

Landmarks with questions – England’s school history wars 1967-2010 and 2010-2013

Robert Guyver
University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth, UK

Abstract:

This is in two parts and provides a background to national curriculum developments mainly from 1967 to 2010 as well as a focus on debates since 2010. It seeks to make links between previous curriculum debates and the current ones in the areas of pedagogy, method and content. The earlier debates had features of many issues that would arise again in the 2010-2013 period, especially: quantitative versus qualitative approaches to education; the place of nation vis-a-vis the rest of the world; the relationship between a disciplinary approach and substantive contexts; the role of historians, government and professional associations; and the role of the media. Progress in planning for the 2013 draft history curriculum in England has been slow, but the nature of the speculation before, and of the reaction after the publication of the draft shows that there are some strongly held and deeply entrenched positions about what function a national history curriculum should fulfil. The debate has involved a Government Minister (Michael Gove) and a range of teachers and academics, and – particularly – historians: from the celebrity academics chosen by him to advise, to others whose response has been divided but public, involving letters and articles in the media. A major concern has been how to organise and rationalise for an English curriculum a national narrative for students 7-14 that encompasses not only a disciplinary approach but also both British and international contexts. Complaints from all groups however show disappointment that the Minister failed to secure his earlier interest in extending compulsory school by two years to the age of 16.

Keywords: Qualitative and quantitative approaches, Significance, Landmarks, National history curriculum, Historians, Political, Historiography, Historical Association, Royal Historical Society, Media, English, British, Anglocentric, Global, Disciplinary, Narrative, Chronological, Chronology, Sequential, Consultation, Discourse of derision, HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate), Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)

Introduction

The battle over school history which has been revived under Education Secretary Michael Gove (in office under a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition since May 2010) is part of a much larger debate which is between quantitative and qualitative approaches to education. The aim of defining, measuring and, of course, raising *standards* for testing is what defines the *quantitative* argument. This is naturally subject to political influence and may well lead to reductionism. By contrast, the predominantly *qualitative* concern of the teaching profession itself is about providing education for development and empowerment through internalization. It involves elaboration and ‘flow’ rather than reduction. The quantitative approach has been associated with a ‘back-to-basics’ campaign which has informed neo-conservative educational discourse since the so-called ‘Black Papers’ of the late 1960s and 1970s¹. It has also been described as ‘essentialist’ or even ‘fundamentalist’.

A simple version of these positions of binary opposites might go like this: (a) when the ‘back-to-basics’ principle is fed into a machine called ‘school history’ what is likely to emerge will be rather distorted, as has indeed happened with the February 7th (2013) draft history curriculum; (b) while focusing on basics it adopts a default position of national history, a chronological and sequential approach to narrative, and a reductionist list of landmarks; (c) this is not reductionist because it is a short list, it is reductionist because by its very nature and because of time allowances in schools, it seems to prevent not only elaboration and flow but it also seems to lack opportunities for development, empowerment and internalization (in the sense of intrinsic motivation). Taylor (2013) describes this as a ‘mile-wide and inch-deep’ approach’.

However, the difficult task is negotiating a middle way between these two positions. Defining the ‘basics’ for history was not a simple project, although one attempt was Staff Inspector HMI Roger Hennessey’s quasi-essentialist search for the ‘heartlands’ of historical content, evident in the Raspberry Ripple (series)

History 5-16 HMI report of 1988, and fed into the reports produced by the History Working Group (1989, 1990) (see also Hennessey, 1988). There are layers of complexity in the 'heartlands' idea, as it does have some similarities with the current prioritization of the search for 'significance', and where events of national significance – although dismissable as a 'canon' – are landmarks which have had historical or historiographical mileage. Nevertheless, there was then and there still is, a great deal of tension between the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Ironically enough the emergence of a *public* debate over 'the basics' occurred not under the Conservative Party, but at the time of a Labour Government, and after a scandal in the mid-1970s involving the staff of the William Tyndale Primary School in London, where freedom of curricular choice was taken literally, to the detriment of children's knowledge of basics like reading and arithmetic. James Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister (1976-79), in his Ruskin College (Oxford) 'Great Debate' speech tried to put the dispute into a broader social context, managing to stress *both* the quantitative and qualitative approaches to education:

The balance was wrong in the past. We have a responsibility now to see that we do not get it wrong in the other direction. There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. Nor at the other extreme must they be technically efficient robots. Both of the basic purposes of education require the same essential tools. These are basic literacy, basic numeracy, the understanding of how to live and work together, respect for others, respect for the individual. This means acquiring certain basic knowledge, and skills and reasoning ability. It means developing lively inquiring minds and an appetite for further knowledge that will last a lifetime. It means mitigating as far as possible the disadvantages that may be suffered through poor home conditions or physical or mental handicap. Are we aiming in the right direction in these matters? (Callaghan, 1976):

What follows is an analysis of broadly two sets of curriculum debates (1967-2010; 2010-2013) and an attempt will be made to identify similarities and differences between them. Because of the May publication date of this number of IJHLTR it will be impossible to bring news within this piece of how the problems examined here will have been resolved, or legislated for, if indeed legislation does resolve the issues.

Part 1 1967-2010

Curriculum reform in history and the humanities in England and (some of) the rest of the world before 1989

The Plowden Report

The Labour administration of Harold Wilson (1964-1970) saw the publication of the Plowden Report (Children and their Primary Schools, CACE, 1967). Although the Hadow Report of the late 1920s and early 1930s had already shown signs of recognising the influence of progressive teaching methods, in 'Plowden' (as the report came to be known) many traditional shibboleths of primary education were questioned, especially the purity of individual subjects and the notion of the teacher as an authoritarian transmitter of knowledge. Cross-curricular topics (characterised by child-centred or discovery methods) and group work were encouraged. In paragraph 521 the names of Baldwin, Isaacs, Luria, Bruner and Piaget are mentioned alongside the importance of offering concrete situations (and by implication experiential learning) as bases for children's learning and development.

Catherine Matheson (2004) interestingly comments on the philosophy of this report as being the triumph of psychological harmony over intellectualism, although clearly in some circumstances a primary classroom can have both. Colin Richards (1999) believes that despite the recommendations of the Plowden Report many, if not most, primary schools continued to prioritise literacy and mathematics in the morning and only taught the afternoon subjects (the rest of the curriculum) with a Plowdensque approach.

The School History Project, Bruner and key concepts

The 1970s witnessed a major project which mirrored Bruner's MACOS (Man a Course of Study) which fed into the Schools History Project. Supported by the ideas of Joseph Schwab (1964, 1978) and Californian Hilda Taba (whose philosophy was based on many of the ideas of John Dewey; see Taba, 1962 and Taba

et al., 1971) there was a move towards letting the curriculum be driven by syntactic rather than substantive knowledge – skills and concepts with content illustrating these principles rather than letting content drive the whole curriculum. What emerged that was particularly influential both in history and geography, was the notion of key concepts, for history a harbinger of later developments that fed into historical thinking. Alan Blyth's University of Liverpool team used the notion of paired key concepts as the motors of enquiry: causes and consequences, change and continuity, similarity and difference (Blyth et al. 1976). Running parallel with these were other major key concepts such as evidence, chronology and interpretation. Drawing on Bruner's spiral curriculum belief that any subject can be taught in an honest form to a (school) child of any age, those who selected content could be influenced by sources as evidence, narratives or stories as interpretations, and chronological and contextual frames supported by timelines. Sources could be written, oral, pictorial, artefactual or environmental (sites). Local history and its immediacy took on more significance especially for younger children.

