

Curriculum Development

A Guide for Educators

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London EC1Y 1SP

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2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

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B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Marianne Lagrange
Assistant editor: Robert Patterson
Marketing manager: Dilhara Attygalle
Cover design: Wendy Scott
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd,
Croydon, CR0 4YY

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First published 2016

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2015940529

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-44627-329-6
ISBN 978-1-44627-330-2 (pbk)

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Curriculum Evolution

Chapter summary

The historical underpinning and antecedents of the Education Reform Act (1988) and the thinking behind the first National Curriculum in the United Kingdom.

The idea of a broad and balanced curriculum is not new, according to the Education Reform Act:

the curriculum for a maintained school should be a balanced and broadly based curriculum. (DES, 1988)

From 1996 until 2007, the author (Bill Boyle) was contracted by the UK government's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to carry out the longitudinal monitoring of the nationally representative sample of primary schools (initially key stage 1 and key stage 2, but subsequently a representative sample of Early Years settings was included). The type of data collected included school type, percentage of free school meals, length and timings of teaching week, curriculum priorities by subject (were 'breadth' and 'balance' as stated by the 1988 Education Reform Act being achieved?), programmes of study (how was the appropriate programme being covered and what were the issues of difficulty in covering the programme, if any?), percentage teaching time allocation (by year group, by subjects specified as statutory core and foundation), combined/separate subject teaching (the extent that subjects are taught discretely or combined with another subject or element of another subject), planning for 'inclusion' (meeting individual learning needs) and finally but not least, success at meeting government expectations (will the majority of pupils meet the expected levels at the end of the relevant key stage?).

With the pressure 'to raise standards' in English and mathematics exerted by the Department for Education increasing steadily over that 11-year period, the introduction of national numeracy and literacy strategies and percentage 'success level targets' set centrally for pupils' national test outcomes, a reduction in the teaching time for the (untested or 'unSAT-ed') foundation subjects was probable. It was the extent of the reduction in the teaching time afforded to those 'other' subjects and the consequent disproportionate 'unbalancing' of the curriculum evidenced by the monitoring survey data that was alarming.

The 1988 Education Reform Act which instituted the National Curriculum and its assessment stated that the curriculum should be 'a balanced and broadly based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society and prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult and working life' (DES, 1988).

This short preamble to the Act had its origins in and extended the statement in the 1944 Education Act that children should be educated 'according to their age, ability and aptitude'. However, the 1988 ERA drew more from the proposals of the 1985 White Paper, *Better Schools* which set out a list of the purposes of education in schools. These were to help pupils to:

develop lively enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally, and to apply themselves to tasks and physical skills; acquire understanding, knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast changing world; use language and numbers effectively; develop personal and moral values, respect for religious values and tolerance of other races, religions and ways of life; understand the world in which they live and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations; appreciate human achievements and aspirations. (DES, 1985: 14)

The major revision of the National Curriculum by Dearing (SCAA, 1993) reduced and clarified the understanding, knowledge and skills to be taught. Dearing's report provided a more extensive description of aims for the school curriculum:

Education is not concerned only with equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to earn a living. It must help our young people to use leisure time creatively; have respect for other people, other cultures and other beliefs; become good citizens; think things out for themselves; pursue a healthy lifestyle; and not least, value themselves and their achievements. It should develop an appreciation of our cultural heritage and of the spiritual and moral dimensions to life. It must moreover be concerned to serve all our children well, whatever their background, sex, creed, ethnicity or talent. (SCAA, 1993: 18)

Aims and purposes of the 1988 ERA sadly were 'after the event' outlined in non-statutory guidance for schools produced by the two bodies, sometimes competitively, responsible for keeping the curriculum under review. These were the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC). In 1997 sense prevailed and the two bodies were subsumed into the newly created, multi-purpose Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). These organisations disseminated advice and guidance for teachers aimed at helping them understand the curriculum and its aims and issues such as the relationships of subjects within cross-curriculum skills, themes and dimensions. However, commentators (Johnson, 1991; Boyle and Bragg, 2008) refer to the 'astonishing silence' on issues such as multicultural education, social studies, personal and social education, political education, etc. which within the framework of this 'new' (although post-Dearing already in its second iteration) National Curriculum. In fact, during the period prior to the consultation for the millennium revisions (Boyle, 2001) the only statement of curriculum aims, purposes and values appeared in *Curriculum Guidance 3: The Whole Curriculum* (NCC, 1990).

