curriculum would also be concerned with representation – with ensuring that the voices of teachers, students and their communities are heard in the creation of curricula. A process of 'community curriculum making' (see Leat & Thomas, 2016) is one example of how such negotiations can take place. Leat and Thomas suggest that, among other attributes, community curriculum-making projects emanate from students' curiosity and draw upon the local community's resources. As such, the enacted curriculum created through this process is, though led by teachers, negotiated with students and their communities. Such a curriculum would also seek to demonstrate the ways in which young people can have an impact on the worlds they inhabit,

through the enhancement of active citizenship.

Raewyn Connell has made the observation that '[t]he issue of social justice is not an add-on. It is fundamental to what good education is about' (1993, p.15). This is most certainly true of the curriculum. We need to ensure that young people from marginalised backgrounds do not get a lesser curriculum than those from privileged backgrounds. We need to make sure that difference is recognised and valued, and that those who are most often marginalised from curriculum-making decisions are instead engaged in making those decisions. These three areas of justice overlap, and at times may appear to be in conflict with each other. Enacting a socially just curriculum thus requires teachers who are knowledgeable about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, reject deficit constructions of young people, and have deep commitments to and understandings of social justice.

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Author's note

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Questions for discussion

1. How do we ensure that *all* students receive an intellectually challenging curriculum despite perceptions about 'ability'?
2. What would a classroom in which engaging with sensitive/contentious topics is considered 'normal' look like?
3. How do we include student voice in the creation of the curriculum without diminishing important disciplinary content and processes?

6. Using mentoring and coaching to focus on the curriculum in action

Rachel Lofthouse
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9 July 2019

As changes in the curriculum appear on the horizon, it is essential for teachers and school leaders to engage critically and constructively with the opportunities and tensions that emerge. Teachers are used to making both reactive and proactive decisions, and those needed to put curriculum into action are no exception.

The terms 'mentoring' and 'coaching' are used differently across different cultures, professions and settings. In the UK, however, the mentoring of teachers is usually associated with induction at a career-entry stage (or associated with advancing up a career ladder). Most mentors have gained experience in the role that their mentee now occupies or is aspiring to, can offer clear advice and will support target-setting against, and often pass judgement in relation to the achievement of, standards established by an external agency (such as standards for qualified teacher status). Coaching tends to be considered more a matter of personal professional development: the coach might support their coachee by asking them questions that facilitate reflection and greater self-determination (Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh, 2017). What both have in common is that they can create a productive space for professional conversations (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017), and that is where their potential lies in terms of teachers' engagement with curriculum.

In these conversational spaces, a starting point would be a discussion related to the positionality of the teacher or school leader in relation to curriculum. Teachers might be expected to be consumers and deliverers of curriculum frameworks, the aims, objectives and content of which are largely defined by others. Teachers might be advised by others 'why' something should be included in the school curriculum, but be given the opportunity to determine the details of what is taught and how. Teachers might claim the curriculum-making space for themselves, generating new thematic constructs and working to carve out new learning opportunities for the students they teach.

Having established this relationship and explored the nooks and crannies of it (because rarely is anything

in education that clear-cut), the discussion can be orientated towards the notion of curriculum in action. I would describe this as bringing the curriculum alive through its design and the pedagogic choices involved in that process. Through mentoring and coaching conversations that articulate the associated opportunities and constraints, it becomes possible to tease out the roles of teachers (either individually or collectively), learners, resources and stakeholders. These conversations can be a space in which to rehearse ideas and problem-solve, and as the conversations can be sequenced over time they can become an integral part of the curriculum-in-action journey, allowing some stock-taking, some redirection and some broadening of perspectives.

So far so good. I have described in brief what the benefit might be if we were to take curriculum as a suitable focus for coaching and mentoring. However, there are two important caveats to this. The first is that establishing quality in coaching and mentoring is not without its problems. In earlier research, the problematic impact of performativity (Ball, 2003) on the experiences of coaching was revealed (Lofthouse & Leat, 2013), as was the vulnerability of mentoring in workplaces and teacher education programmes that place conflicting demands on mentors and mentees (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2014). The second is that the role of coaching and mentoring in curriculum thinking and implementation has not been widely researched. This gap in the research was recently discussed at two inaugural network meetings of a new research network focussed on coaching and mentoring in education, hosted by CollectivED at Leeds Beckett University. The network comprises practitioner-researchers, doctoral students and academics working in the field, and curriculum did not surface in the course of our discussions as a purpose of coaching or mentoring. This may reveal a gap worth pursuing by the research community. Clutterbuck (2013) has also argued for extending the research agenda.

