FORUM
Volume 53, Number 1, 2011
www.wwwords.co.uk/FORUM

Curricula for the Common School: what shall we tell our children?

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ABSTRACT This article gives an account of the way an opportunity has been taken to draw together ideas for a curriculum for the common school and beyond, during the writing of a new edition of the *Index for Inclusion; developing learning and participation in schools* (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). I discuss the way thinking about the curriculum for the common school was curtailed in the mid 1980s and has re-emerged for me following further elaboration of a values framework and a consideration of its implications for educational action. It has been prompted too by facing up to imperatives ignored in the past and clamouring for attention in the present. I consider the nature of a curriculum that builds from experience, is values and rights-based, is local and global, engages with sustainability and roots us in the past, present and future. This involves a radical re-structuring for adults and children of the knowledge and skills which frame learning activities inside and outside classrooms. I give a brief indication of how I have fleshed out curriculum areas, and how I hope for these efforts to be refined in negotiations with others. I briefly compare my own suggestions with proposals from two reviews of primary education (Alexander, 2010; DCSF 2009) and the critique of education of Nel Noddings (Noddings 2005, 2006). I acknowledge the resistance to challenge to a traditional school curriculum, and the particular pressures towards a narrowing of the secondary curriculum from the Coalition Government in the United Kingdom. I stress that, in keeping with my values, I remain optimistic that we, adults and children, working together, as we hurtle through the 21st Century, can construct curricula that are right for our time; that connect together the small and big things that really matter.

Addressing a Lacuna

In her novel *Lacuna*, which I loved, Barbara Kingsolver (2009) tells a story of a United States of America disengaged from its past. One might characterise the

continuing story of the school curriculum as disengaging children from their present and future. In the early 1980s, I was involved in producing courses for the Open University that attempted to answer the question: 'what are schools like when they truly attempt to respond to the interests of *everyone* in their communities?'. It was a time when academics and teachers through the Schools Council, and advisers in local education authorities in places like London and Manchester, were increasingly asking questions about the curriculum for the common school. At one point I had jotted curriculum headings on a scrap of paper that must have occurred to many others. I wondered then if I could develop detailed curriculum proposals based on people's fundamental needs for food, clothing, shelter, health and care and engagement with their physical and natural world. I lost the piece of paper but filed the thought. In a period of increasing rigidity about curriculum planning in schools culminating in the National Curriculum, it subsequently seemed impossible to counter the weight of government determination of what should be taught.

After it was first published in 2000, I made claims for several years that the *Index for Inclusion* set out what inclusive values might mean for all aspects of a school, in staffrooms, playgrounds and classrooms, for relationships within schools and with communities. Yet this was a deception, for there had been a nagging awareness of the lacuna at the heart of the Index that a fourth dimension on the curriculum might need to be added to its three dimensions of school development: cultures, policies and practices. I have tried to address this gap.

Finding an Audience

However, colleagues, aware how difficult it is to envisage the adoption of deep changes to a traditional subject based curriculum, particularly in secondary schools, have responded to my explanations of what I am doing with the question: 'who will listen to you?' The first version of the Index was unexpectedly adapted and used across the world in more than thirty-five other countries. So in making proposals for curriculum change for the new edition it has been possible to check out their sense for a variety of audiences in England and in several other countries before publication and this has given me confidence that they will receive a hearing within the network of people connected by using the Index to support the principled development of schools and communities. I hope that others will also take up an invitation for dialogue about curricula, the principles on which they should be based and how they should be organised. This may be made easier by the discussion in this volume from the *Primary Curriculum Review* Team which happens to have a room a few feet away from me as I write.

Returning to a Framework of Values

In considering how to improve the approach to the development of education in the *Index for Inclusion*, including curricula development, I have further elaborated a framework of values. I have set out the significance I give to a values framework previously, for example, in the last article I wrote for *FORUM* in 2005 (Booth, 2005). Values are fundamental guides and prompts to action. They spur us forward, give us a sense of direction and define a destination. We cannot know that we are doing, or have done, the right thing without understanding the relationship between our actions and our values. For all actions affecting others are underpinned by values. Every such action becomes a moral argument whether or not we are aware of it. It is a way of saying 'this is the right thing to do'. In developing a framework of values we state how we want to live together and educate each other, now and in the future. Being clear about the relationship between values and actions is the most practical step we can take in education.