Historically there are precedents and a number of reports from the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education (established 1902) and from the Ministry of Education's Central Advisory Council (established 1944, replacing the Consultative Committee) articulated educational aims and purposes. These committees and advisory council reports officially had the status of advice to the Secretary of State. The Hadow Reports from the Board of Education Consultative Committee – *The Primary School* (1931) and *Nursery and Infant Schools* (1933) – set out in detail the aims, content and methods for the primary stage. The most significant of these reports was the Central Advisory Council's Plowden Report (DES, 1967).

In the Plowden Report the aims of primary education were reviewed. The society of the 'future' was discussed and aspirational conclusions reached that children would need to be 'adaptable and capable of adjusting', 'be able to live with their fellows appreciating and respecting differences', 'need the power of discrimination and be able to withstand mass pressures', 'be well balanced with neither emotions nor intellect giving ground to each other', and to 'understand that in a democratic society each individual has an obligation to the community as well as rights within it' (DES, 1967: 185–8).

The Consultative Committee consulted a range of stakeholders from headteachers to philosophers of education in the course of their review of evidence for the Plowden Report. Headteachers were reported as emphasising the all-round development of the child and the acquisition of the basic skills necessary for contemporary society. However, Plowden was critical that the aim of securing the co-operation of school and home and 'with it

that of making good the deficiencies of their backgrounds' was barely mentioned by these school leaders. The Report concluded that most schools' general statements of aims 'tended to be little more than expressions of benevolent aspiration which may have a rather tenuous relationship to the educational practices which actually go on there' (DES, 1967: 186).

Plowden stated that 'a recognisable philosophy of education' emerged from its deliberations and included the following statements about aims and values:

a school is not merely a teaching shop, it must transmit values and attitudes. It is a community in which children learn to live first as children and not as future adults ... the school sets out deliberately to devise the right environment for children, to allow them to be themselves, and to develop in the way and at the pace appropriate to them. It tries to equalise opportunities and to compensate for handicaps. It lays special stress on individual discovery, on first hand experience and on opportunities for creative work. It insists that knowledge does not fall neatly into compartments and that play and work are not opposite but complementary. A child brought up in such an atmosphere at all stages of his education has some hope of becoming a balanced and mature adult and of being able to live in, to contribute to and to look critically at the society of which he forms a part. (DES, 1967: 187–8).

Although it was without any associated legislation (unlike the 1988 ERA), the Plowden Report was highly influential in the development of the primary school curriculum and its pedagogy – and its invocation against the 'teaching shop' philosophy is highly significant in 2015 England with more and more discontent about the model of school as 'exam factory' (Boyle and Charles, 2015). Much of the post-Plowden 20 years of debate about the need for a National Curriculum in England and Wales centred round the influence of the 'Plowden philosophy' and the extent to which its philosophy and ideas had been put into practice. Indeed, even later, in 1999 when the author (Bill Boyle) was contracted as the researcher to manage the national consultation and analyse the data for the QCA's report to the Secretary of State for the millennium National Curriculum revisions, many of the issues from Plowden re-emerged. Did schools have aims for their curriculum and did they prioritise those aims in their response to the consultation? Did schools recognise the difference between their aims and their priorities? Did schools define their aims and priorities specifically enough for those comments to be meaningful and or measurable as achieved or not? Would the schools' responses contribute to the debate on whether a revised National Curriculum should depend on a subject structure or a whole curriculum underpinned by a values agenda? Was there an alternative to a state-imposed curriculum? Was this alternative supported and derived from a school-based version of the National Curriculum?