We may be short of direct research evidence, but we need not be short of ideas for developing practice. One way of thinking this through is to focus on how we can ensure that coaching and mentoring do not just become busy activities, but instead form the bridge between professional learning and the development of practice. In a recent research synopsis (Lofthouse, 2018), I indicated the significance of individuals and their organisations sharing key attributes that can leverage effective mentoring (this

can also be applied to coaching): permission to think creatively; a sense of shared purpose; and being authentically rooted in the context. I also pointed out that tools can be used to improve the value of dialogue, including, perhaps, theoretical curriculum lenses to aid discussion. Finally, I noted that certain outcomes can be sought and then themselves used productively to sustain practice: these are the confidence to articulate ideas coherently, to be open to critique, and to have the expectation that professional learning is expansive, creating an extended curriculum repertoire and more knowledgeable practitioners.

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Questions for discussion

1. In your experience, where, when and with whom does curriculum become a topic of productive professional conversation?

2. What effective tools might generate deeper thinking among colleagues using coaching and/or mentoring as an opportunity to discuss curriculum in action?

3. Is it appropriate for conversations about curriculum to be limited to teachers and school leaders, or should the perspectives of learners be considered? If so, how?

7. Connecting and the curriculum

Reflections from Northern Ireland on joining the dots

Sharon Jones
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10 July 2019

As a teacher educator in Northern Ireland I was privileged to reflect about connecting learning, connecting times and cultures and, not least, connecting people, at the recent 'Re-imagining a curriculum for teacher knowledge' event in London – where, as it happened, the idea of connecting emerged as a recurrent theme.

1. Connecting learning

The 2007 Northern Ireland curriculum was re-visionary: a broad, balanced, flexible framework offering schools increased freedom and emphasising connected learning. Rather than traditional subjects, the primary curriculum describes learning areas: 'The World Around Us', for instance, embraces geography, history, science and technology. Teacher guidance was clear, but opportunities to learn *how* to connect more limited, which gave rise to concerns about the dilution of the depth and distinctiveness of disciplines. Moreover, the thinking skills and personal capabilities infusing the curriculum were generic. Even so, according to Greenwood, Richardson and Gracie (2017), many teachers connect learning successfully.

2. Connecting times and cultures

Northern Irish writer C. S. Lewis said:

> *'We need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet we need something to set against the present'.*
>
> (Lewis, 2001, p.58).

How quickly memory fades. My impression reading 'Troubles' literature with undergraduates is that knowledge of our history is limited. Suggestions that the humanities are being squeezed in schools by funding and assessment pressures are, therefore, worrying.

In the years since the 1998 Good Friday agreement, Northern Ireland's primary schools have become increasingly multilingual. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017) highlighted immigrant multilingual pupils as

being at risk of racist bullying and underachievement. Such children enjoy learning languages, and there is evidence of a positive correlation between immigrant multilingualism, language learning and achievement (Jones et al., 2018). Despite a deficit in language skills, and the enhanced intercultural understanding that language learning offers, there is no statutory requirement in Northern Ireland for children in primary schools to learn a language (Jones, Greenwood, Purdy, & McGuckian, 2017). Should languages be included in our primary curriculum, international mobility programmes for student teachers will be vital, since both excellent language and pedagogical skills are prerequisites to successful language teaching.

3. Connecting people

Despite our highly networked world, 'Loneliness has reached epidemic proportions in the UK, where researchers estimate that up to one in four people suffer from it' (Smith, 2018). The mental health picture in Northern Ireland suggests that connecting young people with their neighbours is crucial. Through shared education, schools from different sectors access funding for pupils, staff and the community to learn together. One similar project resulted in the reopening of huge gates in the wall separating two alienated communities, because children on both sides wanted to play together. This began simply, with schools drawing on popular children's stories to teach forgiveness in religious education, using materials from the International Institute of Forgiveness at the University of Wisconsin that address friendship, conflict and forgiveness rather than forgetting.

> **'In troubling times, connecting and the curriculum are crucial. There is surely opportunity in connecting, in and through learning, with other people, times, communities and cultures, to develop respect and a moral imagination.'**

Alan Jacobs's exploration of the fear of dehumanisation in five writers of the Second World War (bodies tattooed with numbers in internment camps sounded sombre warnings), and their desire to instil, through education, an appreciation of human dignity, is timely (Jacobs, 2018). As Ricoeur (1948) argued, we should view learners as human beings, each with a story to be valued, rather than functions or collections of behaviours. For Ricoeur, story is the gateway to understanding ourselves, our relationship with the world and others. Robert Coles, Vigen Guroian and Seamus Heaney (in his Five Fables, broadcast by the BBC) also explored the power of story to

transform through the development of moral imagination. If they are right, story must remain central to curriculum.

In troubling times, connecting and the curriculum are crucial. The Latin roots of the word 'opportunity' describe a hopeful picture of a boat brought safely to harbour. There is surely opportunity in connecting, in and through learning, with other people, times, communities and cultures, to develop respect and a moral imagination. The teacher's role in this is pivotal, so the task of reimagining a curriculum for teacher knowledge is vital.

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Questions for discussion

1. Lewis suggests the past can help us understand the present, and perhaps the future. How can we develop such an understanding by connecting different areas of the curriculum?
2. What opportunities are there, in your setting, to develop understanding and respect for other cultures through language learning?
3. If story helps develop a moral imagination, how could we engage more fully with story in schools?