Alongside these developments some landmark Historical Association publications appeared, particularly Jeannette Coltham and John Fines's *Educational Objectives for the Study of History* (1971), and Peter Rogers' *The New History – Theory into Practice* (1979). Cotham and Fines's work crystallised the importance of syntactic objectives, and this as well as Rogers' work has been amply evaluated in a whole number of IJHLTR in single focus articles by Bage, Chapman, Cooper, Hawkey, Haydn, Lee, Nichol, Oral & Aktin, and Sheldon (all 2010). But what is significant for this narrative is that in Rogers' interpretation his recontextualisation of the 'new history' for schools represents a scholarly approach to the layers of epistemology which, if fully understood, would defy attempts at political manipulation and reduce any temptation to resort to derision. An example of this is Margaret Thatcher's identification of the New History as radically left-wing, undermining traditional, sequential and essentially national (patriotic) school history. Rogers however, as has been incisively demonstrated by Arthur Chapman:

does not set out to turn pupils into 'mini-historians' (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.24-25 and p.40);
is opposed to decontextualised empathy exercises (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.20-21 and 32-33);
is opposed to the rehearsal of decontextualised historical 'skills' (Rogers, 1979, p.34);
is focused on the development of substantive understandings as much as procedural understandings (Rogers, 1979(a) p.12);
is focused around extended enquiry involving the meaningful use of historical documents and the development of contextual knowledge (Rogers, 1979(a) pp.40-57);
and ... argues that history education must enable pupils, from ... [the] earliest stages, to engage in representations of the past and, in time, to construct complex historical narratives (Rogers, 1979 (a) p.10 and pp.48-50). (Chapman, 2009, p.50)

Sheldon (2010) places Rogers' 1979 work in the historical context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1969 to the 1990s), and Rogers' identification of 'strategic importance', using an Ulster example, as his contribution to what became Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). Rogers' interpretation of the 'New History' was if anything conservative (with a small 'c') and a far cry from Mrs Thatcher's later caricature of it as dangerously radical. In particular Rogers' espousal of a continuing relationship between historical scholarship and pedagogy and his insistence on the importance of context, as well as his recognition, later theorized by Shulman (1986, 1987) and refined by Turner-Bisset (2001), that a teacher's repertoire of 'knowledge bases' included a balance or amalgam of substantive ('propositional' in Rogers' terms – broadly about content) and syntactic ('procedural' according to Rogers) knowledge and understanding – broadly about process and knowledge of the discipline. Significantly, according to Rogers, quality in the substantive or propositional knowledge of teachers required the maintaining of an awareness of (and association with) the work of historians. Fostering and supporting this inter-relationship in its publications, local branches and annual conferences, was already the aim of the key organisation, the Historical Association, which included in its membership a healthy mix of historians, teachers, history teacher educators and the general public.

The late 1960s and 1970s also saw the publication of the Black Papers (Cox & Dyson, 1969, 1970; Cox & Boyson, 1975, 1977). The ideas and demands of the Black Papers writers would be fed into Conservative

Party education policy in the 1980s and 1990s, especially (a) the need for a national curriculum with a focus on basic literacy and numeracy, and (b) a rigorous and regular school inspection system. Their concern over appropriate teaching methods for delivering the basics was (apparently) mirrored by academic research in a study by Neville Bennett, *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress* (1976).

The work of John West

Despite these concerns in the 'back-to-basics' 'quantitative' camp, developments in the 'qualitative' field continued, although ironically this involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. Using 'new history' ideas in the context of primary school history, John West working in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley in the West Midlands, provided a research-based rationale for a radical approach to curriculum organisation. West challenged an apparently widely held belief that younger children, because of limitations to their understanding of time, could not engage effectively with history. His tests, undertaken as part of his PhD research (West, 1981) and also extending his role as Chief Inspector (not an HMI) for the Dudley Local Education Authority, showed that when stimulated with artefacts, pictures, stories, documents and time-lines, children would demonstrate an understanding of evidence and sequential time. He espoused Bruner's spiral curriculum approach to the discipline of history and undermined the limitations of Piaget's interpretations of what children could do and understand at certain ages and stages. A talented published historian himself, he brought the rigour of historical method to the primary classroom.

Subsequently West converted his package of sources and tests into a green-covered curriculum handbook (his 'green goddess') for schools in the Dudley area (West, 1980). His ideas were certainly influential and had an impact on Key Stage 1 in the 1991 version of the National Curriculum (and subsequently in the 1995 and 2000 changes). His dismissal of a chronological syllabus in favour of looser designs which would encourage more free-flow across – and in and out of – chronological periods in order to achieve an understanding of chronology was only partly incorporated into Key Stage 2 by the History Working Group. John West's work has since been followed by new developments in history-specific primary pedagogy, with significant contributions from Rosie Turner-Bisset. Other key figures over the last twenty years have been Joan Blyth, Hilary Cooper, Jon Nichol, Penelope Harnett and Roy Hughes. Not only has research into primary pedagogy in history been extended into the international sphere, but the Historical Association's journal *Primary History* has played an influential role in examining good practice and giving it an academic rationale.

HMI 1978-1988

The knock-on effect of the Plowden Report (1967) and the state of 542 primary schools was examined by HMI in a report that was published in 1978, *Primary Education in England – a Survey by HM Inspectors of Schools*. The history section of this reported on various disappointments in the quality of teaching and indeed of curriculum organisation, including poorly chosen reference books for 7 year olds, copying, repeating topics so that children might for example get Romans more than once, maybe even in consecutive years. There was a call for a more coherent and less fragmented rationale, although some good work was noted, especially where local sources and sites supported themes.

It was rare to find classes where the work, even in a simple way, was leading the children towards an understanding of historical change and the causal factors involved, or where children were becoming aware of the nature of historical evidence. (HMI, 1978, p.73, para. 5.127)

On how a curriculum for primary schools might be organised there was this comment:

Where history was taught through topics of general interest there was the danger of a fragmented approach. A framework is required to provide some ordering of the content being taught. This may be a single path through a chronological sequence or a more complex series of historical topics which, while not necessarily taught in chronological order, should give a perspective in terms of the ordering of events or by means of comparison with the present day. (HM, 1978, p.73, para. 5.128)

Advisors and inspectors in local authorities would use this report as a default definition of good practice when visiting schools and would expect to be shown schemes of work which reflected the HMI comments.

The change-over in Secretaries of State for Education from Keith Joseph to Kenneth Baker, which happened in 1986, marked the beginning of the period which culminated in the national curriculum, and the change in direction can be seen in differences in emphasis in the nature of the official reports on history which emerged at this time. John Slater HMI had been Staff Inspector for History and had produced *History in the Primary and Secondary Years* (DES, 1985). It recommended a balance of local, national and international history and a balance of chronological periods for a history curriculum. Tapping into what has become a continuing debate about chronology, this publication stressed that periods studied should be long enough to illustrate the dimension of change. Also, it recognised that history was a controversial subject, and in its pages and appendices provided more than one model for how a school history programme might be organised. It cemented into official government policy the marriage between historical skills and concepts and historical content.

By contrast, but nevertheless by realigning (not abandoning) the skills-content relationship, the period of Roger Hennessey's incumbency as HMI Staff Inspector, in which he oversaw the publication of *History 5-16* (DES, 1988) and the two reports of the History Working Group (*Interim* [DES, 1989] and *Final* [DES, 1990]), was characterised by a commitment to what he termed the 'heartlands' of history, placing content at the heart of the curriculum. This corresponded with Kenneth Baker's commitment, later placed in the guidance to the Chairman of the History Working Group (Michael Saunders Watson), to British history being at the core of the curriculum.

The back-story 1989 – 2010

The first national curriculum for history in England

The first national curriculum for history in England, and in Wales (although the Welsh curriculum was different) became law for the school term (semester) beginning in September 1991. During the first phases of its construction (January 1989 – April 1990: the work of the History Working Group and the publication of two reports [The Interim Report, August 1989, and the Final Report, April 1990] until her resignation in November 1990) Mrs Thatcher was prime minister.

The story of this curriculum development project (for that is essentially what the first national curriculum for history was) has been told elsewhere (Prochaska, 1990, Thatcher, 1993; Baker, 1993; Graham & Tytler, 1993; Phillips, 1998; Saunders Watson, 2008; Guyver in Taylor & Guyver, 2012). It was in development: January 1989 - January 1991; implemented (and experimented with): 1991-1995. The brakes were beginning to be applied as early as 1993 when a review was announced to cut back the content and synthesise (and harmonise) the templates of the whole national curriculum, and the Dearing revisions were published in 1994, for schools to teach from September 1995).

What is significant about the work of the Department of Education and Science (DES) National Curriculum History Working Group (January 1989 – January 1990) is (a) its *modus operandi* and (b) the creation of various templates, especially the so-called PESC formula for different perspectives (political, economic, social and cultural [also embracing scientific, technological, and even religious]). Alongside this was a pattern which embedded a separation of first order and second order concepts – one in programmes of study and the other in statements of attainment (which were later rebranded as 'key elements' but which have much in common with Peter Seixas's (six) benchmarks of historical thinking. Significance as such would not feature until the 2007/8 Key Stage 3 revisions.