Through their role of setting out future government policy, White Papers are therefore important in articulating rationale for legislation. However, unfortunately, that rationale might not in many cases be included in the ensuing statutes. In furthering the cause of prioritising aims of the curriculum *Better Schools* (DES, 1985) was an influential White Paper as it included the statement that schools should develop, based on their Local Education Authority's (now Local Authority) Curriculum Policy, their own detailed aims and priorities (DES, 1985: 13). These would be reviewed over time by all those involved in the partnership of the local education service. *Better Schools* endorsed the principles of breadth, balance, relevance and differentiation (DES, 1985: 88) and stressed that the preparation of a pupil for working life was one of a school's principal functions: 'academic achievement should be complemented by the capacity to apply knowledge ... and the ability to work as part of a team' (DES, 1985: 15). It also emphasised the (Conservative) government's view that 'every element of the primary and secondary curriculum and every learning area is concerned with the development of personal qualities and attitudes' (DES, 1985: 17).

Better Schools provides a stronger articulation of the rationale for the subject-based structure of the (proposed) National Curriculum than other succeeding documents. However, it also stated that the curriculum is described in subject terms for the sake of convenience and that it is not in dispute that the purposes of education in school go beyond learning the traditional subjects (DES, 1985: 53). Two years later, the DES paper, *The National Curriculum 5–16*, did not ignore whole curriculum issues and there is a clearly discernible direct line from *Better Schools*:

there are a number of subjects or themes which can be taught through other subjects ... it is proposed that such subjects or themes should be taught through the foundation subjects. (DES, 1987: 8)

However the same document is clear that:

the description of the National Curriculum in terms of the foundation subjects is not a description of how the school day should be organised and the curriculum delivered. (DES, 1987: 9)

It stressed that there is a need for the attainment targets and programmes of study to 'reflect cross-curricular themes' (DES, 1987: Annex A, para. 3).

Curriculum philosophy

Virtually all the enlightened views on curriculum planning are now agreed that subjects should be regarded as important only if they help to reach other objectives. (Lawton, 1987)

It is a fact that in the course of the implementation of the first version of the National Curriculum (Education Reform Act, 1988) during the period 1988–92, no explicit linkage was formulated between the overall aims of that curriculum and the orders which established the ten subjects. The real issue, the question of why a school curriculum was built around the subject structure, and to what ends, was never adequately addressed at national level and was (O’Hear and White, 1993; White, 1993) and still is (Boyle and Bragg, 2006; 2008a; Boyle et al., 2009) a matter of frequent criticism. It has been regularly suggested that a more sensible and cogent method of proceeding would to have been to establish a coherent set of aims and then agree on the best method of implementing those aims:

[Outline the] aims in various areas of the curriculum, the sequence of development which can be expected in children and the methods through which work can be soundly based and progress accelerated. (DES, 1967: 198)

Such a starting point would have provided a firm basis for critical reflection about values. However, there remains strong opinion that the political objective for the DES at the time was to:

get teachers to accept, understand and implement a National Curriculum free from the distraction and competition provided by the ‘whole curriculum’ debate. The political decision was that publishing guidance on the ‘whole curriculum’ during 1989 was unhelpful. (Crawford, 2000: 629)

Similarly, with the political interventionist resonance that teachers have come to know and fear in the intervening years, ‘the desire [by politicians] to exert direct influence over the curriculum was more important than the precise nature of its form and content’ (Chitty, 1988: 329).

Research literature on the National Curriculum includes significant detail on issues related to educational purposes: much of it emphasising the fundamental importance of a clear vision for the purposes of the curriculum and the lack of appropriate debate on that issue. Concern about this lack of debate and its implications for the Curriculum 2000 revisions were raised by Alexander: ‘there is little point in proposing a grand statement of educational purposes for the next century of the curriculum as prescribed and transacted does not reflect them’ (SCAA, 1997: 42).

The Le Métais and Tabberer study (1997) provided a background against which to consider the vigorous debate about educational purposes which had become more intense since the introduction of the National Curriculum through the 1998 Education Reform Act. In those years, White was one of its strongest critics: ‘the structural weakness of the 1988 curriculum is plain. Its basis is the ten foundation subjects.