It has been instructive to compare where I had reached in elaborating a values framework in that *FORUM* article with my present position in the new edition of the Index. Then I used the nine headings: '*equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, honesty, rights, joy, and sustainability*'. Now I consistently use the heading '*equality*' instead of 'equity' and have also added *non-violence*, *trust, courage, love, hope/optimism and beauty*. The list has emerged following countless discussions with teachers and other colleagues. For example, a final decision to include the linked values of honesty, trust and courage arose from a series of workshops with the previous version of the *Index* in which colleagues in senior positions in schools described the process of building the courage to be honest about weaknesses as well as strengths in their schools and how this was helped in the workshops by engaging on a common task with others who were trusted not to criticise and blame. The significance of any particular heading can be tested by imagining what education would be like if the value for which it stands is subtracted from education. What does education become without courage, joy, love and beauty?

But such headings, do not convey values until their detailed meanings and implications for action are specified. As meanings are elaborated people can see if their own fundamental beliefs are represented. One can also see how a framework fits together and the extent to which it may cover cherished headings not in the list such as *freedom* and *solidarity*. Two people may use different headings in their values frameworks that hook into their motivations for action even though when expanded in detail the frameworks may closely overlap. More commonly, however, going beyond the headings to explore the extent of shared understandings, for example, of equality, participation and community, reveals considerable differences in value positions. The idea of 'universal values' promoted by some, such as Hawkes (2003), deflects us from recognising the extent to which our own and other people's actions are informed by commitments to short-term egotistic and destructive ends.

Nevertheless, I think that something like my framework can form a basis for educational development in many different cultural contexts.

I cannot expand on all my headings here but have chosen enough to indicate the extent to which a focus on values can be related to action on the curriculum:

Respect for diversity: Inclusive respect involves valuing others and treating them well, recognising the contributions they make to a community because of their individuality as well as through their positive actions. It does not mean deferring to people because of their position of status or authority. 'Diversity' includes the seen and unseen differences and similarities between people: diversity is about difference within a common humanity. Diversity encompasses everyone not just those seen to depart from an illusory normality. However, its use is sometimes corrupted in this way so that diversity becomes linked with *otherness;* those not like us. Groups and communities are seen as homogeneous when differences within them are unrecognised. An inclusive response to diversity welcomes the creation of diverse groups and respects the equal worth of others irrespective of their perceived difference. On this view diversity is a rich resource for life and learning rather than a problem to be overcome. This response contrasts with a selective approach which attempts to maintain uniformity by categorising and dividing people and assigning them to groups arranged according to a hierarchy of value. A rejection of those we see as different commonly involves the denial of otherness in ourselves. So, when people do not want to acknowledge their own potential for impairment and old age this can reinforce their wish to separate themselves from and discriminate against old or disabled people. An inclusive approach to diversity involves understanding and opposing the profound destructive dangers in equating difference or strangeness with inferiority which when systematised or integrated into cultural rules and rituals becomes the justification for profound discrimination or even genocide.[1]

Community: A concern with building community involves a recognition that we live in relationship with others and that friendships are fundamental to our wellbeing. Community is built through cultures which encourage *collaboration.* An inclusive view of community extends attachment and obligation beyond family and friendships to a broader fellow feeling. It is linked to a sense of *responsibility* for others and to ideas of *public service*, *citizenship*, *global citizenship* and a recognition of *global interdependence.* An inclusive school community provides a model of what it means to be a responsible and active citizen whose rights are respected outside school. Inclusive communities are always open to, and enriched by, new members who contribute to their transformation. In education, inclusion involves developing mutually sustaining relationships between schools and their surrounding communities. A concern with community is about acting collaboratively, with collegiality and in solidarity; it

leads to an understanding of the way progress in changing institutions can be best achieved when people join their actions together.