As far as its *modus operandi* is concerned it represented a planned set of official and unofficial dialogues of a collaborative nature between historians, teachers, teacher educators, librarians, archivists, education officers, and 'heritage' providers. There were three periods of consultation, two expected (after the Interim report and after the National Curriculum Council (NCC) redrafted the Secretary of State's Proposals, a standard procedure with national curriculum subject reports) and one unexpected (after the new Secretary of State for Education, John MacGregor [who followed Kenneth Baker in August 1989], decided not to

accept the Final Report as his own set of Proposals [as had happened with all of the other subjects to date], but, after seeing Mrs Thatcher and his own officials in March, to build in an extra consultation of three months after the eventual publication of the Final report in April 1990 (he had received it about the beginning of February 1990). So the general public had glimpses of *three* drafts before the Statutory Order was legislated for early in 1991.

In a remarkably open process senior members of the Historical Association (Keith Robbins, President and Martin Roberts, Chair of the Secondary Education Committee) had been invited in November 1989 to a meeting where the public feedback after the Interim report consultation was discussed. Keith Robbins played an important role, although not a member of the Working Group. On the one hand he encouraged a transnational ('multiple kingdom') approach to British (rather than English) history. On the other, he fully supported a British 'core' as opposed to a fully globalised approach. Explaining his position he said he preferred a curriculum that was anchored locally and nationally to one that wandered around the world (Robbins, 1990). This was not an 'either ... or' belief, but a more subtle one where the nation's history in its remarkable complexity (Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well as England) was a starting point.

The History Working Group offered some solutions to conundrums which would later plague the David Cameron administration (from 2010). In particular, although British history would be at the core of the curriculum, there would still be room for the histories of other countries. Also because of concerns about giving only earlier periods of history to younger children Key Stage 2 (for children aged 7-11, over four school years), this group would have discontinuous sets of British history: broadly 55BCE-1066, 1485-1714 (originally, to be reduced to 1485-1603 by 1995), 1837-1901, and 1930 to the present. Thus the 'high' middle ages were missing as well as the 18th and early 20th centuries. However at Key Stage 3 (for students 11-14, over 3 school years) the programme would start at 1066, but it originally included the Roman Empire. Unlike the 2013 proposals, Key Stage 2 would include, as well as ancient Greece, a list of six non-European (and largely pre-modern) societies. As noted above, in two (either ... or) units it would include modern British history: either Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930.

It is perhaps not surprising that Mrs Thatcher herself devoted some pages of her autobiography, *The Downing Street Years* (1993, pp. 593-599 on the National Curriculum), to express her dislike of the history curriculum proposed (at the time of the *Final Report* of the History Working Group) in April 1990. She preferred (as indeed did the Secretary of State for Education who carried this forward from 1986, Kenneth Baker) the patriotic model of history teaching and learning: history as a series of narratives of great events, heroes and heroines, supported by dates. There was another agenda too in that she approved of a more quantitative approach to the teaching and learning of history. This aspect of Conservative policy had filtered down or across to senior civil servants in the Department of Education and Science and caused some friction in debates with the History Working Group especially over (a) the title of the first attainment target (knowledge or understanding?) and (b) in the relationship between the attainment targets and the programmes of study. The History Working Group was in effect seeking a middle way between the quantitative and qualitative positions. The story is told by Phillips (1998) and Saunders Watson (2008). It is worth pausing to remember an article by Robert Skidelsky (a pro-knowledge historian and supporter of a patriotic view of history) entitled 'Make them learn the landmarks' (1990 [*The Times*, 4 April]):

The working group understands perfectly well that knowledge *includes* understanding and that test for knowledge must include testing for understanding as it always used to, but its nerve failed in face of the caricature of knowledge among teachers and the media. (Skidelsky, 1990)

Changes under John Major (1990-1997): The Dearing review 1993-4 (for September 1995)

Not long into John Major's premiership the quantitative v. qualitative debate raised its head again in a DES Discussion Paper, *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* (1992) authored by the so-called 'Three Wise Men', Robin Alexander, a professor, Jim Rose, the HMI Chief Inspector and Chris Woodhead, Chief Executive of head of a government-funded quango, the National Curriculum Council. Within the following twenty years all three men would exert a considerable influence. Rose and Alexander would effectively move into the qualitative camp, producing rival but strangely complementary

reports in 2009, whereas Chris Woodhead moved even more deeply into the quantitative camp, becoming Chief Inspector of Schools as Ofsted emerged, and would gain a reputation as a scourge not only of teachers seen by Ofsted as weak, but also of (mainly 'qualitative') educational researchers. The burden of this report was to recommend not only *subjects* as opposed to *cross-curricular topics*, but also whole class teaching rather than group work. There were echoes here of the Black Papers and an indication of changes to come, with the Literacy and Numeracy 'strategies' recommending not only what was to be taught but also how, and for how long.

The stage was set for a number of developments and non-developments which would affect future versions of the national history curriculum. John Major's Government decided on a trimming down of the whole national curriculum under the chairmanship of Sir Ron (later Lord) Dearing, and this was implemented from September 1995. The three history attainment targets of 1995 were reduced to one, and the content became even more focused on British history, the *Roman Empire* having been dropped from the secondary (Key Stage 3, 11-14) syllabus, and *Exploration and encounters* (the mainly Spanish story of Columbus, Cortes and the Aztecs) from the 7-11 (Key Stage 2) programme, although *Aztecs* was retained as a non-European study alongside *Benin, Egypt, the Indus Valley, the Maya, and Mesopotamia (Assyria or Sumer)*, later to be two separate choices after the changes of 2000). Despite obvious political interest and indeed intervention, the curriculum retained a remarkable balance of the substantive (content) and syntactic (process).

Despite other policy initiatives like those foretold in 'The Three Wise Men Report', nevertheless the influence of the School History Project was confirmed. There were five 'key elements': chronology, range and depth of historical knowledge and understanding, interpretations of history, historical enquiry, and organisation and communication. There were dissenting voices however, significantly Chris McGovern (with Robert Skidelsky and Anthony Freeman a founder of the lobby-group, the History Curriculum Association) who published a minority report and subsequently expressed wider concerns about national curriculum history, placing himself in a patriotic narrative camp and showing a preference for a quantitative approach to knowledge (McGovern, 1994; 2007).

Changes under Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010)

The Blair New Labour Government (1997-2007) which was followed by the brief, but still New Labour, premiership of Gordon Brown (2007-2010) initially changed direction slightly from the Dearing promise that nothing would be changed for 5 years. In January 1998 David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, announced that teaching the exact detail of the programmes of study for all the foundation subjects (those subjects that were not English, Mathematics or Science) at Key Stage 2 (8-11) was to be *suspended* in the interests of having more time to teach the new Literacy and Numeracy 'hours' or strategies. But when the new national curriculum was published in 1999 for implementation from September 2000, little had changed from the 1995 Dearing version. The wording of one key element had become 'knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past', but the content at Key Stages 2 and 3 remained essentially the same.

During the 'War on Terror' period, Gordon Brown, premier from 2007 to 2010, but previously Chancellor of the Exchequer (Treasurer) from 1997 to 2007, made two important speeches (Brown, 2004, 2006) about the meaning of Britishness in which he provided a critical analysis of the subtle interplay between British identity, British history and British exceptionalism, drawing on a very wide range of references.²

Curriculum revisions and debates to 2010

The last piece of curriculum reform in history that took place (to date, May 2013) began to be discussed in December 2005, accompanied by the usual fanfare of alarmist media reports stretching into January 2006, and was implemented from September 2008. This involved changes to the structure of Key Stage 3. A revised framework of concepts and processes was to shape all national curriculum subjects at Key Stage 3, and this clearly owed something to the increasingly influential work of Peter Seixas on historical thinking. The *key concepts* in history would be: chronological understanding; cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence; significance; interpretation. The *key processes*

would be: historical enquiry; using evidence; communicating about the past. What I wrote about the status quo of the history curriculum 2000-2010 and the curriculum changes of 2007-8 can be found in Appendix 1.

There was a very strange and quite sudden break with developments after the final days of the New Labour administration. A fresh primary curriculum had been planned for, under the Rose Review (2009), which adopted a very non-doctrinaire and flexible approach to history, although perhaps not necessarily enhancing its status within the overall curriculum. Alongside this the results of a large scale research project into primary education was published (Alexander et al., 2009), recommending that developments in primary education be research-based. These findings would have no official status and did not necessarily co-incide with the dominant philosophy of the next government, but Alexander's support for dialogic teaching and learning would carry on having a life of its own in professional circles.

