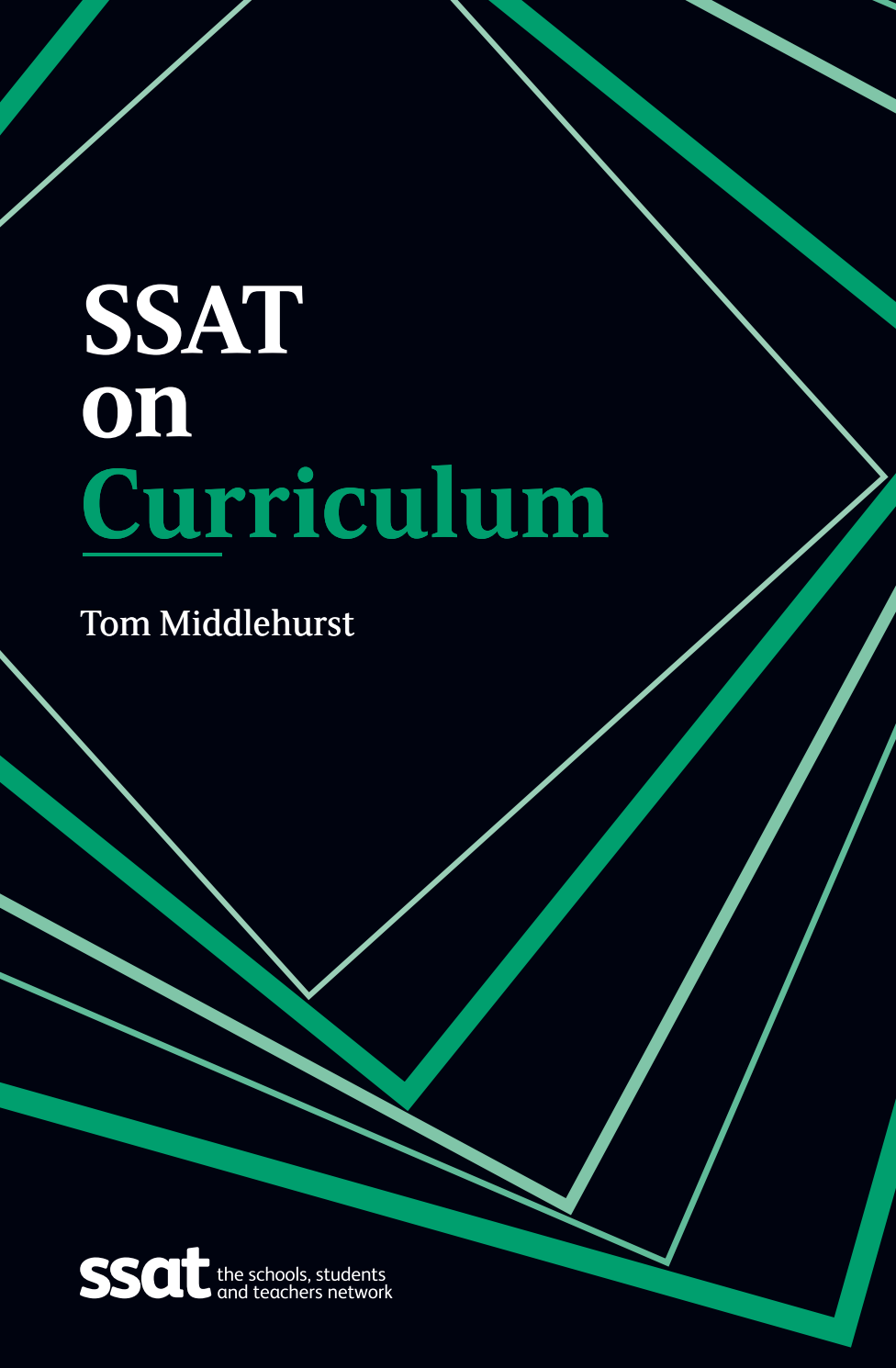




SSAT on Curriculum

Tom Middlehurst

SSAT

We are **SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers network.**

We exist to help improve outcomes for all young people. As a membership organisation of schools and academies across the UK and internationally, we work with leaders, teachers and students to drive school improvement and innovation, and celebrate their successes. We believe in a **truly school-led system**, with schools working in partnership across and beyond the education sector.

At SSAT's heart are our **membership networks**, bringing together school leaders, teachers and students. We have been working with schools for over 30 years, and continue to offer **insight and understanding** into teaching, learning and system leadership. Our **professional development and school improvement programmes** help leaders and teachers to further outcomes for all young people, and develop leadership at all levels across the system.

We are SSAT and we provide fresh ideas for ambitious schools.

ssatuk.co.uk

SSAT on Curriculum

Tom Middlehurst

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INTRODUCTION

The curriculum does, or should, define everything that happens in a school. It is the very substance of education, and is the manifestation of deep-rooted philosophies and ideologies about what it means to be an educated human. It is therefore unsurprising that discussions around curriculum are sometimes divisive and hotly argued. What is surprising, perhaps, is how infrequently these ideas are discussed at a school level and result in positive changes in the school curriculum.

Five years ago, in 2013, the former secretary of state Michael Gove announced major reforms to the national curriculum in England, along with a raft of changes to national assessment arrangements. Five years on, both curriculum and assessment reforms are largely embedded: this gives us an opportunity to rethink the curriculum and to debate some of the key topics around curriculum design and delivery. While during the last five years we know school leaders and teachers have largely been responding to the changes, SSAT members tell us frequently they now have breathing space to think differently about the curriculum again, albeit in a time of financial and accountability pressures. This refocus on the school curriculum has certainly been helped by the personal attention paid to it by the chief inspector, Amanda Spielman, and the two-year-long review led by Ofsted, which may well

inform the future inspection framework for schools.