Sustainability: The most fundamental aim of education is to prepare children and young people for sustainable ways of life within sustainable communities and environments, locally and globally. A commitment to inclusive values must involve a commitment to the well-being of future generations. Discussions of inclusion always beg the question: 'inclusion into what?' Schools developing in inclusive ways are places that encourage the sustainable development of everyone's learning and participation and the lasting reduction of exclusion and discrimination. They avoid making uncoordinated changes only for the short term. Environmental sustainability is central to inclusion at a time when environmental degradation, deforestation, and global warming, threaten the quality of the life of us all and are already undermining the lives of millions around the world. Schools developing inclusively have to be concerned with maintaining the physical and natural environment inside and beyond their boundaries. But, 'ecological literacy' has to grow out of an understanding and respect for nature rather than a terror of catastrophe. It has to be linked to *hope* and *optimism* that hazards can be overcome. To be sustainable all changes have to be integrated into *cultures* and through them to the development of changed *identities.*

Non-violence: Non-violence requires listening to, and understanding the point of view of others and weighing up the strength of arguments, including one's own. It requires the development of skills of negotiation, mediation and conflict-resolution in children and adults. It requires adults to model non-violence in their own conduct. Within communities of equals disputes are resolved through dialogue rather than coercion derived from differences in status and physical strength. This does not mean that people avoid challenging or being challenged and deny disagreement but that they use challenge to provoke reflection and invention.[2] Bullying happens when people abuse their power in order to make another feel vulnerable, physically or psychologically. The harassment and bullying of people because of their ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, beliefs and religion are all forms of violence. A commitment to non-violence may involve challenging ways of resolving conflicts associated with some versions of masculinity and hence a need to offer alternative routes to a robust male identity. It leads to a dissection of notions of 'losing face' and 'losing respect' and their links to 'revenge'. It necessitates a balance to be found between assertion and aggression. Anger is seen as an important indication of the strength of one's feelings about a person or event but is to be directed into productive action and away from aggressive response. Institutional violence or institutional bullying may occur when the humanity and dignity of those within institutions are not respected; when people are treated as a means to an end. This can happen when schools or other educational institutions are treated as businesses. The values of such organisations can be hidden within the

apparently neutral influence of business software that gives exchanges between staff a business value. Non-violent institutions are developed in harmony with the needs of the people within them, with the environment and with their surrounding communities.

Love/care: Compassion is closely linked to the value of love or care. A deep caring for others, which asks for nothing in return, is a core motivation for many educators and a basis for a sense of vocation. It involves nurturing others to be and become themselves in recognition of the way people flourish when they are valued. This fosters a sense of identity and belonging and promotes participation. A willingness to care for others and be cared for in return underlies the creation of communities connected by fellow feeling as well as common activities. But as a value for educators 'love' or 'care' is a feature of an asymmetric relationship. It may be a professional duty that educators should care equally for all children and young people within their settings without regard to any warmth, gratitude or progress that they display.

Optimism/hope: A value concerned with optimism and hope may also be seen as a professional duty for educators and a personal duty for parents: we may have a duty to convey a sense that personal, local, national and global difficulties can be alleviated. It also involves showing how people can make a difference to their own and other people's lives locally and globally. This does not mean that we fail to engage with the realities of the world, or the cynical motives of others, and only look on 'the bright side of life'. For optimism and hope require an eagerness to engage with reality as the foundation for principled action. Clarity over inclusive values can provide a framework for action, connecting together those with similar values but with different labels for their activities. This can increase collective power to counteract the formidable exclusionary pressures that are manifest locally and globally. It can make change for the benefit of people and the planet more likely. Thus hope supports the possibility that a future can be sustained in which people can flourish.

Beauty: A concern with creating beauty may seem contentious since it is evident that beauty is in the eyes and mind of the one who sees or conceives it. It is also evident how oppressive and excluding the marketing of particular notions of beauty is for many people. But it is part of this list since many people see it is a feature of their most rewarding achievements or the most motivating encounters that they experience in education. Its inclusion allows people to connect values with their interpretation of spiritual fulfilment. Beauty can be seen in gratuitous acts of kindness, in precious occasions where communication has transcended self-interest, in collective action and support to demand rights, when people find and use their voice. Beauty is there when someone loves something that they or someone else has crafted, in an appreciation of art and music. Inclusive beauty is to be found away from stereotypes in the diversity of people and in the diversity of nature.