Part 2 – The current history curriculum debate 2010-2013

Phase one – May to November 2010: a resurrection of the discourse of derision

In May 2010 Michael Gove took over the Education Department from New Labour's Ed Balls and rebranded it (his predecessor had been Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families). The new minister immediately scrapped the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Association (QCDA, previously the QCA) and abandoned plans to implement the expensively researched Rose Review of Primary Education (2009), which had already but perhaps unwisely, in view of the impending May 2010 General [Parliamentary] Election, been flagged up for 'definite' implementation. Schools which had already started on its programmes were told to change course and carry on with the old 2000 Key Stage 1 and 2 curricula.

Ironically, while seeking to bring greater definition and a stronger national narrative focus to the history curriculum, Mr Gove was also, at the same time encouraging head teachers and their governing bodies to opt out of the national curriculum by attaining 'free school' or 'academy' status which virtually gave these schools freedoms and privileges over curriculum matters that were the equivalent to those enjoyed by independent schools. As Catherine Matheson (2004) has commented, there is a perpetual tug-o-war in education between egalitarianism and elitism. In this case those who attain elite status no longer need the egalitarian curriculum (which might be seen as 'caviare to the general' [Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II ii, 438]).

Core knowledge and democratic intellectualism – compatible or incompatible?

Core knowledge and Ed Hirsch

Gove, a Scot, had already expressed support for American Ed Hirsch's principles of core knowledge, but also (and to some extent in contrast) his approval of the Scottish educational principles which drove democratic intellectualism. Gove's liking for Ed Hirsch's educational philosophy seemed to stem from an almost evangelical (and perhaps egalitarian) concern about bringing various forms of intellectual, literary and cultural capital to children from lower socio-economic groups. The theory behind it was that even rote learning was acceptable if the facts so learnt could then at the next stage be used. History was rich in potential as far as cultural and literary capital was concerned. This linked with claims from David Cameron, from May 2010 Coalition Prime Minister, that when he had been at school (Eton or earlier) his favourite book had been Henrietta Marshall's *Our Island Story* (1905), a series of short narratives about heroes, heroines and events written (according also to Marshall herself in an explanatory note at the beginning) almost as mythic legends rather than pure history. These indeed could be facts to be learnt and known, not – initially anyway – necessarily discussed, although in Gove's terms they clearly needed to be known before they could be debated (or used). Nevertheless, critics of Hirsch's ideas focus on the difficult relationship, and possible gap, between knowledge and understanding.

The difference between the ideas of Ed Hirsch and the tenets behind the democratic intellect (see George Elder Davie, 1961, 1986) is crucial to the problems that would arise while the history curriculum was in Michael Gove's hands. In fact the 19th century dispute over the reform of Scottish universities has within it a paradigm of the current crisis. The essence of the discrepancy between the Scottish system and the English was that philosophy as taught in Scottish universities included an initiation into philosophical

method as well as philosophical *content*, and there was encouragement to use the method thus learnt in discussion and debate in university seminars.

Michael Gove, Niall Ferguson and Simon Schama – the first phase

Michael Gove's first foray into controversy over the history curriculum took place at the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival in late May 2010, when he was less than a month in office. Niall Ferguson was talking at the festival about what was wrong with history education in English schools. Gove seemed to agree with Ferguson's basic thesis that there was a need for history to be taught in chronological sequence. But the Oxford and Harvard historian had more to say: it is important that the structure is there to get at 'big picture history', or put another way, at significant history. Ferguson was convinced that the big story had been the rise of the West, but now it should include the rise of the East, as well as the causes and consequences of that, one of which might be the decline of the West. Ferguson was writing a book that would come out early in 2011, *Civilization – The West and the Rest*, which would develop some ideas he had already written about in a chapter, 'The decline of history and the futures of Western civilisation', in *Liberating Learning: Widening Participation*, edited by Patrick Derham and Michael Worton (2010).

The theme of the West and the Rest would also be televised in 2011. Whatever else Niall Ferguson might be accused of – and he has been accused of having neoconservative sympathies – he cannot be criticised for too narrow a focus, and in his career he had clearly been interested in synthesising histories of different countries to achieve a composite big picture, as he did in *The War of the World* (2006). Even his forays into British history have had scope (*The Pity of War*, 1998, and *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 2003). His recent short television series on China (*Triumph and Turmoil*, 2012) takes a long look at Chinese history, and in so doing emphasises the importance of studying it.

Indeed, both the USA and Britain in the period after September 11th 2001 had shown a preoccupation with the Middle East, and had taken their eyes off what had been happening, especially with the economy, in China. In the light of the financial crisis across many parts of the world, and particularly within parts of the European Union, this was possibly unwise. Although China has not conformed with Fukuyama's general thesis of the advance of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992), it had changed from over-politicisation and collectivisation to more freedom in land tenure and a great commitment to a market economy. According to Paul Ropp (2010, p. 154), '... many Asian countries, for the first time since World War II, ... see China as politically and economically more important than the United States'. In contrast to a theme of western exceptionalism – even the West's espousal of liberal democracy, another equally valid theme might be along the lines of the title of Kishore Mahbubani's *The Great Convergence – Asia, the West, and the Logic of one World*. According to Mahbubani the great achievement of the EU had been the continuing prospect of peace in Europe. Similarly ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a mini-replica of the EU, had played a crucial role in delivering peace (Mahbubani, 2013, p.6). A history curriculum provides an education to help young people understand how their world came to be, not just how their nation came to be (important though that is), and should track into and from the past issues and related places which are becoming significant worldwide. Given these arguments, there is a case for China and southeast Asia to be included.

Despite the invitation having never been made formal, both Ferguson and Gove were submitted to a ferocious attack by journalist Seumas Milne of *The Guardian* (Milne, 2010). Milne was to go on to attack Gove again in 2013, again using perhaps rather intemperate language. Milne's 2010 article inevitably drew a response from Ferguson himself (Ferguson, 2010). It was a familiar set of criticisms: Britain's crimes under imperialism have compromised any attempt to resurrect history for patriotic reasons, and any idea of celebrating British history is to be deplored. Gove came under criticism from Milne for even considering that such a neo-conservative (and neo-imperialist) as Niall Ferguson would be the right person to help. The piece in the article that drew most fire (from Ferguson himself) was the suggestion that Hitler admired the British Empire for its racism, with its implication that the British had promoted fascist values.

In the light of what has happened since then, Michael Gove's invitation to Ferguson to help him with the history curriculum can only be seen in as a smokescreen, because it has turned out that Gove's and

Ferguson's views of what components make a relevant narrative are quite different. Ferguson would clearly want to place Britain in a global setting, and would not want only the history of Britain to be taught. This became apparent in a debate filmed at the Law Society, London between Ferguson and [Sir] Richard J. Evans, Regius Professor of History, University of Cambridge) dating from March 2011 (University of Oxford Podcasts, 2011; Lay, 2011; YouTube, 2013). Ferguson can be heard saying that British history should be no more than 50% of the curriculum. Evans was to comment on this situation in *The New Statesman* in March 2013.

He initially asked the historian Niall Ferguson to come up with ideas for a new curriculum but Ferguson's response, based on a positive presentation of Europe's – and especially Britain's – global ascendancy since the early modern period, did not appeal to Gove, because it advocated history with a global sweep instead of history focused on supposedly key personalities and events within the British past. Sidelining Ferguson, Gove then asked another expatriate British television historian, Simon Schama, to take a lead. (Evans, 2013d)

To this can be added Evans' other critical and significant contributions to the debate from 2011 (see Evans 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; and 2013d).

The announcement referred to above that it was Simon Schama (and apparently not Niall Ferguson) who would be the 'History Tsar' was made after a period of relative calm following the May-June media furore, and not until the Conservative Party Conference (in October 2010). Schama had already in the early years of the 21st century presented on BBC Television his *A History of Britain* (note the 'A' not 'The'), which was followed up by three substantial books under that title. Later he justified some of his BBC series content choices giving the reason that a selection had to be made, and it was a personal one (Schama, 2010a). At the autumn party political conference Gove presented his caricature version of the existing history curriculum, claiming that students left school knowing only about Henry VIII and Hitler and had no sense of a connecting narrative. This was at odds with the most recent Ofsted report on history (*History for all – History in English schools 2007/10*, March 2010) and with the findings of an Historical Association survey.