What these are all supposed to be *for* has never been made clear, beyond the virtually uninformative prescription in the ERA that they are to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and prepare them for adult life' (White 1993: 3). Following the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, O'Hear and White (1991) presented their alternative National Curriculum in which they took their argument further by emphasising not only the importance of articulating the curriculum's aims and purposes but of 'outlining its basis in the fundamental values of liberal democracy' (O'Hear and White, 1991: 3).

This principle of democratic values as the precursor to establishing curricular aims was taken up by Carr (1997) who emphasised the importance of articulating a vision for the educational future, 'firmly grounded in democratic values and which can provide strategies for the future development of the National curriculum with a strong sense of purpose and direction'. He also requested that 'we re-engage with fundamental questions about the relationship between education and democracy as such a vision would transform the style and substance of educational debates' (Carr, 1997: 3).

There is considerable consensus in the literature about the need for the inclusion of democratic values in underpinning curriculum aims. Woodhead (1993) took issue with this point of view and questioned the extent to which it is necessary or indeed helpful to 'return to first principles' arguing that 'the relevant paragraph [Section 1 ERA 1988] is certainly terse but it points clearly enough to the essential and complementary aims of any educational system' (Woodhead, 1993: 26). This is a minority view in the literature and the claim that 'terse' statements are sufficient may require further elaboration when set alongside the Le Métails and Tabberer study (1997). The latter study pointed to the possibility that a more comprehensive exposition could prove beneficial not only in relation to practice but also to educational outcomes.

The argument was pursued by curriculum analysts with considerable research experience and sound acquaintance with the practicalities of curriculum provision. Invited to consider further curriculum developments, Anning (1997) described the current curricular aims for key stage 1 as not radical enough for the twenty-first century. Richards (1997) called for a creative millennium project which considered the nature of childhood and of the education required for the future. He floated the premise that there was no more apt national agenda for the first decade of the new millennium, urging that the debate should be widespread and involve the wider community and especially the young themselves. The point was pursued by Wragg (1997) who expressed concern about earlier debates taking place behind closed doors (a common thread throughout the iterations of the National Curriculum which have taken place since 1988).

Alexander rebutted the idea that this was a discussion no longer relevant to the present. He acknowledged the 'understandable nervousness' not least on the part of an 'exhausted teaching profession' but argued for a fundamental rethink within the context of the 'millennium factor'. He looked for a shift 'from a view of state education still enslaved by the elementary/grammar legacy of the nineteenth century to one which was attentive to the needs and circumstances of the twenty first' (Alexander, 1997: 37).

The general call for a more explicit articulation of underpinning values was reflected in the QCA's own work in this area, firstly in relation to its 'values forum' (SCAA, 1996) and secondly in its attempt to survey a representative sample of schools' views of their curriculum aims (Boyle and Christie, 1996). A keen critic of these initiatives and of attempts to establish a consensual value position was Marenbon (1996) who took issue with the process in its entirety, arguing that the entry of the QCA into the debate was philosophically misplaced, ill-timed and unworkable. Tooley (1997) pursued a similar argument objecting to any official definition of values in a multicultural society. The Marenbon/Tooley position is not substantially reflected in the overall literature which favours the attempt to identify common ground.

A central point in this argument is that the debate about values is a necessary prerequisite to any description of aims since value positions predispose us towards particular aims. The expression of values helps us to see why we should have a National Curriculum at all and what its nature, scope and aims should be. Alexander is clear that the debate now is about values first, structures and content second (1997: 35–44).

Nevertheless Le Métails and Tabberer's analysis (1997) of values and their comparison of the 'ideal' and the 'real' emphasised that 'there is no point at which education can start with a clean slate', that we do not live in an ideal world where national values are clearly understood and shared and in which there is no dissonance between legislated aims and those pursued by teachers, parents and others with a legitimate interest. Elliott (1994) and Roe (1994) both reflected this view in describing the 'paradoxical' nature of values. Elliott, in arguing for 'greater clarification', warned that this cannot be an 'abstract or armchair' activity but is a dynamic process. He made his argument in the context of schools and individuals but it is one that has obvious relevance to the wider debate about the curriculum.