Listening to Imperatives

A framework of values is a gentle way of expressing commitments. But it may be important to breath some fire into them. Towards the end of his life, Theodor Adorno, a social theorist, gave a speech expressing concern at the way education had responded to the lessons of the Holocaust:

> The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again. Its priority before any other requirement is such that I believe I need not and should not justify it. I cannot understand why it has been given so little concern until now.[3] (Adorno, 1966, p. 1)

Adorno used the Holocaust as a metaphor for the destructive, soul-breaking conflicts in the world that education might have a role in avoiding. He asks us to allow our knowledge that societies can descend into barbarism to make a difference to the way we educate our children. Henri Giroux used the treatment of detainees by some American troops in the Iraq war and what that and other wars tell us about the preparedness of ordinary young people to carry out acts of banal atrocity, to provide a complementary imperative in his article: 'What might education mean after Abu Ghraib' (Giroux, 2004). But arguments for bringing people into a new relationship with their environment, if the sources of their lives are to be preserved, are as compelling as the need to avoid racism and the violent conflicts it fuels. Conflicts over the control of finite resources, of oil, gas and water are implicated in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the simmering occupation in Israel/Palestine. But in an interconnected world, that is to retain any shred of compassion, resource grabs can only stave off the thinking and action necessary to limit global warming and the adaptation of people to a life beyond oil and the lure of maximum consumption. We need to learn how to live within the means of our biospheres and ecosystems, and to pay back what we have spent of the inheritance of others living in economically poor countries, and in future generations.

Values and Aims: creating a framework for action?

In giving us a sense of direction values are aims, though they are more than that. In Table I, I have related the twelve aims in the *Cambridge Primary Review* (Alexander, 2010) to my framework of values which can help to indicate the strengths and limitations of each. The values framework is not confined to a phase of education or even only to education, while the *Primary Review* specifies its aims as being for primary education. Could they also be aims for secondary education or for education in communities generally?

Headings for a framework of inclusive values (*Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools*, Booth & Ainscow, 2011)	Aims for primary education (*Cambridge Primary Review*, Alexander 2010)
Equality	
Rights	
Participation	Well-being, engagement, empowerment, autonomy. Knowing understanding, exploring making sense, fostering skill.
Community	Celebrating culture and community, Empowering local, national and global citizenship, Promoting interdependence
Respect for diversity	Respect and reciprocity/dialogue
Compassion	Reciprocity
Sustainability	Promoting interdependence and sustainability
Non-violence	
Trust	
Honesty	
Courage	
Joy	Well-being, exciting the imagination
Love	
Hope/Optimism	
Beauty	

Table I. Values and aims: possible overlap.

Attending to Curricula

How can our values, imperatives and aims help to formulate ideas for how and what we teach and learn? If values are about how we should live together, then curricula are about what we might learn in order to live well. How curricula are framed depends on conceptions of schools and classrooms. Schools should be conceived as contributing to, rather than monopolising, the education of communities. Classrooms might be understood to encompass the world as well as four school room walls. If these are our conceptions then curricula serve the education of communities rather than just school children. They express how we want to structure our learning and knowledge about the world.

My framework of values is linked to a set of curriculum principles; that learning should build from experience; equip us for non-violent relationships; reflect human and planetary rights; encourage action on sustainability; link people globally by encouraging an understanding of human and environmental interdependence; and prepare us to be active national and global citizens. In the early decades of the 21st Century schools in England have been asked, to some extent, to recognize and act on such principles through cross-curricular work.

Yet governments and academic have not considered the extent to which such demands might affect the deep structuring of the curriculum. The advice to schools to become aware and active on issues of sustainability comes close to recognising such a possibility:

> Sustainable development is a cross-cutting dimension of the National Curriculum...A curriculum designed to achieve...a future where nothing can be taken for granted...would differ from that which is taught in many schools. (DCSF, 2009)

I see a values framework and principles for a 21st century curriculum as having unambiguous implications for the re-structuring of learning.

Reviewing Informal Curricula

A review of curricula in schools is as much concerned with the less formal shaping of cultures and policies as with teaching and learning activities. If changes in policies and practices are not sustained by shared cultures then they can only be maintained co-ercively.

The revision of ideas for the development of school cultures in the Index (Dimension A) has added to concerns with collaboration and community building, detailed consideration of the following issues:

A1.7 The school is a model of democratic citizenship.
A1.8 The school encourages an understanding of the connections between people around the world.
A1.9 Adults and children are responsive to a variety of ways of being a gender.
A2.1 The school develops shared inclusive values.
A2.2 The school encourages respect for all human rights.
A2.3 The school encourages respect for the integrity of planet earth.
A2.5 The school promotes non-violent interactions and resolutions to disputes.
A2.9 The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves.