8. Curriculum development

The practitioner's view

Sarah Seleznyov
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11 July 2019

Attending the BERA/BCF 'Reimagining a Curriculum for Teacher Knowledge' event enabled me to develop a deeper and broader understanding of recent thinking about the curriculum in England. Ofsted's new focus on curriculum has thrown many English schools into disarray. Very few schools have managed to maintain the integrity of their curriculum through recent years, during which English and maths results seemed to be all that mattered to the powers that be. So, this recent change is a welcome opportunity for many school leaders, but also a leap into the unknown with a teaching team whose skills have dwindled.

Several of the speakers at the event recognised the importance of getting teacher education right, in order to ensure that teachers can become active participants in curriculum design for their pupils. **Moira Hulme**, **Linda Clarke**, **Gary Beauchamp** and **Beth Dickson** explored how Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have shifted their approaches to teacher education in recent years, recognising it as a process that needs to be career-long and one on which universities should take the lead. These changes are not without their practical challenges: funds must be made available to match the proposed changes and the historic separation of initial teacher education and in-service continuing professional development must be addressed. As a teaching school we strive to get the balance right for our teachers, in a climate in which time to learn is restricted by increasingly tight budgets and accountability pressures: both school and teacher attitudes towards release time for professional development have become problematic over recent years.

And as **Beth Dickson** highlighted, the challenges are not just practical. Beth described the tension between declarative and procedural knowledge, which underlies the theory–practice debate we face in teacher education in England. Any teacher education curriculum must give teachers the declarative knowledge they need to teach, but such knowledge remains latent until it is explored through cycles

of reflective practice, with cohorts of pupils in different contexts, and over time in a rapidly changing society. Getting this balance right is something we struggle with for the students on our School Direct programme. Only by carefully combining both declarative and procedural knowledge in teacher education will we develop teachers who are able to craft such careful curricula for their pupils.

'As a teaching school we strive to get the balance right for our teachers, in a climate in which time to learn is restricted by increasingly tight budgets and accountability pressures.'

For many teachers engaged in debates about curriculum development, the biggest challenge has been understanding Ofsted's call for consideration of 'intent'. Both **Martin Mills** and **Laura Colucci-Gray** offered valuable advice on this issue. Mills called for schools to focus on developing a curriculum for social justice, through redistribution, representation and recognition. Teaching in an area of London that spans areas of both significant wealth and significant deprivation, we must ensure we distribute a common curriculum to all pupils. This curriculum must ensure that all voices in the community are represented, and that even the least advantaged pupils have a voice. It must recognise the value of the diversity in our multicultural community, build on pupils' own experiences and connect them to the wider world. Colucci-Gray described the challenges of engaging pupils in curriculum development in this way, mirroring those we face in south London. Our local schools must fight against decisions about curriculum content that are taken by those outside the community and premised on subjective notions of 'cultural capital'; they must be aware of how the pressure of external accountability can distort curriculum choices that teachers might make.

Similarly, **Kevin Smith** articulated a tension between knowing and knowledge, as exemplified in the Twittersphere debates currently raging in relation to 'traditional' versus 'progressive' approaches to curriculum development. He describes the complicated relationship between knowledge and experience, and placed teachers clearly in the driving seat of curriculum decisions as 'experts' on their own pupils, deciding not only curriculum content but also how learning experiences should be sequenced. Those of us who work in schools know that 'lightbulb'

moments for pupils, those instances of real learning, are always a result of the interplay between knowledge and experience.

Sharon Jones exemplified the challenges we face with local curriculum design in her exploration of a curriculum for Northern Ireland – one that must consider both the connections between and integrity of the disciplines, enable pupils to see themselves within their own historical and geographical context, and engage them with their peers and the wider community in order to reduce increasingly pervasive social isolation.

Finally, **Rachel Lofthouse** offered us a practical route to achieving this complex balancing act: using mentoring and coaching to support teachers engaged in curriculum design to think creatively, to develop a sense of shared purpose and a deep understanding of context, and to be open to critique. She closed the day's circle of thought by reminding us that effective curriculum development relies on a knowledgeable and continually developing teacher workforce.

Questions for discussion

The questions presented to those of us working in schools are threefold.

1. Since effective curriculum development relies on a continually developing workforce, how do we achieve continuity in learning from initial teacher training through to longstanding teachers?
2. How can we enable teachers to develop a deep understanding of curriculum 'intent' so that they can get the curriculum right for our pupils and their community?
3. How can we provide opportunities for teachers to work together with pupils to develop exciting curricula that fuse both knowledge and knowing, and that promote both social justice and global awareness?