This pamphlet does not seek to promote any one curriculum model, but instead is designed to prompt discussion in schools. It builds on SSAT's earlier work on curriculum design, including the work of David Hargreaves on personalising learning in the 2000s, and Dylan Wiliam's SSAT pamphlet *Principled curriculum design*, released to members in 2013.

We start by setting the scene: looking at why these discussions matter in 2019, what we mean by curriculum, and the history of curriculum design in England. This section will also raise some of the key current debates in curriculum dialogues – including the skills v knowledge debate, the role of the state, and the selection of material.

We then introduce the five reports from roundtable discussions SSAT has held over the past two years, all focused on curriculum. These roundtables bring together policymakers, academics and school leaders; and are generously sponsored by a range of partners. The topics we debated are:

- Will we see a broadening or a narrowing of the curriculum over the next five years? – led by Tim Oates
- Literacy: the cornerstone of the curriculum – led by Geoff Barton
- Character education: taught or caught? – led by Nicky Morgan
- Is ITT sufficiently preparing teachers to design and deliver curriculum? – led by Matt Hood
- The role of the school curriculum in widening participation at HE – led by Anthony Seldon

Each of these reports is followed by some key discussion topics, which we hope will form the basis of many useful and interesting discussions among your team.

Finally this publication concludes with SSAT's *Four Pillars of Curriculum Design*; a framework designed to help schools think through their current provision and how they talk about the curriculum, rather than redesigning it from scratch.

My sincere thanks, as ever, go to Patrick Watson who continues to challenge my thinking and provides support on all the roundtables we do, including the five reported here. Patrick's work is invaluable in helping to arrange the discussions, and taking notes for the record while I do my best to chair. I also thank all the speakers and guests that have attended roundtables over the past two years, and whose inputs constantly force me to re-evaluate. Special thanks to my colleagues Alex Galvin and Colin Logan at SSAT, who have developed our curriculum and assessment offer for many years, including co-writing the four pillars over many cups of coffee; and our chief executive Sue Williamson, who has supported us in this, and, as a former headteacher and current chair of governors, remains passionate about curriculum design.

As discussed throughout this pamphlet, curriculum is at the heart of what we do: it is the basis by which academic knowledge and skills are taught, where we can develop character traits and employability, and through which opportunities can secure students' success in the future. In this way, conversations about curriculum are never really over: the experience we offer our students can also be refined and always made deeper.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

What do we mean by curriculum?

Our definition of curriculum is the 'lived daily experience of young people in and out of the classroom' – a phrase Dylan Wiliam used during his work with us on Redesigning Schooling over five years ago.

Dylan reaches this definition by first suggesting that the national curriculum was never really a curriculum – it was merely a series of destinations. We can, therefore, talk about three types of curricula:

1. The intended curriculum – national or local curriculum aims, set by government or other forms of governance. Often presented as a series of aims.
2. The achieved curriculum – the substance of the curriculum in a school, formed by a school's own curriculum vision, subject and year group mapping and schemes of work; and the resources, text books and plans that go along with these.
3. The real curriculum – the lived daily experience of young people.

It is not to say that the intended curriculum and achieved curriculum are unimportant; indeed it's where much of the

thinking and debate occurs. But what matters most is what young people actually experience, and thus the learning and development they undertake as a result.

This definition of curriculum as the lived daily experience has several implications. First, it means that the real curriculum is always created by teachers, or indeed any individuals coming into contact with students, rather than politicians or school leaders. In this way every member of staff is responsible for the curriculum. For example, if a school's intended curriculum is to promote growth mindset, how the lunchtime supervisor responds when a child is hurt, or how the canteen staff take orders, can arguably have as much impact as the formal learning done in lessons.

Second, it suggests that we cannot ever divorce pedagogy from curriculum. If pedagogy is the means by which we deliver the curriculum, and curriculum is the lived daily experience, then we cannot properly talk about one without the other. Debates about pedagogy without curriculum are impossible, because the pedagogical decisions taken depend on the precise concept being taught. Conversations about curriculum without pedagogy remain only a set of ideals or aims, and may not reflect the reality of what is happening. In his Redesigning Schooling seminar, this led Dylan to say: 'pedagogy trumps curriculum every time'. Perhaps it's not a case of one trumping the other, but rather that we can't meaningfully separate the two.

It's hard for school leaders and teachers to talk about and to assess the curriculum. It's far easier to look at what's stated on the website, or check for fully resourced schemes of work

Third, this definition undermines the concept of extra-curricular or super-curricular activities. If the curriculum is every experience you've planned, then that includes clubs, trips, visits and assemblies, etc. Taken at its broadest it could also be seen to include the physical design of the school, which can fundamentally affect a young person's daily experience. At the very least, how are these decisions informed by the curriculum? Is the curriculum at the heart of every decision?

Fourth, this makes it a lot harder for school leaders and teachers to talk about and to assess the curriculum. It's far easier to look at what's stated on the website, or check for fully resourced schemes of work – but this doesn't tell you everything about what it is like to be a student at that school. This problem is addressed in the final of the SSAT four pillars (see below).

SSAT's work on curriculum design

Since our inception as the City Technology Colleges Trust in 1987, SSAT has always advocated principled curriculum design that meets the needs of all learners in a local context, and developed resources and programmes to help schools achieve that. It is interesting that, at that time, the Conservative government decided to introduce a type of school that was free from national curriculum demands, which became statutory for maintained schools the following year. With 30 years of working with all types of schools including maintained, CTCs, sponsored academies, converter academies and free schools, we have hundreds of school case studies on differing curriculum models – many of which are available on the SSAT website.