The fleshing out of the values framework has led, too, to additional ideas for policy development:

B1.1 The school has a participatory development process.
B1.2 The school has an inclusive approach to leadership.
B1.12 The school reduces its carbon footprint and use of water.
B1,13 The school contributes to the reduction of waste.

Structuring Teaching and Learning Activities

But the largest change is in the more formal curriculum in a new section called 'constructing curricula for all' within the existing dimension, 'evolving inclusive practices'. I have set out the headings for contrasting curricula in Table II.

A global rights-based curriculum for all	A traditional curriculum for schools
Food	Mathematics
Water	Language and literature
Clothing	Modern foreign languages
Housing/building	Physics
The earth, solar system and universe	Chemistry
The natural world	Biology
Energy	Geography
Transport	History
Communication and communication technology	Art
	Music
Health and relationships	Religion
Literature/arts/music	Design and technology
Work/activity	Physical education
Ethics, power and government	Personal, health and social education

Table II. Comparing curriculum headings

On the right is a traditional set of subject headings, close to those in the National Curriculum in England in 2011. They would have been recognisable to schools at any time in the previous hundred years. In thinking about their origins one might conclude that they were not designed to capture the interest of all children but to prepare an elite group for a traditional University Education. It can be argued that a traditional school curriculum has been created to artificially separate school learning from life outside it and to weed out from success those who resist leaping this hurdle.

On the left are headings for a values and rights based, global, sustainability, curriculum. It has been constructed from my values framework, education principles, reading, experience and conversations with colleagues. I have explored with others what I might have left out and how the curriculum framework can be improved. For example, a colleague in Hong Kong suggested an addition to a draft scheme relating the curriculum to basic needs for food, water, clothing, shelter, health and care, by telling me that Confucius had said that basic human needs were for food, clothing, shelter *and transport*'[4]meaning movement rather than modes of travel. We later found that the suggestion was from 'Sun Yat-sen a mid 20th century political leader, and he probably did mean forms of transport. Nevertheless serendipitously, through this conversation transport has been incorporated as an essential curriculum subject

broadened to encompass, 'when, why and how people move around their locality and the world'. It includes modes of transport, trade and migration within and between countries.

I do not view the headings on the left as standing for topics or cross-curricular themes but as having the same status as the traditional subjects or disciplines on the right. They are related to the common concerns of people at home and at work. They could be used to construct a meaningful curriculum in cities and villages in China, Burma, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as England and Germany and so encourage global interconnections between people. They provide the basis for a curriculum for people from three to one hundred and three. They are headings which can be linked to shared experiences for people irrespective of their attainments and can inform curricula from pre-school to doctoral studies.

They are concerned with the activities that people do in the communities around schools and so reinforce the contributions that can be made to curricula of all children's families. A person who builds a wall, who carries out this essential activity is as fertile for the curriculum as an engineer or an astronomer. In reflecting the kinds of work in which people commonly engage such a curriculum can break down distinctions between vocational and academic education, theoretical and practical activity. Activity and work are considered together so that schools prepare children to think of waged work as a paid activity amongst other more or less fulfilling activities in their lives. .

The curriculum headings on the left of Table 2 are translated in the new *Index for Inclusion* into the areas shown in Table III.

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1. Children explore cycles of food production and consumption.
2. Children investigate the importance of water.
3. Children study clothing and decoration of the body
4. Children find out about housing and the built environment.
5. Children consider how and why people move around their locality and the world.
6. Children learn about health and relationships.
7. Children investigate the Earth, the solar system and the universe.
8. Children study life on Earth.
9. Children investigate sources of energy.
10. Children learn about communication and communication technology.
11. Children will engage with and create literature, arts and music.
12. Children learn about work and link it to the development of their interests.
13. Children learn about ethics, power and government.

Table III. Indicators for dimension c, section 1: constructing curricula for all.