9. National curriculum in England

The first 30 years, part 1

Mary James

2 October 2018

For the whole of the 1970s I taught in secondary schools. (I am that old!) At that time there was no national curriculum (NC), so teachers usually decided *what* to teach as well as *how*to teach. These decisions were often guided by the content of textbooks, or examination syllabuses, although a number of innovative curriculum development projects were set up around this time, many by the then Schools Council in response to the decision to raise the school leaving age to 16 in 1973. Examples included: the Schools Council History Project; Geography for the Young School Leaver; the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP); the Moral Education Project 8–13; the General Studies Project for sixth forms; and Nuffield Science. The influence of these projects on curriculum and pedagogy can be detected to this day. However, there was a sense that this cafeteria-type system could not continue. Politicians of all stripes were increasingly uncomfortable with what they regarded as curriculum capture by the teaching profession and universities – what became known as the 'educational establishment'. In a democracy it seemed right that all stakeholders, including employers, parents, the general public and their elected representatives, should have a say.

'Politicians of all stripes were increasingly uncomfortable with what they regarded as curriculum capture by the teaching profession and universities – what became known as the "educational establishment".'

As early as 1962, David Eccles, then the Conservative secretary of state (SoS) for education, pledged to open up the 'secret garden of the curriculum'. It was he who established the Curriculum Study Group – the forerunner of the Schools Council. This move was given a significant boost by the Labour prime minister, James Callaghan, who in 1976 initiated a 'great debate' on curriculum. But it was Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher and her SoS, Kenneth Baker, who really changed things through the Education Reform Act of 1988.

Thatcher's vision was somewhat different from those who had gone before. She wanted to promote a free market in education, believing that this would raise standards in a post-industrial economy. She saw a common curriculum, and its associated testing arrangements, as the way to judge schools. The money for schools would then follow the results through local financial management. She wanted something simple, based on a core of English, mathematics and science, but Kenneth Baker had a broader vision, more akin to his own grammar school education. Baker's tenacity prevailed, and the first NC was made up of three core and seven foundation subjects for both primary and secondary schools. By 1993, however, it was evident that the curriculum was virtually unmanageable, so the first of a number of reviews and revisions was initiated.

Ron Dearing's review in 1994 was followed by the publication of an updated curriculum, with reduced content, in 1995. When Labour took power in 1997, the new SoS, David Blunkett, announced another overhaul and published a new NC in 1999, allowing more time for the core, and reducing content in foundation subjects. Then in 2007 more changes were announced, based partly on a review by Jim Rose of the primary curriculum. These were designed to allow schools more flexibility by being less prescriptive about knowledge content and promoting understanding and skills in 'areas of learning'. When the government changed to a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, the new SoS, Michael Gove, initiated yet another review that eventually led to the NC that we have today.[4]

Gove's priority was to push the neoliberal agenda forward with the establishment of free schools and academies, so he was not as directly involved as his schools minister, Nick Gibb, was. No one can doubt Gibb's commitment to education because, with only one short break, he has been either Conservative education spokesperson or minister since 2005. His abiding concern has been with what he has perceived as lack of attention to 'knowledge' in the curriculum and the dominance of progressivist pedagogy.

The NC review initiated by Gove was conducted by an expert panel (EP) led by Tim Oates of Cambridge Assessment (CA). Tim was asked to lead the EP because ministers had seen CA's 2009 statement

4 Documents related to these reviews can be found on Derek Gillard's very useful website 'Education in England: the history of our schools', at www.educationengland.org.uk/index

expressing regret about the lack of specificity about essential knowledge in the 2007 NC (reported in Mansell 2009). Tim told me that the CA paper was stimulated by the fact that his chief examiner for science asked whether it was OK to set a GCSE question on photosynthesis – a fundamental concept that was not mentioned in the NC. Ministers clearly felt that they had found a like-minded expert. Having agreed to lead the EP, Tim then asked me, Dylan Wiliam and Andrew Pollard to join him. For the 'greater good' we agreed, after each being interviewed by Nick Gibb, who used the opportunity to emphasise how impressed he was with E D Hirsch's 'Core Knowledge' curriculum.[5]

The EP's remit was to draw on robust evidence to inform drafting of new programmes of study and build a detailed framework for the NC, taking account of the requirements of successful educational jurisdictions across the world, and the views of stakeholders

Reference

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5 For more about the work of E D Hirsch, see his foundation's website: coreknowledge.org.

Questions for discussion

1. How much control should teachers and schools be given over *what* to teach? Should their responsibilities be confined to *how* to teach?
2. Is it right that all stakeholders – parents, students, employers and politicians – should have a say in the construction of a national curriculum? How can this be managed?
3. How can breadth, balance and coherence be achieved without overload?
4. Is there real tension between knowledge and skills in the curriculum, or is this a false dichotomy?

10. National curriculum in England

The first 30 years, part 2

Mary James

2 October 2018

The work of the expert panel, for the most recent review of the national curriculum (NC), occupied much of 2011. Although all four members (Tim Oates, Andrew Pollard, Dylan Wiliam and myself) were involved in attending stakeholder meetings, analysing consultation responses and commenting on draft programmes of study (PoS), we also developed a division of labour. Tim oversaw the development of the PoS, while Andrew and I took the lead in writing the EP report, which attempted to provide a principled framework for a 'whole curriculum'. However, by the autumn of 2011 Andrew and I felt that we could not continue our work on the review because of concerns about:

- the way that PoS development was beginning to bypass the EP as a whole
- the downgrading of arts and music
- the constraints imposed on schools by year-on-year specification in primary schools
- the undervaluing of oral language development
- concerns for transition between the early years foundation stage and primary
- underdevelopment of curricular aims that should guide all decisions about content selection
- the undue pace of the review
- the undervaluing of stakeholder responses to the consultation.