In 2004, working with headteachers, David Hargreaves identified curriculum as one of the nine pillars to personalising learning. Personalising learning may not be a particu-

larly fashionable term any more, and has sometimes been wrongly understood as lowering aspirations for some students. David's definition of personalising learning was 'meeting more of the needs of more students more fully than ever before' – and it's clear curriculum is an important vehicle (or gateway) for achieving this. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not mean offering some students an impoverished curriculum and not allowing them access to rigorous academic study. It does however mean that curricula are flexible in meeting individual needs and that pathways may allow students to flourish in different fields.

Following the nine gateways, David then grouped these into the four 'deeps': deep learning, deep experience, deep support and deep leadership. This definition of curriculum as experience is nothing new. The deeps provided a framework to think about how these different areas intertwined; and we know it is still used as the main school improvement model by many successful schools and MATs.

With the changes brought in by the Coalition government, SSAT launched its Redesigning Schooling campaign, which led to national debates in 2012-2013 about some key educational issues, including curriculum and assessment. In his SSAT pamphlet, *Principled curriculum design*, Dylan Wiliam explains the history of curriculum in England, before suggesting seven principles of a good curriculum.

Dylan argues that a good curriculum is 1) balanced in its

*With broad consensus
from the DfE,
Ofsted, professional
organisations including
SSAT, and school
leaders and teachers,
we have a real
opportunity to refocus
on curriculum*

breadth of subjects and topics; 2) rigorous to the disciplines taught; 3) coherent within and across subjects; 4) vertically integrated to promote progress over time; 5) appropriate for the stage of students' learning; 6) focused in its choice of content; and 7) relevant to the young people in your school.

Over the last five years, we have worked with schools across England, particularly with the SSAT Leading Edge network, which represents the highest performing schools in the country. This led us to our current understanding of curriculum, articulated through the four pillars of design: intent, content, delivery and impact. The questions posed in the final section of this pamphlet are based on our 30-year history of curriculum design and support with schools.

SSAT will never advocate a curriculum that puts school performance measures over students' own interests; for example by suggesting certain exam boards or qualifications to 'game' the system. At the same time, we recognise that school leaders are working in a culture of either perceived or real high-stakes accountability. It is therefore to be welcomed that the regulator, Ofsted, are committed to looking at the substance of schools' curricula, rather than a narrow set of achievement and progress measures. With broad consensus from the DfE, Ofsted, professional organisations including SSAT, and school leaders and teachers, we have a real opportunity to refocus on curriculum.

A history of curriculum in England

In *Principled curriculum design* Dylan maps the history of curriculum design, noting that the first use of the word curriculum appears to be in Scottish universities in the eighteenth century, referring to the courses students took.

Until Ken Baker's Education Reform Act in 1988, curric-

ula were largely designed at school level; and Dylan cites a number of academics including Tyler, Kerr and Stenhouse, whose work influenced curriculum design. 1988 saw the introduction of the new national curriculum, which all state maintained schools were required to teach. The national curriculum set out the attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements for each curriculum area, and has been the basis of subsequent national curricula.

The 1988 act gives any secretary of state the responsibility to publish a national curriculum for maintained schools to follow, and the right to revise this as he or she sees fit. However, in a curious piece of legislation, the act also limits the powers of the government: that no secretary of state can say how long a subject or topic should be studied, how it should be timetabled in the school day, or the order in which concepts should be taught over the key stage. So although subsequent national curricula have been written in such a way as to define specific year-group material, this has never been a statutory requirement.

The importance of this should not be overlooked. Whereas many see 1988 as the start of a decline in school-led curriculum design; it has always been the case, since the national curriculum's introduction, that it is up to schools how they design their own curriculum to meet these aims.

The development of sponsored academies under New Labour, followed by the expansion into convertor academies, free schools and MATs under the Coalition means that many schools are exempt from following the national curriculum

It has always been the case, since the national curriculum's introduction, that it is up to schools how they design their own curriculum

in 2019; although SSAT's research suggests that curriculum design is one of the least used autonomies of the academies programme, and least important reasons in schools' decision to convert to academy status.

Perhaps this is unsurprising, as although academies do not have to follow the national curriculum, the national assessments at the end of key stage two and four are based on national curriculum content.

However, as has ever been the case since 1988, how schools structure, deliver and teach that content, is entirely up to them.

The 2014 national curriculum

The current national curriculum was brought in through a series of sweeping reforms under former education secretary Michael Gove, who brought changes to the curriculum and every stage of assessment. The key changes made by him and subsequent ministers include:

- A sequenced core-knowledge curriculum, based on the work of the American socialist ED Hirsch
- More 'rigorous' content, with key concepts often taught at earlier ages
- Slimmed-down programmes of study, with greater scope for local choice
- A greater focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar
- The removal of national curriculum levels
- A new 'expected standard' at the end of primary school – expressed as a scaled score of 100
- New, linear GCSEs, with a grading system from 9-1 – with 4 being a standard pass
- New, linear A-levels, decoupled from the new AS levels
- New accountability measures, including the KS4 Progress 8 measure and Ebacc.

Although many schools do not need to follow the national curriculum, all schools have had to respond to the changing assessments and the accountability measures they feed into.

Some hot topics

The changes to the national curriculum provoked anger and praise in almost equal measure from teachers and leaders across England, showing just how divisive discussions of curriculum can be. During those years, a number of key themes emerged, many of which continue to bubble away today.

First, was an annoying debate between skills or knowledge: with some seeing Michael Gove as a Gradgrindian figure, filling children to the brim with facts. Conversely, people attacked practitioners who professed to value pro-social skills over disciplinary knowledge, arguing this did not give students the right chances to succeed.

Some have dismissed this as a non-binary debate, arguing that knowledge and skills are the same; and that it's not really worth discussing. They are wrong. There is clearly a difference in knowing the causes, events and aftermath of the Third Crusade; practising the historical skills of analysis and evaluation; and developing empathy, moral awareness and respect for others. These are different skills and not the same.