Each of these areas is then outlined over two to four pages through a series of subheadings and questions with the encouragement to teachers and children to

find their own further questions to use as their own starting points for exploration. The first heading for each area is about making *local* and *global* links and each finishes with *ethical* questions, and then the linking of the *present*, with the *past* and *future.* This last idea has been inspired by curriculum discussions that have taken place in Norway (Nes 2003). I have provided guidelines which can be extended and adapted to the circumstances of any school. They are work in progress to be refined through dialogue in the coming years. A central place is given to the understanding of children and adults of the environment, the physical and natural world, and how it can be nourished. For example, every school might link itself to a water source: a local stream or river and also to a river in another part of the world.[5]Such simple moves can immeasurably enhance the curriculum. An understanding of the rivers of others provides insights into their lives, their climates and perhaps to the origin of their conflicts. An example of a set of subheadings in an area is given in Table IV.

Linking locally and globally
Food cycles
Growing and land use
Food and water
Food, seasons and weather
Pests and weeds
Animals for food
Transporting food
Preparing and Eating
Flavouring
Preserving/processing
Food business
Waste disposal and treatment
Composting and fertilising
Nutrition, health and disease
Food ethics
Linking, past present and future

Table IV. Children learn about cycles of food production and consumption: draft headings.

Linking Forms of Knowledge

There are two arrows in Table II. In outlining an alternative curriculum I have been concerned to make sure that the knowledge associated with traditional curricula is included within my scheme as represented by the arrow pointing from right to left. The content of physics and chemistry, while appearing across

the curriculum, can be seen to fit clearly within an understanding the earth, solar system and the universe. Biology arises in understanding food cycles and health but more coherently in the context of an understanding of life on Earth. Of course any school will wish children to be literate and numerate. In my scheme, literacy is given attention in the communication area and *across* other curriculum areas.

History appears in every area through the requirement to link past present and future, a move seemingly in accord with the History Association's position given to the government review of the primary curriculum in 2009:

> We fully support ... the development of a less prescriptive and a more flexible National Curriculum that draws upon subjects like history as tools for learning. (DCSF, 2009)

Mathematics too, becomes a cross curricular theme. Concerns have been expressed that the hierarchical nature of Mathematics knowledge requires that it is taught as a separate subject and that seeing it as informing many different subjects would impede understanding. At the same time disquiet is voiced about children's motivation for acquiring mathematical understanding and limited achievement when it is taught as a subject disconnected from the real world. Seeing mathematics as a cross-curricular resource is not incompatible with children pursuing mathematics as a complex system of thought as they progress through school. When we do things differently we are faced with new problems to resolve.

But where my suggestions are used in schools in England the arrow is far more likely to operate from left to right. My headings may be seen as topics and the outline used as a source of ideas for cross-curricular work, particularly in important but neglected areas such as clothing/body decoration and transport. People may find ideas in my suggestions for relating a traditional curriculum more closely to the lives and experience of children. They may use the scheme as a basis for curriculum development.

But what seems radical to some seems common place to others. So when a thirteen year old boy sitting with his mother in the cafe where I was working asked what I was doing, his response as I told him of my structuring of the school curriculum was to say: 'that makes much more sense than what I do in school, it's more related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs'. I have met with a similar view of it being sensibly ordinary in England, Germany, Mexico, Hong Kong and Kosovo. Nevertheless, I am aware that, commonly, my suggestions will be ignored, opposed strongly, or felt to be impossible to implement.

A Continuing Conversation

One teacher after a recent presentation in Germany said: 'we all agree with your curriculum proposals but we have no chance of putting them into practice'. I suggested that her willingness to make a comment was 'a ripple', a starting point for further dialogue. Suggestions for modifying the traditional curriculum

have been made by many others. I am part of continuing conversations about education that have been going on for centuries. To call something new in education is always done with this recognition of the contexts in which novelty appears. There is a German 'didactic' tradition within which radical proposals for a principled grounding of the curriculum have also been made. Nel Noddings, is part of the chorus of people who have argued that a traditional 'liberal education' lacks relevance for many children and has proposed instead tracking to allow different students to engage with different curricula (Noddings, 2005). She has also emphasised a collection of issues around which an alternative curriculum could coalesce, such as: the psychology of war, house and home, other people, parenting, animals and nature, advertising and propaganda, making a living, gender, religion (Noddings, 2007). My suggestions are for everybody and are also distinctive in forming a more or less complete framework for learning that is related to an explicit framework of values.