Phase 2 – November 2010 to February 2013: speculating in the dark

Simon Schama was quick to respond, but not in an official report or rationale, although his piece has all of the eloquence, panache, wit, wisdom and insight expected of him. As has become customary in recent years this debate would be undertaken in the printed or online pages of the media. In this case it was *The Guardian*. He defended the place of history in the curriculum and as an essential ingredient of citizenship:

The seeding of amnesia is the undoing of citizenship. To the vulgar utilitarian demand, 'Yes, all very nice, I'm sure, but what use is it?', this much (and more) can be said: inter alia, the scrutiny of evidence and the capacity to decide which version of an event seems most credible; analytical knowledge of the nature of power; an understanding of the way in which some societies acquire wealth while others lose it and others again never attain it; a familiarity with the follies and pity of war; the distinctions between just and unjust conflicts; a clear-eyed vision of the trappings and the aura of charisma, the weird magic that turns sovereignty into majesty; the still more peculiar surrender to authority grounded in revelation, be that a sacred book or a constitution invoked as if it too were supernaturally ordained and hence unavailable to contested interpretation. (Schama, 2010b)

There were subtle messages here to acknowledge the part already played by Ferguson ('an understanding of the way in which some societies acquire wealth while others lose it', and the title of one of Ferguson's books, 'the pity of war'). Schama showed recognition of history as inquiry and expressed caution about its use to enhance identity politics:

To the retort that teachers have enough on their hands in the state system getting their students to be literate and numerate, I would respond that in a pluralist Britain of many cultures, vocational skills are the necessary but insufficient conditions of modern civility. Kids need to

know they belong to a history that's bigger, broader, more inclusive than the subject they imagine to be the saga of remote grandees alien to their traditions and irrelevant to their present. A truly capacious British history will not be the feeder of identity politics but its dissolvent. In the last resort, all serious history is about entering the lives of others, separated by place and time. It is the greatest, least sentimental, least politically correct tutor of tolerance. (Schama, 2010b)

He selected six landmarks, but if these are examined carefully in the original article it will be seen that each has at least one question attached. His vision is not of a narrow view of English or British history, but makes links to multiple British kingdoms and the British Empire's far-flung corners and spaces. It is not always a sanguine view of British history (his comments under these headings can be read in full on the related *Guardian* website [www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/nov/09/future-history-schools]):

What every child should learn: Murder in the cathedral; the black death, and the peasants revolt in the reign of Richard II; the execution of King Charles I; the Indian moment; the Irish wars; the opium wars and China. (Schama, 2010b)

What Schama did not do was to suggest at what age school students should examine these events. However the initial choice of Schama seemed inspired because of his underpinning sense of humour as well as his eclectic interests and ability to link history to his other major concern, Art (e.g. Schama, 2009).

This period was characterised by high profile historians and educationalists having their say. It has already been noted that Sir Richard Evans had taken a very active role, although as was the case with all historians it was largely speculative as it would be undertaken before a draft curriculum had become available, but in one significant instance it involved reporting on a funded research (and therefore evidence-based) enquiry into history teaching in the 20th century, published as *The Right Kind of History*, which was available from November 2011. This had been completed by another high profile historian, Sir David Cannadine with his two co-authors and researchers, Jenny Keating and Nicola Sheldon. Michael Gove himself attended the book launch at the Institute of Historical Research in Senate House, London, and both Gove and Cannadine gave speeches.

The main message of the research project was that there had been no 'golden age' of history teaching, and there had been both good and bad examples from those interviewed of both progressive and traditional teaching of history. David Cannadine wanted to communicate to the Secretary of State that the current history curriculum did not in itself need any real change. However, the change that Cannadine wanted was an extension to the programme so that history would be taught to the age of 16, requiring history to be given two more compulsory years (as in Australia). Michael Gove was not in principle against this but stated that he would envisage a single examination board for whatever the 16 plus exam would be called (to date it is called the GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education]), including the possibility that it might be some form of baccalaureate. However, neither of these suggestions (an extension of history to 16 and single exam boards) would come to pass.

Phase 3 – After the publication of the draft on February 7th 2013

There were strong reactions to the draft curriculum when it was finally published after an announcement in Parliament on February 7th 2013 (see Appendix 1). There was a recognition that the curriculum was sequentially chronological and that the main focus was English rather than British history, and that little room had been given to the histories of places outside Britain. Key Stage 2 (for 7-11 year olds) had all of English history from before the Romans to the end of the Stuarts (1714). It also had Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Key Stage 3 (for 12-14 year olds) would start in the early 18th century and reach up to 1990. Thus, if the Government wanted this to be taught in chronological order, understanding of the Greeks, Romans and the Roman Empire would be at level suitable for Year 3 (age 7-8); the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans would be pitched for Year 4 (age 8-9), the rest of the Middle Ages (1154-1485) for Year 5 (age 9-10), and the Tudors and Stuarts for Year 6 (age 10-11). An online BBC report gave the flavour of the reactions from education professionals, including Professor Chris Husbands who commented that:

If you teach chronologically you end up with a seven-year-old understanding of the Saxons, a 10-year-old understanding of the Middle Ages and a 14-year-old understanding of the industrial revolution. But history is more complex than that. There's no evidence that teaching chronologically produces an understanding of chronology. What we want young people to have is a usable map of the past. There are well-tried ways of handling these issues, which are currently being ignored. (Sellgren, 2013)

Husbands, while making an important point, performs a neat polemical trick by eliding 'understanding chronology' with 'understanding history', although clearly these macroconcepts are not quite the same. Also responding to the proposals, Rebecca Sullivan, chief executive of the Historical Association, after acknowledging that Michael Gove had confirmed history's importance in the curriculum, reiterated disappointment that the upper age limit of history in the national curriculum has not been extended to 16, commenting:

... our main concern with these proposals has to be primary, where most teachers are not history specialists, and are being expected to teach complex areas of history such as religion, war, identity and nation building without any training or resources and possibly little historical knowledge of their own. This is more likely to muddle chronological understanding. This particular problem will only be exacerbated in small rural schools where classes are made up from more than one year group making sequential teaching difficult. So whilst we sympathise with the signatories of the [*Times*] letter [of 27 February], as it stands this curriculum is unworkable and we will be making serious recommendations for further review. (Sellgren, 2013)

The reactions of teachers, as reported on the Historical Association website, but which were integral to the HA's own response³(published immediately after the formal consultation closed), indicate high levels of concern about the draft curriculum.

The letter in *TheTimes* (text in Appendix 4) from historians (including Niall Ferguson) referred to above makes one key point, that teaching a connected national narrative needs to be restored to schools. This argument is partly based on seeing a need for this aspect of historical knowledge as intellectual and cultural literacy for understanding identity, although it is clearly underpinned by a belief in the need for the study of British history as a key element in an overall education. The letter criticised current arrangements in schools as being unfit to achieve this end, and welcomed Mr Gove's plans to reform this.

By contrast, the letter from representatives of the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association (Appendix 3), including both of their presidents (Peter Mandler and Jackie Eales) deplored the lack of formal consultation in the process as well as the lack of a global dimension to counterbalance the focus on a particularly English view of national history. There was a sense that the events and developments were too skewed to the political, and overseas events were too often seen just through British or even English eyes. The signatories highlighted the problems associated with an age-related continuous narrative, pointing out that each age group would miss out either on the earlier or the later periods. Again, the decision to stop formal history at 14 rather than extend it to 16, as had originally been mooted, was criticised.

David Cannadine had been keeping his powder dry while fellow historians took sides, but by March 13 even he felt driven to make some very critical comments not just about the proposed curriculum itself but also about related conditions for teachers in the schools:

To cover English history from the Stone Age to the early eighteenth century in four academic years at primary school in at most one hour a week cannot be done; and the proposal to go from the mid-eighteenth century to the late twentieth at Key Stage Three with no more teaching time is equally unrealistic. The only way to deliver such a curriculum would be to abandon any pretence that history is about understanding as well as about knowing, and to teach it in just the patchy, simplistic, superficial and disconnected ways that the Secretary of State deplores about

the present arrangements. His proposal does not solve that problem: instead it intensifies and exacerbates it. (Cannadine, 2013)

Not surprisingly, the response to this proposed history curriculum from most professional historians and schoolteachers has been deeply critical – notwithstanding Niall Ferguson’s recent defence of Gove’s syllabus in the *Guardian* [Ferguson, 2013], which was distinctly unconvincing; while his spat with Richard Evans merely exemplified the unhelpfulness of argument by anecdote and excessively polarized posturing, which has for too long occluded serious discussion of the subject. Of course the media love it when professors fall out in public, and Gove may well be enjoying the spectacle of two distinguished historians apparently so divided.