Knowledge and skills are not the same: there is clearly a difference in knowing the causes, events and aftermath of the Third Crusade; practising the historical skills of analysis and evaluation; and developing empathy, moral awareness and respect for others

The point is, students need all of them. Students deserve access to powerful knowledge. They cannot simply look up a fact on Google, if they don't have a conceptual schema to work within. Students also need to develop disciplinary skills – which don't come naturally and need to be practised: what does it mean to be an historian, a physicist, a musician? Students also need to develop character traits and virtues – otherwise their education has been in vain. It's not a case of either/or, nor that they're all the same: the curriculum should and can (even in the current climate) achieve all of these.

The Coalition reforms also unearthed a debate about the extent to which the state should intervene in education. To paraphrase the education journalist Laura McInerney, education is too important for politicians to meddle in, and too important for them not to!

As we have already seen, it is the government's prerogative to change the national curriculum and assessment arrangements as they like; but school leaders and teachers have the right to enact this as they see fit, based on their professional expertise.

A national curriculum is a powerful tool for social justice; it ensures that all young people, in theory, have access to the same knowledge, understanding and experiences, regardless of where they come from or where they go to school. This has to be welcomed.

But there must also be room for local contextualisation and content. The percentage of the school curriculum that should be defined centrally is always open for debate – and readers will have different views on this. The fact remains that, compared to many education systems, English schools have a great degree of freedom on what their curriculum looks like, and how they deliver it.

The wider context

While many schools undoubtedly have a large degree of autonomy over their curriculum, there are a number of factors which undermine this autonomy.

Perhaps most important is funding. Independent analysis suggests that, despite technically more money in the system, schools have seen an 8% cut to their budgets since 2010; which may worsen further in future years unless more cash is made available. This has been caused by an increase in the number of students, along with school costs rising well above inflation. In an unprecedented move in September 2018, some 2000 headteachers marched to Downing Street, to demand more money from the Treasury.

Steps are being taken to rebalance school accountability, but it is unavoidable that school performance measures will influence curriculum design

Insufficient funding clearly impacts on a school's ability to offer a broad and balanced curriculum for their students. Certainly wider curriculum experiences are at risk of being dropped, and levels of staffing and resourcing the core curriculum offer are also under threat. Many schools that wish to offer an innovative curriculum find themselves hampered by financial restraints.

The other key restraints for schools are national assessment and accountability arrangements. On the one hand, it is wrong for schools to 'teach to the test' and to base their entire school curriculum on either SATs or GCSEs. On the other hand, it would be a disservice to young people not to adequately prepare them for the next stage of their education

or help them gain valuable qualifications. There is also a reality that schools are held to account by the pupils' results; and previous Ofsted frameworks and historic threats of forced academisation have resulted in a very high-stakes accountability system. Steps are being taken to rebalance school accountability, but it is unavoidable that school performance measures will influence curriculum design.

In primary schools, the content in the reading, writing, maths and grammar tests is considerable; and much curriculum time is required to ensure the expected standard is met. This has resulted in some schools reducing the amount of time spent on the non-core curriculum.

Secondary schools are now judged on Progress 8, showing their students average progress in 8 subjects: English; maths; 3 out of the sciences, languages, history and geography; and any other 3 eligible qualifications.

Furthermore, the Ebacc entry and attainment measures report on what percentage of the cohort enter every 1 of the Ebacc subjects: English language, English literature, maths, combined sciences or 3 separate sciences, history or geography, and a language; and their average grade.

We have fiercely opposed the Ebacc since its announcement; not because we don't think young people shouldn't have access to these areas; but because insisting that almost all students sit every one of the 7/8 subjects will greatly narrow choice, and reduce the number of options available. With the increased content at GCSE, many students will only sit 8-10 GCSEs; if 7 of those are predetermined, it becomes unsustainable for schools to offer a large number of options for the remaining 1-3 subjects as class sizes will be too small to be viable.

We have seen a decline in a number of subject entries since

the introduction of the Ebacc, especially in the technologies. This will begin to affect the entry rates for A-levels and universities as well.

The final piece of the landscape that impacts on curriculum design is the rise of multi-academy trusts. While it is understood that the system is more autonomous than ever, individual academies within a MAT may find themselves with less autonomy than they had before as maintained schools. All MATs operate differently, and some offer their schools a large degree of curriculum autonomy. Others are more prescriptive, requiring schools to follow certain curriculum models or frameworks, or telling them which exam boards to use. Neither approach is necessarily wrong or right; that depends on the context of the MAT and its schools. Autonomy is there in the interests of young people, not school leaders; and it is morally right under trust law and governance that the MAT board decides where to delegate decisions, and where not to, in the interests of their students. However, it does mean that some schools will have a greater degree of flexibility with their curriculum than others.

So, with funding pressures, assessment and accountability requirements, and an inconsistent system of maintained schools, differing MATs and stand-alone academies, curriculum design may seem rather hollow. That being said, the recent work of both the DfE and Ofsted is encouraging and may see the advent of a new approach to curriculum design.

The DfE and curriculum

After DfE introduced the new national curriculum in 2014, many were hoping for a period of calm and stability from curriculum changes, and, to some degree, this has been achieved.

In 2016, then secretary of state, Nicky Morgan, promised

DfE's new £7.7m fund to pilot curriculum programmes shows an awareness that centrally driven curricula are not effective in implementation; and that the design of curriculum programmes is best done in schools

this period of calm and stability; making a commitment, as part of the workload challenge, not to make curriculum or assessment changes midway through the school year, and to allow a full school year before implementation. This has been repeated by Damian Hinds, who had made tackling workload one of his key priorities in his first year as education secretary. The government have, largely, been true to their word on this: for example, the new sex and relationship education curriculum – which all schools including academies will

have to teach – has been delayed from its 2019 anticipated start date, because it was not ready for release in September 2018. This has to be a welcome sign from the DfE.