Making Comparisons

It is interesting to compare the curriculum structure I am proposing with those from two reviews in England of primary education as well as the primary review for the International Baccalaureate, all conducted at the end of the first decade of the 21st Century. Their proposed structures are shown in Table V. Both reviews are based on principles which overlap with the values framework of the *Index*. However they use more familiar curriculum headings. Despite an emphasis on cross-cutting themes the headings carry the weight of traditional expectations. The Alexander review made it explicit that the curriculum was to be seen as involving induction into 'the different ways that humans make sense of their world and act upon it, principally through what we call the disciplines – language, the arts, the humanities and so on' (Alexander, 2009, p. 257). Each review accepted that primary curricula were to 'dovetail' with subject based secondary curricula and this limits their aspirations.

Independent (Government Initiated) Review of Primary Curriculum (Rose Review)	*Cambridge Primary Review* (Alexander Review)	International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme[6]
Understanding English, communication and languages Mathematical understanding Scientific and technological understanding Historical, geographical and social understanding Understanding physical development, health and wellbeing Understanding the Arts Religious education Citizenship	Language, oracy and literacy Mathematics Science and technology Place and time Physical and emotional health Arts and creativity Faith and belief Citizenship and ethics	Language Mathematics Science Social studies Personal, social and physical education Arts

Table V. New curricula for old?

What Can Be Achieved by Proposing Changes to the Curriculum?

Neither the Rose Review nor the more extensive Alexander Review have been implemented by government and I am sure that the government will not immediately nationalise my suggestions. Pressure on schools to restrict the breadth of the secondary curriculum has been increased by the phasing out of 14-19 diplomas and the requirement from the Coalition Government, introduced in January 2011, that all schools are to be arranged in league tables according to numbers of children gaining five subjects: English, Mathematics, two sciences Ancient or Modern history and a Modern or Ancient Language (Mansell, 2011).

My only influence is through dialogue. I believe the power to engage others in dialogue increases if you stay true to your principles rather than enter the murky world of political or academic diplomacy. I do not need to determine what people make of my ideas but try my best to be clear about them. Through

dialogue it is possible to find and make common cause. Those engaged in the principled development of education may form a far larger group than is sometimes recognised. People conceive of their development efforts as falling under a variety of labels such as comprehensive community education, democratic education, anti-bias/anti-discrimination education, equalities education, healthy schools, sustainability education, global citizenship, values and rights based education, critical pedagogy, learning without ability labelling and non-violent education. I happen to use the idea of inclusive development as a super-ordinate concept standing for attempts to develop education along all these lines: I call it a singular approach to educational development. But it does not matter at all whether people use the word inclusive or another word as long as they recognise the need for a super-ordinate concept and for alliances to be made.

I believe as strongly that school curricula need to change as that we need to recognise the global interdependence of people and environments; to connect ourselves with the realities of our lives; to wean ourselves from a dependence on oil and from beliefs that we can increasingly consume other finite resources; and that our planet can healthily absorb ever growing amounts of our waste. I believe that education has to be part of the solution to the pressing problems of our time. I remain optimistic.

Notes

[1] This last sentence requires a reference to Primo Levi (1996, p. 9): 'Many people – many nations – can find themselves holding, more or less wittingly, that 'every stranger is an enemy'. For the most part this conviction lies deep down, like some latent infection; it betrays itself only in random, disconnected acts and does not lie at the base of a system of reason. But when this does come about, when the unspoken dogma becomes a major premise in a syllogism, then at the end of the chain there is the [the death camp].'

[2] This owes a reference to John Dewey, in Boydston J. (Ed.)(1988) *John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct* 1922, Morals are human, Middle Works 1899-1924, Vol. 14, p. 207. Also see DEWEY-L archive posting by Richard Hake (2005): 'Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving.'

[3] My attention was drawn to this speech by Elisabeth Plate, a research student.

[4] V. Heung (2009), personal communication.

[5] The idea for connecting to a local river comes from 'Ecological Literacy' (Stone & Barlow, 2005) and also pays due respect to the Maori practice of identifying one's river, a source of one's life, as a first move in a formal introduction.

[6] http://www.ibo.org/pyp/curriculum/Index.cfm

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