Yet behind all the bluster and the point-scoring, it is clear that Evans and Ferguson actually agree on several important matters: namely that the draft curriculum is too prescriptive, that it is too Anglocentric, that it pays insufficient heed to the broader world, and that more time needs to be given to history in schools if the subject is to be better taught – which is exactly what most informed people have been saying since the document was first published. In truth, there is much more consensus on this subject than such media-driven disagreement suggests, and it is a consensus with which Michael Gove urgently needs to engage. Like him, we all wish history to be better taught, and for pupils to leave school knowing more about the past than they do at present; yet what he is proposing in his new draft curriculum will not bring that about, but would only make things worse. (Cannadine, 2013)

In another co-ordinated letter, this time in *The Daily Telegraph* on March 20th, from one hundred academics involved in teacher education, the old battle between the qualitative and quantitative approaches comes out, providing a classic description of the qualitative position:

The dangers of the new National Curriculum proposals (*Michael Gove has prioritised facts over creativity*)

SIR – As academics, we are writing to warn of the dangers posed by Michael Gove’s new National Curriculum, which could severely erode educational standards. The proposed curriculum consists of endless lists of spellings, facts and rules. This mountain of data will not develop children’s ability to think, including problem-solving, critical understanding and creativity. Much of it demands too much, too young. This will put pressure on teachers to rely on rote learning without understanding. Little account is taken of children’s potential interests and capacities, or that young children need to relate abstract ideas to their experience, lives and activity. In its volume of detailed instructions, this curriculum betrays a distrust of teachers. Whatever the intention, the proposed curriculum for England will result in a ‘dumbing down’ of teaching and learning. Mr Gove has clearly misunderstood England’s decline in the Programme for International Student Assessment tests. Schools in high-achieving Finland and Massachusetts emphasise cognitive development, critical understanding and creativity, not rote learning. (Basse et al., 2013)

Mr Gove’s reaction was to condemn the authors as ‘bad’ academics (Shepherd, 2013a), although there are some well-known figures here: Guy Claxton, John Furlong, Richard Pring, and not only Colin Richards (who had been an HMI), but also Andrew Pollard who had served on Mr Gove’s own national curriculum panel until, after disillusionment, he resigned (with Mary James) in October 2011. Michael Basse’s reflections on this episode were the subject of a subsequent interview with *The Guardian* (Wilby, 2013).

Further controversies

Michael Gove in a speech on May 9th (Gove, 2013), going over a much older debate about the value of play, empathy and imagination in the teaching and learning of history, clearly dismissed almost altogether the qualitative approach to teaching history. Conflating two publications, one from *Primary History* (a journal published by the Historical Association, with Jon Nichol as editor) and another from a website run by Richard Tarr (www.activehistory.co.uk), see Tarr2013), he implied (perhaps having not checked the

provenance of his sources) that they were both from the Historical Association. His first criticism was about a recommendation to use a cartoon about King John in an article by a teacher, Jane Card (2012), and the second was about the use of Roger Hargreaves' 'Mr Men' type cartoons in teaching the history of Germany. Mr Gove's interpretation of both pieces seemed to lack balance and contextualization as well as a sense of humour. The responses to the speech were swift, both from the media itself, where newspapers of all political orientations were reporting the negative reactions to Mr Gove's interventions (*The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph*, see Hurst, 2013; Levy, 2013; Meredith, 2013; Shephard, 2013b; and Wholehouse, 2013), and from 54 historians who defended the Historical Association (Amber et al., 2013). Playing an active role in this was Richard Toye, professor at the University of Exeter, currently researching the use of rhetoric in politics, to whose blog the Historical Association had redirected its own report on Mr Gove's comments. Linked into this blog was an e-petition initiated by Katherine Edwards, a secondary history teacher who was already playing an active part in opposing the new draft curriculum (Edwards, 2013a, 2013b). This is the text of the e-petition:

Keep the history curriculum politically neutral

We strongly object to the government's proposed new history curriculum and want it to be scrapped on the following grounds:

- 1) An almost exclusively British history course encourages insularity, needlessly narrows the horizons of pupils and is a poor preparation for later life.
- 2) The content of the course is impractical to deliver, dry and likely to disengage pupils from history.
- 3) The proposals have been made without adequate consultation with professionals.
- 4) The use of the education system to promote a nationalist political agenda will stop history being a vehicle for teaching critical thought and is an assault on academic freedom.

Mr Gove has carried forward a 'discourse of derision'⁴ between government and teachers (characterized by a lack of trust on both sides) which shows features of a *mêlée* that stretches back to the late 1960s. In adopting both a dominantly quantitative approach to education generally and a 'patriotic' stance to history he has concocted a potentially toxic mix in this particular cauldron. Alternative and more reconciliatory approaches might consist in working organically with professional bodies and seeking to get a consensus on how best regulation of the profession might work, based on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation, of the sort that is already operational in the world of academy schools. That something is wrong can be seen in opposition to his plans tabled by both of the professional bodies closest (a) to the classroom teachers and (b) to the world of historians, i.e. the Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society.

In a *volte face* reported in *The Sunday Telegraph* (May 19, 2013), Michael Gove is reported to have said at the NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) conference in Birmingham that 'the curriculum, currently almost entirely focused on British history, would allow "studies into other civilizations and countries"' (Paton, 2013). By the end of May it became apparent that a new draft was being written.

Conclusion

In seeking to find a middle way, and perhaps drawing on the wisdom of James Callaghan's remarks in 1976, an 'either ... or' approach will not solve this problem. On the 'patriotic' narrative embedded in the draft proposals, of course 'national' does not have to mean 'nationalist', and national history at its best will tap into current debates among historians, including J.H. Elliott (2012), whose view is that transnational history will feed back into the project of achieving a clearer (and in effect more scholarly) vision to understand the nation's past. Other issues include just how much time should be given to history in schools. But the battle over the syntactic or procedural side of history as inquiry (with strong features linking to historical thinking) seems to have been won, and has certainly had a presence in national curriculum history since its outset in 1991. However, decisions over suitable contexts, in terms of when (chronology), where (location), and indeed how much (in content terms), for the different school age groups are still subject to discussion.

In many ways pedagogy itself offers organizing solutions. Bruner's spiral curriculum is still valid, just as the

notion of scaffolding or contextual frames for structuring content (perhaps in overviews with depth-studies, as in Australia) offers a more teacher-friendly and indeed student-friendly set of solutions. The work of Alexander et al. (2009), published just before the current Coalition came to office and in parallel with, but independent from, the official but later rejected Rose Review, stresses dialogue and a research-based approach to professional knowledge. Dialogue can enrich many aspects of history teaching and learning, including the handling of historical sources and the ideas of inquiry and interpretation. This also demonstrates an organic link between what has to continue to be research-based pedagogy and scholarly history. Knowledge and understanding that are co-constructed between teacher and class, getting inside the source, the event, and the different narratives, and drawing on the work of Vygotsky, will provide as good a way as any of proceeding. The shape of the overall curriculum structure is not yet clear, however.