In 2018, the DfE announced a new £7.7m fund to pilot curriculum programmes based on the 2014 national curriculum. This was particularly interesting for three reasons:

1. It is reflective about the effectiveness of curriculum delivery to date
2. It put curriculum delivery into the hands of teachers as part of the school-led system
3. The funding requirements suggested some ideological approaches to curriculum (see below).

The funding acknowledged that the implementation of the national curriculum has not been fully realised, and that

resourced schemes of work are needed across the system in certain subjects. Arguably this unmask a tension between a government rhetoric of the school-led system and centrally defined curriculum and national assessments. That being said, it is to be welcomed that the funding is for pilots designed by and delivered by schools. At a time when we are seeing fewer teaching schools, and less funding for school-led school improvement, this is an interesting vote of confidence in the school-led system.

Most interesting were the requirements attached to the funding. The pilot programmes that would be successful for a share of the £7.7m fund should support the government's principles of:

- A core-knowledge curriculum
- Whole-class teaching, rather than differentiation
- Teacher-led instruction, rather than a 'child-centred' approach.

This shows a very ideological approach to the delivery of curriculum (pedagogy).

Nonetheless, the fact the funding exists shows an awareness that centrally driven curricula are not effective in implementation; and that the design of curriculum programmes is best done in schools.

Ofsted and the curriculum

There was a national outcry in 2016 when a qualification, the ECDL, rose in entry by 350% in one year, when it was suggested that the qualification counted in KS4 performance measures but could be taught in 'three or four intensive days'. This led to an Ofsted investigation into league table gaming, and the qualification being subsequently removed from the

performance tables.

Following this, Ofsted launched a deep review into the curriculum, exploring the extent to which school leaders and teachers understood curriculum design, and how much this was influenced by external assessment and accountability pressures. Reflecting on the findings, HM chief inspector Amanda Spielman commented:

"The research ... showed that there was a dearth of understanding about the curriculum in some schools. Too many teachers and leaders have not been trained to think deeply about what they want their pupils to learn and how they are going to teach it. We saw curriculum narrowing, especially in upper key stage 2, with lessons disproportionately focused on English and mathematics. Sometimes, this manifested as intensive, even obsessive, test preparation for key stage 2 SATs that in some cases started at Christmas in year 6. Some secondary schools were significantly shortening key stage 3 in order to start GCSEs. This approach results in the range of subjects that pupils study narrowing at an early stage and means that they might drop art, history or music, for instance, at age 12 or 13. At the same time, the assessment objectives from GCSE specifications were being tracked back to as early as year 7, meaning many pupils spend their secondary education learning narrowed and shallow test content rather than broader and more in-depth content across a subject area."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmci-commentary-curriculum-and-the-new-education-inspection-framework>

She acknowledges that Ofsted have had a part to play in creating this climate, and that no educator really believes that this represents a good quality of education.

It is therefore helpful and encouraging to hear a shift in Ofsted, from both the chief inspector and other senior staff, away from intensifying performance data to a more nuanced, balanced evaluation of the substance of education in a school: the curriculum.

Last year's results, even trends over time, can only tell you so much about the education a school provides. It does not show the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding that children are exposed to; the range of non-examined subjects that they are offered; or – to return to SSAT's definition of curriculum – what the 'lived daily experience of young people in the classroom' is like.

In 2019, we will have a new Ofsted framework – which is utterly the right time to bring one in. SSAT hopes that this will include a far greater focus on the lived daily experience – the curriculum. It encourages school leaders to think differently about their curriculum, leading to more intelligent and professional conversations about the substance of education.

Questions to consider

- As a school, how autonomous do you feel over your curriculum? What impact do your finances, external pressures, and school structure have on this?
- What is the right balance between government and school leaders and teachers, when it comes to defining curriculum in state-funded schools?
- How would you like to see curriculum inspected or evaluated in a new Ofsted framework?

WILL WE SEE A BROADENING OR A NARROWING OF THE CURRICULUM OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

This discussion, held on 22 February 2018, opened SSAT's 2018 series of discussion roundtables focused on the curriculum. We were keen to explore whether education in this country would see a broadening or a narrowing of the curriculum over the next five years. On the one hand, the curriculum and assessment reforms of the Coalition government are now largely embedded and so, coupled with a renewed and welcome emphasis on curriculum from Ofsted, we may see more room for innovation and deeper, broader curricula. However, we know that some schools find KS2 and KS4 performance measures stifling, and measures such as the Ebacc have been cited as limiting curriculum choice, at the same time as schools are facing acute funding pressures. Tim Oates, director at Cambridge Assessment, was asked to reflect on this question and stimulate discussion among guests.

Introduction

Tim Oates started the discussion with the question of the evening: will the curriculum broaden or narrow over the next few years? His answer was 'yes!' He explained: we have an extraordinarily diverse education system, views vary on the most

Round table guests included:

Julian Astle

Head of Creative Learning,
RSA

Caroline Barlow

Headteacher,
Heathfield Community School

Dale Bassett

Head of Public Policy,
AQA

Rod Bristow

President,
Pearson UK

Andrew Campbell

Chief Executive,
Brooke Weston Trust

Leora Cruddas

Chief Executive,
Confederation of School Trusts

Alex Galvin

Senior Education Lead, *SSAT*

Jasper Green

Head of Secondary Curriculum,
Ark

Emma Hardy MP

Education Select Committee

Chris Holmwood

Principal, *Shenley Brook End
Leadership Training Centre*

Mark Lehain

Director, *Parents and Teachers
for Excellence*

Tom Middlehurst

Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
SSAT

Joseph Millard

SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow,
The Mallard School

Sir Daniel Moynihan

Chief Executive,
Harris Federation

Tim Oates CBE

Group Director,
Cambridge Assessment

Suzanne O'Farrell

Curriculum and Assessment
Specialist, *ASCL*

Dr Saima Rana

Principal, *Westminster Academy*

Alice Ratheram

SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow,
Preston Manor School

Anna Trethewey

Deputy Director, *LKMCo*

David Turrell

Chair, *National Baccalaureate Trust*

Amelia Walker

Deputy Director, *Ofsted*

Patrick Watson

Managing Director,
Montrose Public Affairs

Karen Wespieser

Managing Director, *Centre for
Education Economics*

Jenny Williams

Chief Executive, *ASDAN*

Sue Williamson

Chief Executive, *SSAT*

important ideas and any opinion can be strongly opposed. Some schools will see broadening as a way they can improve performance and optimise outcomes; others will see narrowing as a means of doing that. There is a lack of consensus

about the most efficient forms of education in this country.

Often it is a question of ideology vs ideas. Looking at EBacc, a head in one school will say that breadth won't be affected; another school with identical characteristics will say that the drama department needs to close.

We need to think about when the learning curriculum starts. It certainly goes beyond taught lessons. We need to consider the implicit curriculum and wider influences on children's learning. We know that children's acquisition of complex language needs to begin before the age of seven. What happens at home, before children start school? We know that children's experiences are narrowing dramatically – largely due to time spent on electronic devices. More and more children are struggling to access the primary curriculum.

Professor Andrew Pollard, head of research impact at the Institute of Education, has criticised the primary curriculum for being too narrow due to the focus on reading and maths. But in what way is reading narrow? Or maths? It depends on how they are presented and the content. It is vital to remember the distinction between the national curriculum and the school curriculum. The focus should be on fewer things in greater depth, as well argued in Ofqual's 2017 report into national curriculum testing at key stage 2.

There has not been enough focus on learning at key stage 2 and there has been too much drilling to the test. Using key stage 2 tests to try to predict outcomes at key stage 4 is also problematic – predictions can become self-fulfilling, as the use of tiers demonstrated. Stephen Spurr, the former headmaster at Westminster School, had said that students should do no more than nine GCSEs in order to make space for the wider curriculum and to enable students to pursue their other interests. The curriculum will always be narrow if we simply

see it as being built out of qualifications. The school curriculum must be much more than just exams.

Oates concluded by saying he is broadly optimistic about the future, while recognising some of the challenges that schools face, such as funding.

The KIPP Charter schools in the United States discovered that an essential ingredient of their students' success was not so much intelligence as resilience and grit – character, perseverance, and ability to overcome obstacles and challenges.

Reasons to be optimistic?

Amelia Walker, then-deputy director at Ofsted, saw an interesting distinction between national curriculum and school curriculum. In response to the question of the evening, she would put money on seeing a broadening. Having been suppressed for a long time, schools now have the freedom to flourish. Schools are excited about the positive focus on curriculum. Previous approaches have turned education into a business of doing rather than thinking. There is a need for the inspectorate to remedy this; a need to talk, challenge and engage. Things go wrong when the quality of thinking isn't right. We have such an anxious system – schools see themselves as cogs in the machine and this stops people from thinking. Anxiety inhibits the potential of the system. Curriculum is founded on a love of learning, and it is this that led people to go into teaching. She declared she had a great sense of optimism.

In response, guests were interested to know how that approach by Ofsted would work. How will ministers respond? It makes things much more subjective and difficult to adjudicate over. Do unmeasured things tend to go untaught? Some said they would like to see a position where the game is refer-

eed by Ofsted, but that may make politicians nervous.

Leora Cruddas also expressed optimism. The Ofsted focus could be seen as a cause of more fear or an invitation to do things differently. The compliance mindset of at least the last two decades means that leaders are nervous of doing the thinking. This is a real leadership challenge. She welcomes the principle of the curriculum not being driven by qualifications.

Mark Lehain, director of Parents and Teachers for Excellence and a former headteacher, gave an idiosyncratic view

"Teachers would be less anxious if outside agencies stopped interfering."

Dr Saima Rana,
Westminster Academy

of the system, arguing that, as a profession, we have much to be grateful for – more money in the system, Ofsted off your back, corruption and gaming of the system has been ended. We have the framework we have been asking for. Accountability measures are not perfect but better than before. There is no reason why

anyone can't do it – and he suggested the profession needs to stop moaning.

Tim Oates also challenged the notion that current funding is leading to reduced outcomes. He suggested that there is poor empirical evidence to support that increased funding results in improved outcomes. However, there is a threshold with funding: once you drop below a certain point, it is bound to impact on a school's ability to provide a rounded curriculum. Arguably, he said, we are close to that threshold.

Challenges in the system

Dr Saima Rana forcibly responded to Lehain's comment, saying that schools are not moaning; and that the challenge is

real. She said in some ways she was disappointed by the discussion and the way in which optimism was glossing over the realities of current school leadership. Recruitment and retention issues, poverty, supporting refugee children are all real challenges. She would love to be optimistic, she said: her academy has “a great curriculum model”, which they are very proud of (including the IB and IB career-related programmes). The pressure of Ofsted is very real – football manager analogy is often applied to the situation heads find themselves in. Teachers would be less anxious if outside agencies stopped interfering. She said that she found it unfair and offensive to romanticise about a curriculum that isn’t realistic in the current circumstances for an ordinary state school.

Likewise, another MAT executive agreed that these are challenging times in education. Looking at curriculum for curriculum’s sake is quite hollow. Knowledge must do something. We can’t get away from the fact that students get recognised for their qualifications, not the quality of the curriculum they studied. We should be able to design a great curriculum that is not at odds with great outcomes.