The distinction between the process of expressing democratic values and the reflection of those values in educational aims may be an important one for several reasons. For example, Elliott addressed the issue of 'values in use' – those ideologies and values that are perceived as underpinning curriculum reform, notably economic, market-led values, but without the benefit of a wider debate. The lack of this debate is viewed by several policy analysts as having had negative

effects on the structure and content of the curriculum subjects and themes and resulting in considerable disenchantment by members of the teaching profession.

A second reason why the debate about values is currently important is its emphasis on the central concept of citizenship in a democratic society and what that might involve beyond the consumerist principles of a market economy, Bottery's 'Citizens Charters' (1986). Bottery (1986), Fogelman (1991), McLaughlin (1992), Buck and Inman (1993) and White (1997) all argued that this is the essential issue which needs to be addressed as the foundation of the curriculum for the twenty-first century.

Alexander summarised what he perceived to be a short-sighted approach to curriculum aims and associated curriculum structures. 'The sentiments in the ERA's first chapter are meaningless. It is clear that of the various purposes which a state education could properly pursue, utilitarian, and more specific economic, imperatives have been paramount. In relation to all the other imperatives arising from a complex pluralist society such as ours, and from the needs of the individuals trying to make their way in that society, the National Curriculum may be fairly broad but it is not balanced and balance not breadth is the real issue here' (Alexander, 1997: 5). He called for a more generously conceived balance of curricular aims and purposes – economic, occupational, personal, cultural, moral, social and civic – that would lead logically to a different curriculum structure from that currently in place.

The idea that the curriculum is designed to preserve certain interests provides the basis for a realistic assessment of the barriers to curriculum change and the extent to which changes are resisted for ideological as well as educational reasons.

In England in 1988 Kenneth Baker (Secretary of State for Education and Science), in outlining his government's intention to regain control of the curriculum through a national core curriculum gave weight to the country's needs in an age of acute international economic competition. 'Raising the quality of education in our schools is the most important task for this Parliament' (*Hansard*, 1987). This device of control has never been far beneath the surface of the English National Curriculum and its assessment's legislation, a legislation designed to increase England's status in the global arena of international 'standards' competitiveness.

International perspectives

Le Métails and Tabberer's research (1997) on the values and aims evidenced through the curricular frameworks of sixteen countries provided a useful starting point for considering how educational purposes were defined in

different cultural contexts. Le Métais and Tabberer's study identified 'immense' educational diversity among (and within) the 16 countries investigated and indicated several aspects which have proved to be influential in shaping those differences. Relevant to this analysis was the diversity in educational aims and values and the ways in which these are expressed. Le Métais and Tabberer drew attention to three issues: the extent to which national governments' statements of values and aims reflected popular aspirations and expectations, whether stated aims and values were evident in practice and how stable over time values and aims proved to be.

Despite these open-ended issues, Le Métais and Tabberer's study identified some commonly articulated aims across the 16 countries in relation to developing the capacity of the individual, promoting equal opportunity, preparing young people for work, establishing a foundation for further and higher education, providing knowledge, skills and understanding and promoting citizenship and cultural heritage.

It is interesting that while there were common features across the expressions of educational aims and values, countries varied considerably in the level of detail with which these were expressed or prescribed in legislation. Curriculum frameworks in many other countries include a fuller specification of aims than in the current National Curriculum in England. The approach in England prior to the year 2000 revision fell into the 'minimal' reference to values category while in Japan, Korea, Singapore and Sweden, aims and educational and social values were enunciated very specifically. In Sweden, the basic values underpinning the education system were clearly prescribed and included 'the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, equal value, solidarity with the weak and vulnerable, understanding and compassion, open discussion, the internationalisation of Swedish society, and empathy with the values and conditions of others' (Le Métais and Tabberer, 1997: 11).

In Norway the *Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education* (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 1990) consisted of 300 pages covering every aspect of schooling including the 'core task' of schools and 'the role of school in society'. Underpinning values were stated through a lengthy description of the aims of the education system. 'The daily activities of the school must reflect democratic values ... Through examples and guidance the school shall help pupils to be broad-minded and tolerant. However, if the assumption of intellectual freedom and tolerance is to have any meaning the school must represent specific values and concepts. Pupils must learn that a personal stand point is no obstacle to showing respect for others ... The school shall promote a democratic view of society and stimulate the pupils to become actively involved in society' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 1990).