Correspondence

rguyver@btinternet.com

Notes

1. The Black Papers debates can be found in Cox & Dyson (1969, 1970) and Cox & Boyson (1975, 1977).
2. Gordon Brown's Britishness lectures: These addressed issues of the place of Britain in the modern world, and almost by accident the role of the past, and indeed history, in defining the meaning of citizenship. Brown had a doctorate in history from the University of Edinburgh (1982), the title of his thesis being, *The Labour Party and Political Change in Scotland 1918–29*. Among matters being discussed at the Fabian Society conference in January 2006 (which I attended) was the possibility of hybrid or multiple identities, and, significantly, whether citizens could be for example both Pakistani and British, or Cornish and British. His discussion in the 2004 'Britishness' address to the British Council about different views on whether Britain was in decline, was impressive, drawing on the work of Jonathan Freedland, George Orwell, Andrew Marr, Neal Ascherson, Tom Nairn, Linda Colley, Norman Davies, Roger Scruton, Simon Heffer, Ferdinand Mount, David Goodhart, Melanie Phillips, Sir Herman Ousley, Sir Bernard Crick, Tom Nairn, Montesquieu, Adam Nicholson, Matthew Arnold, Adam Smith, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Edmund Burke, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Babbage, Alan Turing, and David Cannadine. In addition, in the 2006 *Future of Britishness* address to the Fabian Society, he included references to James Joyce, Voltaire, Milton, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Henry Grattan, Thomas Rainsborough (of the 17th century Putney Debates) and Francesca Klug. This was a multi-layered and complex debate backed up by wide reading.
- 3 The HA's consultation results can be found: http://www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_news_1779.html
- 4The idea of a 'discourse of derision' comes from Stephen Ball (1990).

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Appendix 1

(Extract from Guyver in Taylor & Guyver, 2012, pp. 174-175)

The National Curriculum for History [as it was] in England 2010

Key Stage One History (for ages 5–6) (Implemented from September 2000)

This has four areas of content making up the 'breadth of study', the first of which corresponds with an 'expanding horizons' agenda, starting with the child and moving outwards and backwards in space and time. The second looks at 'way of life' in the more distant past (locally or elsewhere in Britain). The third is about significant lives (men, women and children); and the last focuses on past events from the history of Britain and the wider world (with non-statutory examples given for the last two categories). This broad content goes alongside a set of syntactic principles, which are the same headlines (but different sub-definitions for each age group) as in Key Stage 2 History (i.e. chronological understanding; knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past; historical interpretation; historical inquiry; and organisation and communication).

Key Stage Two History (for ages 7–11) (Implemented from September 2000)

The breadth of study content for this 'key stage' is more defined and consists of six units (one local study; three national or British studies—Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain; Britain and the wider world in Tudor times; and either Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930); a European (although in this case Ancient Greece, therefore a classical) study; and one world history study drawn from a menu of seven (Ancient Egypt, Ancient Sumer, the Assyrian Empire, the Indus Valley, the Maya, Benin, or the

Aztecs). The Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings unit is an example of overview and focus, where all three settlements need to be introduced, but only one has to be studied in depth. Within 'Britain since 1930' the focus can either be on the Second World War or on the impact on men, women and children of social and technological changes that have taken place since 1930. Thus there is choice, but there are considerable chronological gaps, the missing periods being: pre-Roman; 1066–1485; 1603–1837; 1901–1930. The rationale here is sampling in depth, not a continuous narrative. The syntactic principles are as in Key Stage 1.

Key Stage Three History (for ages 12–14) (Implemented from September 2008)

The content for this key stage is subdivided into two, first British history and then European and world history. The rationale has an embedded continuous narrative from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, with more of an emphasis on political developments around crown and parliament and the growth of democracy. The different histories, dimensions, and changing relationships among England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are mentioned, as well as the movement and settlement of peoples to and from the British Isles. The old PESC perspectives formula from the 1991 curriculum is preserved as an attempt to counterbalance the more political emphasis of the 1066–2000 master narrative with a corresponding focus on forces of economic and technological change as well as changes in war, religion and culture. As a result of the Britishness debates (2004, 2006), another parallel focus is the British Empire alongside a study of the development of trade, colonization, industrialization and technology (in this imperial phase context), but also the notion of 'impact' on pre-colonial populations, and a consideration of the nature and consequences of the slave trade as well as resistance in colonial settings and the subsequent narratives of decolonisation.

The European and world history content makes demands of the teacher to make choices about significance in a range of impacts in political, social, cultural, religious, technological and/or economic developments and events on past European and world societies. This certainly does not exclude war, but juxtaposes conflict and changes in the nature of war with co-operation between countries and peoples and the lasting effect of this working together on national, ethnic, racial, cultural or religious issues. Compulsory content consists of the two world wars and the Holocaust (and their consequences), and the role of European and international institutions in resolving conflicts.

As has been seen in all three key stages, the statutory content goes alongside a set of syntactic principles. For Key Stage 3 these are key concepts (chronological understanding; cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence; significance; and interpretation) and key processes (historical inquiry; using evidence, and communicating about the past).

Appendix 2– The draft of national curriculum history (Feb 7 2013)

Purpose of study

A high-quality history education equips pupils to think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. A knowledge of Britain's past, and our place in the world, helps us understand the challenges of our own time.

Aims

The National Curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the story of these islands: how the British people shaped this nation and how Britain influenced the world
- know and understand British history as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the story of the first settlers in these islands to the development of the institutions which govern our lives today
- know and understand the broad outlines of European and world history: the growth and decline of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; the achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically-grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'

- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

Attainment targets

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

Subject content

KeyStage1

Pupils should begin to develop an awareness of the past and the ways in which it is similar to and different from the present. They should understand simple subject-specific vocabulary relating to the passing of time and begin to develop an understanding of the key features of a range of different events and historical periods.

Pupils should be taught about:

- simple vocabulary relating to the passing of time such as 'before', 'after', 'past', 'present', 'then' and 'now'
- the concept of nation and of a nation's history
- concepts such as civilisation, monarchy, parliament, democracy, and war and peace that are essential to understanding history
- the lives of significant individuals in Britain's past who have contributed to our nation's achievements—scientists such as Isaac Newton or Michael Faraday, reformers such as Elizabeth Fry or William Wilberforce, medical pioneers such as William Harvey or Florence Nightingale, or creative geniuses such as Isambard Kingdom Brunel or Christina Rossetti
- key events in the past that are significant nationally and globally, particularly those that coincide with festivals or other events that are commemorated throughout the year
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.

KeyStage 2

Pupils should be taught about the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome.

In addition, across Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils should be taught the essential chronology of Britain's history. This will serve as an essential frame of reference for more in-depth study. Pupils should be made aware that history takes many forms, including cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history. Pupils should be taught about key dates, events and significant individuals. They should also be given the opportunity to study local history.

Pupils should be taught the following chronology of British history sequentially:
early Britons and settlers, including:

- the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages
- Celtic culture and patterns of settlement

Roman conquest and rule, including:

- Caesar, Augustus, and Claudius
- Britain as part of the Roman Empire
- the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire

Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlement, including:

- the Heptarchy
- the spread of Christianity
- key developments in the reigns of Alfred, Athelstan, Cnut and Edward the Confessor

the Norman Conquest and Norman rule, including:

- the Domesday Book
- feudalism
- Norman culture
- the Crusades

Plantagenet rule in the 12th and 13th centuries, including:

- key developments in the reign of Henry II, including the murder of Thomas Becket
- Magna Carta
- de Montfort's Parliament
- relations between England, Wales, Scotland and France, including:
 - William Wallace
 - Robert the Bruce
 - Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffydd
 - the Hundred Years War

life in 14th-century England, including:

- chivalry
- the Black Death
- the Peasants' Revolt

the later Middle Ages and the early modern period, including:

- Chaucer and the revival of learning
- Wycliffe's Bible
- Caxton and the introduction of the printing press
- the Wars of the Roses
- Warwick the Kingmaker
- the Tudor period, including religious strife and Reformation in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary

Elizabeth I's reign and English expansion, including:

- colonisation of the New World
- plantation of Ireland
- conflict with Spain
- the Renaissance in England, including the lives and works of individuals such as Shakespeare and Marlowe

the Stuart period, including:

- the Union of the Crowns
- King versus Parliament
- Cromwell's commonwealth, the Levellers and the Diggers
- the restoration of the monarchy
- the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London
- Samuel Pepys and the establishment of the Royal Navy
- the Glorious Revolution, constitutional monarchy and the Union of the Parliaments.

Key Stage 3

Building on the study of the chronology of the history of Britain in Key Stage 2, teaching of the periods specified below should ensure that pupils understand and use historical concepts in increasingly sophisticated ways to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts. They should develop an awareness and understanding of the role and use of different types of sources, as well as their strengths, weaknesses and reliability. They should also examine cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social aspects and be given the opportunity to study local history. The teaching of the content should be approached as a combination of overview and in-depth studies.