Another agreed, stressing policymakers need to remember realities. In a PFI school with a complex community they need to be allowed some breathing space. There should be a school improvement partnership with the regulator, but it doesn’t always feel like that.

Andrew Campbell, a MAT CEO, asked how to define breadth and depth. We need to focus on applying learning as a means of providing depth, he said.

Pearson’s Rod Bristow believes the impact of social media is exacerbating the problem. The amount of time spent away from other people is the problem. Leadership is needed to address this, and more work needs to be done about the

accountability system. In recent times the impression has been that qualifications were being used to define what should be taught in schools.

"School leaders achieve despite the structures they work within, not because of them."

Dale Bassett, AQA

There is a big role for school leaders to play, to provide a louder voice for schools. Teachers don't want curriculum to be defined by qualifications; they feel they are forced into this position. We need to re-look at the relationship between assessment and

learning: it is clear that teaching to the test does not result in better outcomes. We need to improve training about assessment for teachers.

Suzanne O'Farrell from ASCL acknowledged that performance measures are a key driver in the system. She said that in her time as a headteacher she was most proud of the curriculum. We can't deny that accountability and Progress 8 are key drivers. Schools' views of Ofsted are defined by their most recent experience. Accountability measures create fear. During a recent webinar with teachers, she was asked how it is possible to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum at the same time as meeting officialdom's specified requirements.

The balance between assessment and curriculum outcomes

Former teacher and current MP, Emma Hardy, suggested we need to think about why there are tactics and tricks. No-one goes into the system wanting to game it, behaviours are driven by do or die high stakes accountability. We do have a qualification-based curriculum and "there absolutely is fear in the system." We are never going to have teachers being truly creative and innovative while there is fear in the system. Students are

facing more exams and more testing. It is difficult for some teachers to stomach Ofsted championing a broad and balanced curriculum when that is not what they are judged on. The development of key skills such as oracy become lost in concerns about getting through content.

Oates immediately came back on this point. He pointed out that we are well down the international league table on testing. Finland does much more testing than we do – some of their tests are written by teacher unions. It is important to think about why we are testing. We need more assessment of the right kind. He also suggested oracy was deliberately given a higher profile in the national curriculum – embedded throughout, not an add-on.

Karen Wespeiser agreed that there is definitely fear in the system, and we need to recognise the realities. Recruitment and retention are huge issues, as highlighted in a recent DfE report. We need to look at evidence rather than anecdote to explore the extent to which funding issues are leading to a narrowing of the curriculum – a ‘shadow curriculum’ in which delivery is dominated by core subjects.

On the definition of curriculum, Dale Bassett from AQA emphasised the need for a clearer distinction between the national curriculum and the school curriculum. School leaders need to ensure that curriculum models are not too defined by qualifications. School leaders achieve despite the structures they work within, not because of them. He is glad that there are attempts to lessen pressures on them. The government and exam boards say that qualifications shouldn’t define curriculum – but then keep putting in more and more content.

Likewise, Jenny Williams from ASDAN said her exam board is grappling with the relationship between curriculum and qualifications, and the relationship between skills and

knowledge. Understandably schools are often driven by what will count in performance tables.

Emma Hardy said we have to be careful what we wish for. It is not moaning to talk about the current realities. We are living in the world that politicians and the system have created. The whole system is built around accountability. We shouldn't believe the claim that previously teachers were all gaming the system. It isn't surprising that decision-making is driven by what counts for progress.

There was consensus that we need to find a balance between ambition and this reality. Much is said about freedom, but the counter-narrative of accountability is just as strong, and we need to listen to both sides, argued Karen Westpeiser. A broad curriculum shouldn't be a luxury, a view echoed by Leora Cruddas who said an academic curriculum should be available to all; reflecting on her own upbringing in Apartheid South Africa when only white children had access to this.

Jasper Green reminded the roundtable that qualifications are the currency that students need. What you measure is what you value. We need to make sure that assessment recognises learning in the right ways.

The way forward: collaboration and exchange

Representing Ofsted, Amelia Walker acknowledged that the system has treated schools as if they are the same for a long time. However, she can be optimistic because she is inside the system and sees that things can change. It will take time for people to see inspection in a different light and to experience a different kind of inspection.

In summing up, Tim Oates said that to avoid perspectives being skewed by ideology, we need collaboration and exchange. We need to overcome myths about what the reg-

ulator requires. Too often myths about practice are perceived as a state requirement. Collaboration and exchange is the only way out, he repeated. We need to make sure that concerns about recruitment and funding don't cause us to lose focus on curriculum principles. If we get stuck on practicalities, we will miss the opportunity to establish sound curriculum principles.

LITERACY: THE CORNERSTONE OF CURRICULUM

Sponsored by Lexonik

On 4 June 2018, SSAT and Lexonik invited a small group of policymakers, policy-shapers, academics, and school leaders to discuss the specific issue of literacy, and why prioritising literacy is so important if all students are going to access the curriculum. Geoff Barton, current general secretary of ASCL and former headteacher, head of English, and English teacher, introduced the roundtable, highlighting the key reasons why literacy is important and some practical actions that can be taken to improve literacy in schools. Both SSAT and Lexonik are clear that literacy is not just needed to access the school curriculum; it has a significant impact on young people's life chances and fulfilment in the future.

Introduction

Geoff Barton began by pointing out the irony that all the attendees at the discussion are the 'word-rich', people for whom illiteracy has probably never been a problem.