Seven countries describe the curriculum in terms of key or essential areas of learning: Australia, Hungary, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain and the USA. Seven countries group their subjects together: Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands and Sweden. Three countries teach their curriculum in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary ways: Italy, The Netherlands, Singapore. All the other countries studied define their curriculum in terms of areas of learning or subject groupings. England is the only country in the group of 16 studied which defines its curriculum in terms of ten discrete subjects.

The study also suggested further similarities but Le Métais and Tabberer suggested that there is 'superficial evidence of convergence between different systems' and warned against simplistic comparison, when closer analysis often revealed subtle differences. For example, 'the structure of moral education content in early education in Japan is similar to that recently debated in England although there are significant differences in the degree to which the two countries emphasise this content within the primary curriculum as a whole' (Le Métais and Tabberer, 1997).

Other differences emerged in content analysis: Le Métais and Tabberer found that 'labels could be misleading, in one case the science curriculum proves to be relatively heavy in geography' (1997). The differences can be even deeper: 'In different countries, subjects, educational concepts and teaching techniques or organisational approaches can mean quite different things. These hidden differences are in such realms as teacher discourse, teacher-pupil interaction, attitudes towards learning and the ways in which subjects and knowledge are constructed, conveyed and validated. These differences can be more profound even than the hidden differences in what subjects mean' (Le Métais and Tabberer, 1997: 11).

Relevant analyses of the impact of these differences can be found in collaborative work undertaken by Broadfoot et al. (1996) and Osborn et al. (1997) in England and France. Their work addressed the impact of curriculum change on children's educational experiences, attitude to school and learning outcomes.

Vulliamy and Nikki's (1997) comparative study of school experiences of curriculum change in Finland and England was an in-depth study of 12 schools using case study methods. This study chronicled the differences between English and Finnish primary schools as they moved in apparently opposite directions in relation to the balance between national prescription and local determination. Following the determination of a highly prescriptive and centralised curriculum in the 1970s (soon revealed as unworkable, expensive and fragmentary) Finland moved towards the development of local curricula within national guidelines. 'Schools are encouraged to clarify their values and aims,

devising new curricula, monitoring their implementation by devising school self-evaluation strategies and feeding the results back into school-based and wider regional in-service training [teacher professional development] programmes or courses' (Vulliamy and Nikki, 1997: 4).

A similar approach was advocated by Campbell who suggested that to encourage schools to think more creatively about the curriculum it would be useful to follow Margiotta's maxim of 'encouraging experimental approaches to the whole curriculum amongst a selected group of schools who have shown high performance in the statutory curriculum as evidenced through inspections' (Campbell, 1997: 5). In 1997 no curriculum researcher could have realised how that theory was going to turn around and bite as Ofsted's power grew as the arm of government policy on 'failing schools, failing teachers'.

Granheim (1997) also made an important point when comparing Norwegian principles and procedures with practice in England and Wales. Because of scepticism among the teachers, the Norwegian Ministry of Education laid down the following principles: 'The aim should be to evaluate the degree of achievement in the whole range of objectives defined in the curriculum. The results of various evaluations should not be used to rank schools or municipalities. A system of evaluation should not involve the collection of more data than will be for certain made use of' (Granheim, 1997: 6).

During this post-Dearing review period, Alexander's voice was prominent in raising issues which should be included in the millennium revisions for England and Wales:

We find the critical point of variation with countries with demographic and economic circumstances not unlike our own is the extent to which children in their primary schools engage with the question of what it means to be a social being or, as a user, inheritor or custodian of finite resources, or as part of an independent community of nations. It seems to me to be not insignificant that these are precisely the areas which feature most prominently in the SCAA/National Forum for Values in Education Framework (1997). On the basis of international comparison and national consensus then, we have a pointer for curriculum review that we cannot afford to ignore. (Alexander, 1997: 3)

These specific differences represent only part of the picture. Le Métais and Tabberer forecast an increasing dialogue between countries about curriculum and assessment options and suggested that this dialogue will produce practical effects. As one country moves towards a more regulated curriculum with greater emphasis, for example, on basic skills, 'it will encounter others with those same qualities, interested in deregulating and trying to achieve a better balance with an extended curriculum or higher order skills' (Le Métais and Tabberer, 1997: 17).