However, Michael Gove called us in to a meeting and persuaded us to stay on, promising to publish our EP report in full. This he did on 19 December 2011 (DfE 2011).

In 2013 the government published the NC that is now in force. Some of the EP's recommendations have been implemented: a sub-division within key stage 2, more attention to oral development, and the abandonment of 'levels' of attainment. However, other concerns remain: breadth and balance are not maintained to 16, in contrast with other advanced countries; arts, music and design and technology are not compulsory, nor are they included in the English Baccalaureate. Furthermore, the aims of the curriculum, which should be central, remain very sketchy, although Matthew Arnold's exhortation that the curriculum should introduce young people to

the 'best that has been thought and said' is invoked, and the statement in the 2002 Education Act is reiterated – but with 'state-funded' replacing 'maintained', and 'nursery' omitted.

> *'The curriculum for a maintained school or maintained nursery school satisfies the requirements of this section if it is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which: (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.'*
> (Education Act 2002, ch. 32, pt. 6)

Presumably a school's own curriculum is expected to fulfil these more nuanced aims, in any time left after the requirements of the NC are met. Gove's original promise to reduce the amount of curricular prescription and give 'schools and teachers more freedom to decide how to teach this most effectively' is somewhat undermined by a primary curriculum that gives 85 pages of statutory requirements and non-statutory guidance for English, 44 pages for mathematics, 31 pages for science, and two pages each for eight foundation subjects. There is less prescription in the secondary curriculum, but the *Times Educational Supplement* recently reported that secondary schools felt impelled to increase hours devoted to core subjects and reduce teaching on the arts (Ward 2018).

Throughout the history of the national curriculum in England, the same themes recur. Debate about the following issues continue.

- Aims: what is the curriculum intended to achieve, and for what societal purposes?
- How are separate subjects supposed to cohere in the whole curriculum experienced by students?
- The balance between the national curriculum and a school curriculum designed for local needs.
- The balance in curriculum content between knowledge of facts and concepts ('knowing that') and the development of skills and processes ('knowing how').
- Whose responsibility it is to specifying curriculum content, in subjects or otherwise, and who should be responsible for organising content (for example, through different curriculum structures and timetables) and deciding how it should be taught (pedagogy)? The temptation for governments to stray beyond specifying curriculum content is evidenced in the obsessive promotion of the pedagogy of synthetic phonics by ministers.

- The appropriate level of specification and prescription to avoid overload for teachers and students, given that students have only about 10,450 hours in lessons between the ages of five and 16.
- Mixed messages about teacher autonomy.
- All the perverse consequences of NC assessment and an unintelligent accountability regime.

At present we are in a relatively quiet period, although a new 'multiplication tables check' is being trialled for year 4 and will be rolled out next year. This initiative has the fingerprints of the school standards minister, Nick Gibb – an accountant by training – all over it.

The key question now is, How can we continue to improve the NC for all our children, but avoid the political churn that has characterised the last 30 years?

It seems to me that we might learn some lessons from high-performing jurisdictions like Hong Kong and Finland (for a case study from Hong Kong see James, 2017). Of course, their contexts are very different from ours, but they have realised the following benefits.

- Creating a standing, cross-party, stakeholder body to take overall responsibility.
- Recognising the need to allow a longer time-scale for design, development, implementation, evaluation and fine-tuning, with attention to teachers' professional learning, properly resourced.
- Paying careful attention to the recruitment, retention and reward of teachers.
- Developing an intelligent accountability system based on evidenced judgement rather than data manipulation.

When I taught O-level sociology in schools, at the beginning of my career, I remember the textbooks describing education as a 'political football'. It still is. This has to stop.

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Questions for discussion

1. Were the concerns justified that motivated the resignation letter to Michael Gove in autumn 2011? Have they now been addressed or diminished in importance? Have new ones arisen?

2. What space and resource is there for schools to develop a 'school curriculum'?

3. Which of the themes in continuing debate (see bullet points) do you consider to be the most important and urgent?

4. How could the political churn of the last 30 years be avoided?

11. What next for curriculum?

Dominic Wyse & Yana Manyukhina
UCL Institute of Education

10 April 2019

People are talking about curriculum again. Not just literacy and maths, but the whole curriculum. What's more, there seems to be a real appetite for these discussions: organisations as diverse as Ofsted, the CBI, BERA, schools and university education departments, are thinking about curriculum. But what type of curriculum is best: 'knowledge-based', 'skills-oriented', or 'learner-centred'?