Pupils should be taught about:

The development of the modern nation

Britain and her Empire, including:

- Wolfe and the conquest of Canada
- Clive of India
- Competition with France and the Jacobite rebellion
- the American Revolution
- the Enlightenment in England, including Francis Bacon, John Locke, Christopher Wren, Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, Adam Smith and the impact of European thinkers

the struggle for power in Europe, including:

- the French Revolution and the Rights of Man
- the Napoleonic Wars, Nelson, Wellington and Pitt
- the Congress of Vienna

the struggle for power in Britain, including:

- the Six Acts and Peterloo through to Catholic Emancipation
- the slave trade and the abolition of slavery, the role of Olaudah Equiano and free slaves
- the Great Reform Act and the Chartists

the High Victorian era, including:

- Gladstone and Disraeli
- the Second and Third Reform Acts
- the battle for Home Rule
- Chamberlain and Salisbury

the development of a modern economy, including:

- iron, coal and steam
- the growth of the railways
- great innovators such as Watt, Stephenson and Brunel
- the abolition of the Corn Laws
- the growth and industrialization of cities
- the Factory Acts
- the Great Exhibition and global trade
- social conditions
- the Tolpuddle Martyrs and the birth of trade unionism

Britain's global impact in the 19th century, including:

- war in the Crimea and the Eastern Question
- gunboat diplomacy and the growth of Empire
- the Indian Mutiny and the Great Game
- the scramble for Africa

- the Boer Wars

Britain's social and cultural development during the Victorian era, including:

- the changing role of women, including figures such as Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole, George Eliot and Annie Besant
- the impact of mass literacy and the Elementary Education Act.

The twentieth century

Britain transformed, including:

- the Rowntree Report and the birth of the modern welfare state
- 'Peers versus the People'
- Home Rule for Ireland
- the suffragette movement and women's emancipation

the First World War, including:

- causes such as colonial rivalry, naval expansion and European alliances
- key events
- conscription
- trench warfare
- Lloyd George's coalition
- the Russian Revolution
- The Armistice
- the peace of Versailles

the 1920s and 1930s, including:

- the first Labour Government
- universal suffrage
- the Great Depression
- the abdication of Edward VIII and constitutional crisis

the Second World War, including:

- causes such as appeasement, the failure of the League of Nations and the rise of the Dictators
- the global reach of the war – from Arctic Convoys to the Pacific Campaign
- the roles of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin
- Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe and the unique evil of the Holocaust

Britain's retreat from Empire, including:

- independence for India and the Wind of Change in Africa
- the independence generation – Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Kenyatta, Nkrumah
- the Cold War and the impact of Communism on Europe
- the Attlee Government and the growth of the welfare state
- the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians
- society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalization of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act

Economic change and crisis, the end of the post-war consensus, and governments up to and including:

- the election of Margaret Thatcher
- Britain's relations with Europe, the Commonwealth, and the wider world
- the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Appendix 3

Royal Historical Society Statement on the Draft National Curriculum for History (12 February)

As representatives of the principal organizations for historians in the UK, we would like to respond to the publication of the draft Programmes of Study for History in the national curriculum released by the Department for Education on 7 February 2013. We want to voice significant reservations both about the content of the Programmes of Study which have been proposed, and about the process by which the Programmes have been devised.

First, we believe that the Programmes of Study are far too narrowly and exclusively focused on British history to serve the needs of children growing up in the world today. History is of course an important and necessary tool for teaching future citizens about the making of their localities and nations. But it is not only that – it is also the treasure-house of human experience across millennia and around the world. Students should learn about British history: but knowledge of the history of other cultures (and not only as they have been encountered through their interactions with the British Isles) is as vital as knowledge of foreign languages to enable British citizens to understand the full variety and diversity of human life. The narrowness of the Programmes deprives children, many of whom will not continue with the study of History beyond the national curriculum, of the vast bulk of the precious inheritance of the past.

Secondly, we welcome the inclusion within the Programmes of Study of topics concerned with social, economic and cultural history. Students should certainly be taught political history; but they should also be taught the histories of economies, societies, ideas, beliefs and cultures. As the writings of historians over the past hundred years have eloquently demonstrated, it is in any case impossible properly to understand political history without an appreciation of these other histories. It might still be debated whether the specifications set out in the Programmes of Study have yet found the ideal balance between political history and other aspects of the past, not least in relation to conveying to students a proper appreciation of what the discipline of History now encompasses. This is especially important with reference to how the subject is studied and taught in the higher level qualifications delivered in both schools and universities for which these programmes of study must in part be seen as preparation (a point of equal relevance in consideration of the concentration on British history).

Thirdly, we regret that the construction of the Programme in a strictly chronological sequence from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 ensures that many students will not be properly exposed to the exciting and intellectually demanding study of pre-modern history other than in the very earliest stages of their studies. This risks promoting even if only inadvertently the naive assumption that human society and culture become more sophisticated and complex through time, and also potentially encourages students and teachers to neglect pre-modern history as they move on to study history at GCSE, A-Level and beyond.

We recognize that there are limits to the capacity of a curriculum to encompass all desiderata, and that a balance must be struck between ambition and practicality. It is partly for this reason that we also regret the way in which the curriculum was drafted. Despite much interesting debate in the media about the future of the curriculum, and especially the History curriculum, in the early days of the current government, the details of the curriculum have been drafted inside the Department for Education without any systematic consultation or public discussion with historians, teachers or the wider public. The contrast with the practice of the Conservative government of the late 1980s when it drafted the first national curriculum is striking. Then, a History Working Group including teachers, educational experts and academics worked in tandem with the ministry of the day to produce first an interim report and then a final report in the midst of much public discussion. The curriculum that resulted was widely supported across many professional and political divisions in the teaching and academic professions and by the general public. The current government was certainly right to feel that after many interim changes it was time for a fresh look.

Unfortunately, it has not attempted to assemble the same kind of consensus, and as a result it has produced a draft curriculum which it can be argued could still benefit from extensive discussion about how to ensure that it best serves both good practice and the public interest. Rather than find ourselves cast necessarily in the role of critics, we would welcome an opportunity to engage constructively with the

government in fashioning Programmes of Study which could seek to deliver outcomes equally acceptable to politicians, working historians, the public at large and above all students, their teachers and parents.

Professor David D'Avray, Chair, Medieval Studies Section, British Academy

Professor Jackie Eales, President, Historical Association

Professor Mary Fulbrook, Chair, Modern History Section, British Academy

Dr Keith McLay, Co-Convenor, History UK

Professor Peter Mandler, President, Royal Historical Society

Professor Hamish Scott, Chair, Early Modern History Section, British Academy

Appendix 4

The full text of the historians' letter to *TheTimes*, Wednesday 27 February 2013

Dear Sir,

We believe that every pupil should have the opportunity to attain a broad and comprehensive knowledge of English and British history. Alongside other core subjects of the curriculum, mathematics, English, sciences and modern languages, history has a special role in developing in each and every individual a sense of their own identity as part of a historic community with world-wide links, interwoven with the ability to analyse and research the past that remains essential for a full understanding of modern society.

It should be made possible for every pupil to take in the full narrative of our history throughout every century. No one would expect a pupil to be denied the full range of the English language; equally, no pupil should any longer be denied the chance to obtain a full knowledge of the rich tapestry of the history of their own country, in both its internal and international dimensions.

It is for this reason that we give our support in principle to the changes to the new national curriculum for history that the government is proposing. While these proposals will no doubt be adapted as a result of full consultation, the essential idea that a curriculum framework should ensure that pupils are given an overall understanding of history through its most important changes, events and individuals is a welcome one. Above all, we recognise that a coherent curriculum that reflects how events and topics relate to one another over time, together with a renewed focus in primary school for history, has long been needed. Such is the consensus view in most countries of Europe. We also welcome the indication that sufficient freedom will in future be given to history teachers to plan and teach in ways which will revitalise history in schools.

We are in no doubt that the proposed changes to the curriculum will provoke controversy among those attached to the status quo and suspicious of change. Yet we must not shy away from this golden opportunity to place history back at the centre of the national curriculum and make it part of the common culture of every future citizen.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David Abulafia FBA

Antony Beevor FRSL

Professor Jeremy Black

Professor Michael Burleigh

Professor John Charmley

Professor J.C.D. Clark

Professor Niall Ferguson

Dr Amanda Foreman

Professor Jeremy Jennings

Dr Simon Sebag Montefiore

Dr Andrew Roberts

Chris Skidmore MP

Professor David Starkey FSA

D.R. Thorpe

Professor Robert Tombs