Research for A Curriculum for Excellence

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Towards a Curriculum for Excellence:
TEI Conference
Glasgow, 29 March 2006
What do we mean by curriculum?

'A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice’

Stenhouse on curriculum

As a minimum, a curriculum should provide a basis for:

• planning an educational programme,
• studying it empirically and
• considering the grounds of its justification.
• NB Inevitable dilemmas, conflicting demands, value judgements…plus ça change!
And what do we mean by ‘research’?

“Research is systematic enquiry made public.”

(Stenhouse, 1975)

- A broad, inclusive definition is necessary.
- Need properly to value “applied and practice-based” research (Furlong and Oancea, 2005)
- OECD call for research in ‘Pasteur’s Quadrant’
What does research evidence tell us about learning?

Key factors in effective learning:

- **Meaningfulness** of what is to be learned (relevance, connectedness)
- **Motivation** to learn (interest, challenge, personal choice, goals, ownership)
- **Engagement** in the learning process (effort, interaction, cooperation, collaboration)
- **Feedback** on progress (formative assessment)
- **Climate of Respect** (trust, well-being, belonging)
A Curriculum for Excellence: Seven principles for curriculum design

• challenge and enjoyment;
• breadth;
• progression;
• depth;
• personalisation and choice;
• coherence; and
• relevance
Can ‘Curriculum 3-18’ deliver?

• Learning experiences that are meaningful
• Motivation to learn
• Engagement in learning
• Opportunities for feedback on learning
• A climate of respect…

Successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors? (SEED, 2004)
Current relevant research in UK

ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) – see www.tlrp.org

- **Home-School Knowledge Exchange in Primary Education;** Hughes, Feiler, Greenhough, Osborn, Pollard & Winter (2001-04)
- **Learning Scientific Concepts in Classroom Groups at Key Stage 1;** Hodgkinson (Research Training Fellow) (2001-06)
- **The Role of Awareness in the Teaching and Learning of Literacy and Numeracy in Key Stage 2;** Nunes, Bryant & Hurry (2001-04)
- **Supporting Group-work in Scottish Schools;** Christie, Topping, Tolmie, Livingstone & Howe (2003-04)
- **Provision for Gifted and Talented Pupils at Secondary Transfer;** Brookes (Research Training Fellow) (2002-07)
Current Scottish research

Applied Educational Research Scheme (www.aers.ac.uk)
• School Management and Governance Network
  – E.g. Project 1 - How do schools measure their own progress? Project 2 - Citizenship and Democracy
• Schools and Social Capital Network
  – E.g. Project 3 - Recognising Identities: building social capital among learners
• Learners, Learning and Teaching Network
  – Project 1 – Fostering Communities of Enquiry.
  – Project 2 – Teachers as Learners.
  – Project 3 - Pupils’ dispositions to learn
Research evidence informing
A Curriculum for Excellence

1. Overview of research-based literature for the ‘Curriculum 3-18’ review (2005)
   - Literature searches on pedagogy and pupil progression in eight areas of the curriculum
   - Team from Strathclyde and Glasgow Universities, with involvement of AERS Learners, Learning and Teaching Network

2. Further critical friend role to provide critiques of ‘rationales for change’ (2006)
Research-based principles 1

The environment for learning

- Respect
- Pupil voice
- Experiential learning
- Relevance
- Clear goals and feedback
Research-based principles 2

The choice of teaching and learning approaches:

• Foster active engagement
• Ensure meaningfulness
• Enhance motivation
• Harness meta-cognition
• ICT to facilitate learning community
Research-based principles 3

The ways in which learning is organised

- Harness the potential of cooperative and collaborative learning
- Use problem-based learning appropriately
- Effective Grouping
Teachers’ understandings, values and autonomy

Three closely related themes which have emerged very strongly from almost all of the reviews of factors influencing learning were:

• the importance of teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the subject matter;
• teachers’ underlying values and beliefs about their role; and
• the degree of autonomy they had in deciding how best to meet the needs of their pupils
Summary of evidence-informed strategies

• Give pupils opportunities to decide their own learning objectives
• Give pupils opportunities to assess their own and others’ work
• Provide opportunities for genuinely collaborative group work
• Consult/listen to pupils and let them have their say regarding both classroom practices and broader school-wide issues
• Recognise the learning that takes place out of school
• Treat pupil diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem
• Use technology imaginatively
• Create a community of learners in the classroom
• Think about values, teacher learning and understanding
Development of ACfE as a research process?

- Curriculum development as action research
- Research as collaborative activity
- Clusters of schools form collaborative communities of enquiry to take forward cross-cutting themes (AiFL as a model)
- In partnership/collaboration with researchers and other stakeholders
- New e-tools for networking available (AERS Virtual Research Environment; SSDN)
- Funding for collaborative engagement
Implications for Teacher Education

• Engage in new collaborative partnerships involving schools, LAs, TEIs, LTS, HMIE, QCA and SEED
• Equip students to be professional enquirers and curriculum developers
• Celebrate opportunity to bring our research, our teaching and our CPD portfolios into closer alignment
• Radically review courses both for pre-service and for CPD
Issues

• Opportunity or threat?
• Tension between vertical and horizontal strands of ACE?
• Need to look beyond the horizon and use our imaginations
• International dimension

LET’S MAKE IT HAPPEN!

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