We were commissioned to do some work as part of the review of Ireland's national curriculum for primary schools. In particular, we were asked to investigate the place of knowledge in the curriculum. The research included a comparison of the curricula of four jurisdictions internationally, selected according to three criteria.

1. Jurisdictions in which English is at least one of the dominant languages, including national curriculum texts available digitally in English.
2. Significant levels of ethnic diversity.
3. High scoring in PISA outcomes (OECD, 2018).

The jurisdictions and the curriculum documents used as the data for content and discourse analyses were as follows.

- **Australia:** 1. The Australian Curriculum: Learning Areas; 2. The Australian Curriculum: General Capabilities; 3. The Australian Curriculum: Cross-Curriculum Priorities.
- **Canada (Ontario):** The Ontario curriculum subject guides.
- **Hong-Kong:** The Basic Education Curriculum Guide.
- **England:** The National Curriculum in England: Framework Document.

Our research analysed the ways in which knowledge was positioned in these curriculum texts in relation to other elements such as skills, values and attitudes. As a result, we identified three types of curricula.

- **Knowledge-based (e.g. England):** Knowledge is the dominant organisational emphasis across the curriculum as a whole.
- **Skills-oriented (e.g. Australia and Ontario):** skills are an important consideration, particularly in relation to applying knowledge, which remains an important element.

- **Learner-oriented (e.g. Hong Kong):** the dominant organising emphasis is on the learner, including whole-person development and lifelong learning. This was accompanied by an explicit recognition that a bias towards an emphasis on knowledge is undesirable.

The fact that all three curriculum models have been used in countries whose PISA results are strong means that, on the basis of these data, policymakers could make an evidence-based claim that a learner-centred curriculum is appropriate. We have just published a paper in the *Curriculum Journal* that builds on our research by exploring learner agency in relation to the curriculum (Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019).

In England, the national inspectorate, Ofsted, is now requiring schools to think about curriculum models. Amanda Spielman (2018) outlined three models in her blog post. Table 1 compares models with ours.

Of considerable concern is the fact that the learner-centred curriculum model is not even a consideration in Ofsted's recent work on curriculum; had curriculum researchers in the UK been consulted, we doubt that this omission would have been made. Here are some suggestions of people who could have contributed (and apologies to any I've left out): Ruth Dann, Carmel Gallagher, Christopher Hanley, Louise Hayward, Mary James, David Leat, Kay Livingston, Ian Menter, Andrew Pollard, Mark Priestley and Kevin Smith. And, for a wider international perspective, there are the 50 eminent authors of the chapters in the *SAGE Handbook of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment* (Wyse, Hayward & Pandya, 2016), who give more food for thought.

The renewed emphasis on curriculum in schools is long overdue, and is welcome and necessary. However, there is also

Table 1
A comparison of curriculum models

National Curricula (Manyukhina & Wyse)		School Curricula (Amanda Spielman, Ofsted)
Knowledge-based	↔	Knowledge-led approach
Skills-oriented	↔	Knowledge-engaged
	→	Skills-led
Learner-centred	- - - - - →	*Absent from Spielman classification*

Sources: Manyukhina & Wyse (2019) vs Spielman (2018)

an imperative to look critically at England's national curriculum. It is time to start a new and different process of national curriculum development in England. We have much to learn from our neighbours in Ireland (on both sides of the border), Scotland and Wales – their more inclusive processes of curriculum development, for example.

The assessment-led and knowledge-based approach that has typified England has not been fit for purpose. Instead of knowledge, powerful or otherwise, it is time to focus more on empowering learners.

This blog post is based on the article 'Learner agency and the curriculum: a critical realist perspective' by Yana Manyukhina and Dominic Wyse (2019), published in the *Curriculum Journal*.

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Questions for discussion

1. What kind of curriculum model do you think is best for children's learning?
2. What should the next government in England do in relation to the national curriculum?
3. How should knowledge by represented in national curricula?

12. Curriculum is – or should be – at the heart of educational practice

Mark Priestley & Stavroula Philippou
Lead editors, *Curriculum Journal*

10 May 2019

New forms of national curriculum emerging worldwide have shifted the focus from input regulation – detailed specification of content to be taught – to output regulation – evaluation of the outputs of education, gauged via analysis of attainment data and by school inspections (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). This 'new curriculum' (Priestley & Biesta, 2013) continues the trend of positioning education systems more widely, and curriculum in particular, as drivers of economic development and national competitiveness (Yates & Young, 2010).

In light of these international trends in education, systematic and nuanced thinking about the curriculum has never been more important. The curriculum is – or at least should be – at the heart of educational discourse and practice. Moreover, the role of scholarly journals such as the *Curriculum Journal*, with a specialist focus on curriculum studies, is key to developing and maintaining this. It is therefore with a great sense of responsibility and pride that we take on the editorship of a journal with an illustrious and distinctive history, and with a strong track-record of making important contributions to scholarship, research and practice in the field of curriculum.