Maden drew upon several international studies of over 25 countries in her analysis which identified not common curricula but common global concerns. She argued that 'the curricula challenges confronting schools in England and Wales in the post-industrial world are basically the same as elsewhere' (Maden, 1997: 2). Maden was less concerned with specific curriculum models than with what she described as the 'common range of pressures and developments which result in a broadly shared needs analysis and agenda for action' (1997: 2). Le Métais and Tabberer argued that the agenda for action will be shaped by cultural differences which will almost certainly result in different approaches to provision.

Maden's view of global curricular commonality in part mirrored the findings of Meyer's international examination of primary curricula (1992). Meyer identified a common cross-national spine of language and mathematics. Campbell pursued this issue within the framework of the, at that time, public and political perception of the importance that teachers have consistently attached to 'the basics'. Meyer stated that empirically the phenomenon of 50% of time on these two subjects (English and mathematics) – what we might call the basic instinct – is firmly established. Indeed, Meyer argued that this phenomenon has been a global constant – irrespective of region or political economy or state of development (Meyer 1992: 4). Fast forward a dozen years and Boyle and Bragg's research showed the dramatic increase in the time spent 'teaching' (coaching) mathematics and English for end of key stage 2 SAT tests, and made this 50% figure of Meyer's look like a balanced curriculum! (Boyle and Bragg, 2006).

Curriculum analysts of the structure in England consistently made the point that the greatest weakness of the pre-2000 National Curriculum was its lack of an underpinning set of values and aims. It is a recurring argument that prefaces much of the reflective discourse on curriculum structure, for example, Elliott (1996), Alexander (1997), Campbell (1997), Carr (1997) and Daugherty (1997) are representative of a much wider field of researcher critics.

The need to think more creatively about the curriculum for the twenty-first century was reiterated by Anning (1995; 1997) who was critical of Dearing's redefinition of the 'distinctive purposes of the key stage 1 curriculum' (SCAA, 1993: 31). Anning (1995) acknowledged the need to 'develop basic skills' to introduce young children to 'an interesting range of content' and to 'promote positive attitudes to learning' but argued that while these might be laudable they were not radical enough for the twenty-first-century agenda. Holt, in setting out the rationale for the arts in the curriculum, re-examined the concept of entitlement (as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act) and called for a better overall balance, arguing that it is only through a more far-sighted view of curricular aims that the position of the arts will be ensured in the face of the 'worst excesses of the current basics drive' (Holt, 1997).

The Revised Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Schools (1996) described areas considered of value in the curriculum. The Framework's focus on areas to be evaluated and reported on made it clear that judgements about curriculum provision and teaching quality should take account of breadth and balance in the curriculum in conjunction with aspects such as equality of access and opportunity for pupils to learn. The Revised Framework set out in a document (which was in the public domain) what is valued in relation to pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal, social and moral behaviour.

The Department for Education and Employment report, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (DfEE, 1999a) strongly supported the QCA view that the millennium curriculum revisions should be based around a clear rationale. The DfEE report took issue with the Education Reform Act (1988) requirement for all schools to provide a curriculum 'which prepares young people for adult life' as the ERA text did not explain what preparation for adult life was likely to mean at the end of the twentieth century or at the commencement of the twenty-first. Of more concern was that the objective of preparing for adult life gave no indication how that objective was to be met in the context of the ten subject structure that ERA had introduced. The *All Our Futures* report (DfEE, 1999a) expressed concern that 'while accepting the need for a sustained strategy in numeracy and literacy, it is vital that this emphasis in key stages 1 and 2 should not marginalise other areas of intellectual and personal development which are equally important in the early years and during primary school' (DfEE, 1999a: 77) (see also, Boyle and Bragg 2005; 2006, House of Commons, 2009).