The new editorial team comprises two lead editors – Mark Priestley (University of Stirling, UK) and Stavroula Philippou (University of Cyprus) – and an extended international team of associate editors.[6]

Definitions of 'curriculum' as a concept of inquiry and 'curriculum studies' as an interdisciplinary field have repeatedly been addressed in the literature through the metaphor of boundaries – disciplinary and in other forms. In a sense, a key task occupying a journal – especially one of the few and key journals in a particular field – relates to the paradoxical task of maintaining and even consolidating those boundaries, while simultaneously contributing to understanding, challenging and reshaping them.

6 See https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation

Over the years the *Curriculum Journal* has focussed on, and will continue to focus on, curriculum theory, policy and practice, including research on issues concerning curriculum structure, organisation and development, teaching, learning, pedagogy and assessment. All of these issues comprise the multi-layered social practices through which curriculum is made.

‘Curriculum research and scholarship is currently at a critical juncture, with the curriculum becoming more central to education debate and policy.’

We view curriculum research and scholarship as currently being at a critical juncture. In the UK, after much activity and productivity in the 1970s and 1980s, it became negatively influenced by the introduction of the national curriculum, becoming primarily geared towards questions of fidelity of implementation and normative evaluation of the national curriculum. In recent years we have seen strong signs of a revival of interest in curriculum matters that go beyond these questions. Curriculum discourse, so often seemingly absent from educational conversations in the UK, is once more apparent, for example, in the public pronouncements of Ofsted in England. These trends are evident more broadly.

In many countries, the curriculum has become a central pillar of education policy, manifested in recent years in the development of new and innovative forms of national curriculum policy and a renewed emphasis on the important role of teachers as curriculum makers (for example, the Welsh Successful Futures initiative, the New Zealand Curriculum and Curriculum.nu in the Netherlands).

These trends are to be welcomed, but come with considerable challenges, not least in supporting and sustaining the capacity of professionals to conceptualise, mediate and enact the curriculum in educational institutions such as schools. Furthermore, such attention to curriculum has sometimes contributed to its constriction, as official curricular texts and policies have been framed as tools of regulation and control, both of teachers’ work and of pupil learning, with a strong focus on standardised or high-stakes testing. The increased focus on teachers and the curriculum is clearly related to school development and questions about how different models of continuing professional education become a vehicle to facilitate teachers’ curriculum practice at school and classroom level. To some extent it has also found its way into discussions about initial teacher education.

Internationally, significant parallel developments greatly add to the complexity of the curriculum field. In North America, the 'reconceptualisation' of curriculum studies over recent decades, and subsequent concerns over 'internationalisation' and 'post-reconceptualisation', have shifted the focus to some extent from questions of curriculum structure, organisation, development and enactment towards wider historical, sociological and political questions about the curriculum. On the European continent, the concept of 'curriculum' has been less prominent as a field or object of scholarship and research than has been the case in the Anglophone sphere; instead, questions about the curriculum have been approached more through the traditions of 'bildung' and 'didactics'. Important questions about the interconnections between didactics and curriculum have long engaged curriculum scholars across the Atlantic.

We see the *Curriculum Journal* as an important forum for these debates, and our role as editors as enabling such debates within the space provided by the journal. The papers included in this first issue of the new volume focus on the crucial and difficult curriculum questions that we will seek to explore throughout our tenure.

This blog is an edited extract from the editorial to issue 1, volume 30 of the *Curriculum Journal*, by Mark Priestley and Stavroula Philippou.

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Questions for discussion

1. Who gets to 'make' curriculum in your context at the moment and who doesn't?
2. What are the implications of neglecting some curriculum components when making the curriculum in schools (for example, emphasising knowledge but not considering assessment and/or pedagogical practices)?

About the authors

Gary Beauchamp is associate dean (research) for the School of Education and Social Policy and professor of education at Cardiff Metropolitan University. After many years working as a primary school teacher, Gary moved into higher education as a lecturer at Swansea University. He became programme director for the primary PGCE course as well as lecturing in primary science, music and education and professional studies. He also taught on a range of master's modules and supervised research students. He moved to fulfil the same duties at the Swansea School of Education before taking the post of programme director for the BA (Hons) educational studies degree at Cardiff Metropolitan University in 2007. He was appointed director of research in 2009.

Gary's research focus is on information and communications technology (ICT) in education, particularly the use of interactive technologies in learning and teaching. He is currently supervising PhD students looking at ICT in education and music education. Professor Beauchamp has also published work on ICT and interactive teaching, primary education, music education (the area in which he gained his Ph.D. in 1996) and primary school science education.

Gary was elected onto BERA Council in 2018.

Linda Clarke was born in Brooklyn, New York, and moved to Northern Ireland in early childhood. She qualified as a teacher in 1983 and served as a geography teacher and head of department for 15 years. Her master's degree is in education technology, and her PhD examines the use of e-learning in initial teacher education. She was appointed as a lecturer in education at Ulster University in 2001 and senior lecturer in 2008, with teaching responsibilities in initial teacher education (as course director in PGCE geography) and in continuing professional development courses in the information and communications technology pathway of the master of education degree.

Laura Colucci-Gray holds a teaching, research and leadership appointment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and sustainability education at Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. A former biology teacher, Laura holds a degree in natural sciences from the University of Turin and a PhD in science education, awarded by the Open University. Laura is passionate about real-life learning, radical democracy and participatory methodologies across the arts and sciences.

Beth Dickson is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. In her roles

as associate dean of initial teacher education (ITE), deputy head of school and director of learning and teaching, she has led the teams that have reformed teacher education.

Beginning in 2008, the PGCE programme was restructured and raised to master's level, with credits remaining live for five years after the end of the course so that students could complete the remaining credits in practice. The remaining credits were delivered online so that they could be accessed from wherever students were teaching. In 2010–2011, a pilot study was undertaken to construct a closer partnership with local authorities and schools in order to provide a more structured experience for pre-service teachers in schools. Students reported feeling greater tutor and peer support under this model, and it was subsequently rolled out through all ITE programmes.

Moira Hulme is professor of teacher education at Manchester Metropolitan University, where she leads the research group on Teacher Education: Curriculum, Leadership and Inclusion. She co-convenes the BERA Teacher Education and Development special interest group. Her research addresses new forms of teacher education, teacher employment, professional learning and development, and research capacity in teacher education. She is currently working on 'The development of cluster-based approaches to school improvement', a research study commissioned by the Education Achievement Service for South East Wales.

Mary James retired in 2014 from the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge; in that same year she completed her four years as vice president and latterly president of BERA. In 2011 she was a member of the expert panel appointed by Michael Gove to assist the review of the national curriculum in England. From 1989 to 2014 she was a trustee of the British Curriculum Foundation (latterly the British Curriculum Forum, which is now incorporated into BERA), and was the first editor of the *Curriculum Journal*. She was a member of the UK Assessment Reform Group from 1992 until it 'retired' in 2010.

Her research has been in the field of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, notably as deputy director of the ESRC's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), and director of the TLRP project, 'Learning How to Learn – in classrooms, schools and networks'. She taught for 10 years in secondary schools at the beginning of her career.

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Rachel sits on BERA's Publications Committee and is an editor of the BERA Blog.

Yana Manyukhina is research associate at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy (0–11 years). Her area of expertise cuts across the sociology of identity, the sociology of morality, the philosophy of critical realism, and qualitative methodologies. Yana's work to date contributes to unlocking the potential of critical realism to advance understanding of the real causes of social processes and phenomena. Her first book, published in the Routledge Critical Realism Series, is a critical realist account of ethical consumption, relating the underlying processes of personal change to the wider social contexts. She is now exploring the potential of critical realism to provide a new level of sensitivity in explaining educational processes and outcomes.

Martin Mills is director of the Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research, UCL Institute of Education. His research interests include teachers' work, alternative forms of schooling, and social justice issues in education.

Sarah Seleznyov is director at the London South Teaching School Alliance, and has worked in London schools for over 25 years. She has been a deputy head and a school improvement consultant, and still works as a school improvement partner. Before leading the Alliance, she worked at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning, UCL Institute of Education, where she designed and led a range of research-informed programmes for school leaders and teacher enquiry projects. She also acted as a facilitator on the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leaders.

During her career, Sarah has also worked for the Fischer Family Trust and the National Literacy Trust. She is a specialist maths tutor on the Cognitive Acceleration research project based at King's College University (letsthink.org.uk).

Sarah's research specialism is Japanese lesson study, and she has published widely on the use of lesson study outside Japan. She

is a member of the Collaborative Lesson Research UK group. She also sits on the steering group of BERA's British Curriculum Forum.

Kevin Smith is a senior lecturer in education in the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. His research interests include curriculum theory, critical pedagogy and cultural studies. He is also committed to developing capacity for educational research in Wales, and enjoys opportunities to work with schools, local educational organisations and higher education institution partners in pursuit of that goal.

Kevin is also the co-director of the student experience for the School of Social Sciences. This includes working closely with personal tutors, student academic representatives and colleagues concerned with inclusive education. Kevin was co-opted onto BERA Council in 2017 and sits on BERA's Engagement Committee.

Dominic Wyse is professor of early childhood and primary education at the University College London (UCL), Institute of Education (IOE), head of the Department of Learning and Leadership, and founding director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy (0–11). Dominic will be president of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) from late 2019 to 2021. He is a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS), and of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA). Prior to his current role at the IOE as head of academic department learning and leadership, Dominic was faculty director of research, consultancy and knowledge transfer, in the Faculty of Children and Learning. Dominic has significant experience in music that began with his undergraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music. Before joining the IOE, Dominic was a senior lecturer at the University of Cambridge. He was also appointed as the first director of music-making at Churchill College, Cambridge, where he was a fellow and director of studies for education. In the past Dominic was a reader at Liverpool John Moores University, and a teacher with experience working in London, Bradford and Huddersfield in the infant and junior phases.

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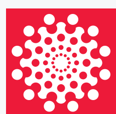

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