The word-rich can, apparently effortlessly, see words on a page or screen and decode them to make meaning, to see pictures, to understand ideas, and to enjoy stories. We routinely use vocabulary in both our speech and writing to express our-

Round table guests included:**Geoff Barton**General Secretary, *ASCL***James Bell**Director of Professional Services,
*Renaissance***Paul Clayton**Director, *NATE***Professor Teresa Cremin**Professor of Literacy,
*Open University***Matt Davis**UK Director,
*Education Development Trust***Fiona Evans**Head of School Programmes,
*National Literacy Trust***Sue Flohr MBE**Head of Policy,
*British Dyslexia Association***Hélène Galdin O'Shea**Co-Founder, *ResearchEd***Dr Simon Gibbons**Senior Lecturer,
*King's College London***Jean Gross CBE**Author, *Time to Talk***Angelina Idun**Director of School Improvement,
*SSAT***Andrea Jenkyns MP**Co-Chair,
*APPG on Education***Christopher Jolly**Managing Director,
*Jolly Learning Ltd***Anita Kerwin-Nye**Lead, *Every Child Should***Mark Lehain**Director, *PTE***Jack Lopresti MP****Tom Middlehurst**Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
*SSAT***Professor Jane Oakhill**Professor of Experimental
Psychology, *University of Sussex***Katy Parkinson**Founder, *Lexonik***Claire Preston**Chief Executive, *Lexonik***Bart Shaw**Associate, *LKMCo***Sophie Thomson**Head of Primary Literacy,
*Pearson***Patrick Watson**Managing Director,
*Montrose PA***Sue Williamson**Chief Executive, *SSAT***Professor Clare Wood**School of Social Sciences,
Nottingham Trent University.

selves with precision and clarity.

We, the word-rich, will have habits of reading, writing, speaking, listening and learning. A word-rich child in a science lesson, for example, will be able to, in writing up the answer to a question, give a fuller, more complete, more

in-depth answer, more like a scientist, than a child who has a limited vocabulary and is not word-rich. Their learning and understanding is constrained by their vocabulary.

Indeed, limited vocabulary has an important impact on all curriculum subjects. If you don't understand words in a maths question, you won't understand the question or be able to answer it. It limits the child's learning experience and ability of a teacher to teach. If you are word-rich it has a multiplier effect. While the word-rich get richer the word-poor get poorer; and the learning gap grows.

Linguistic success begets success in many areas. It gives access to the discourse of the powerful. Word-rich pupils move quickly from learning to read, to reading to learn. Those who are word poor are outside, looking in at those who are more privileged. The word gap will depend on your circumstances rather than your choices – your home, your family, the richness of language and relations, the presence of books and conversations, the habits you form as you grow up. We must explore both the what, and the how of literacy, and accept that it is an entitlement of every child; and then work out how we deliver this.

So what do we do about this? The answer, Barton suggested, is threefold.

First, we have a responsibility and opportunity to equip teachers to make sure that they can develop children's literacy. To do this we look at the way teachers are being educated, their CPD, how they are sequencing their literacy teaching. And we need to find and disseminate best practice in literacy teaching. Teacher talk is important to unlock learning.

Second, we must look again at KS3, which can be something of a 'disaster zone', which Nick Gibb has rightly highlighted and has long been identified as a problem area. For

some pupils it meant, and still means, a long period of stagnation. Year 7, the first year at secondary school, still doesn't add sufficient value and learning progress, in Barton's view.

Third, we tend to have too narrow a view of the inclusion agenda as affecting a few on the margins. There needs to be a basic entitlement for every child when it comes to literacy, ensuring they can read and access a good vocabulary.

The roundtable then discussed this analysis and debated the issues.

What's already working?

One of the most challenging truths in this discussion is that there is already a lot of good practice across the system, and yet the literacy gap persists.

Lexonik references the centrality of the literacy curriculum in influencing life outcomes and in leading every child to fulfil their potential. Founding director, Katy Parkinson, explained their decoding approach to words, breaking words into polysyllables, with an anecdote about how 16-year-old American students could read the word 'constitutional' but didn't know its meaning. But with many polysyllabic words if you break the word down into its constituent parts, with each part having a meaning, the overall meaning of the word becomes clear - the act of standing together, for example. Much focus is currently given to how to read; whereas Lexonik maintains the focus must be on reading for real understanding.

One MAT executive commented that his trust will shortly

*There needs to be
a basic literacy
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deliver research which shows some of the students in primary schools in the North East are now outperforming London children in literacy, since their teachers began using a mix of methods. He stressed that a one-size fits all approach does not work, and that a plurality of approaches is needed.

Many guests commented on successful classroom pedagogies, such as 'prompting boards'; visual prompts as a critical thinking tool for independent word learning. These are most effective when they comprise a single page with illustrated pictures.

Sophie Thomson, from Pearson, stressed the importance of shared reading as early as possible, and highlighted KS2 as a significant stage in this respect.

What we mean by literacy

Much of the discussion focused on reading (both decoding and comprehension) and vocabulary acquisition, although there was acknowledgement across the room that literacy is more than the ability to read. Fiona Evans from the National Literacy Trust stressed the importance of writing; while Bart Shaw from think-and-action-tank LKMCo highlighted the link between oracy and literacy. Good oracy is not, he suggested, part of the culture; indeed it is given little priority. Yet it is essential for learning and feedback, as part of the learning process. It is also essential for formative assessment, which confirms that students are learning what they are being taught. He advocated greater attention to oracy, literacy and phonics in ITT and CPD.

Leadership and training

Sue Williamson said that every child must be treated as an individual in school. There is too much fear in the system

about testing and outcomes. Teachers, the professionals, must take back the agenda from politicians and their interventions – the literacy gap will not close unless school leaders themselves prioritise it as a key issue.

Many guests commented on the need to embed literacy training in ITT and CPD. For example, the importance of tier 2 vocabulary training in teachers' pre-service training was highlighted [tier 2 – high frequency words in written texts, as opposed to tier 1 – high frequency in spoken language].

The 'politics' of teaching literacy: explicit and implicit methods

Jane Oakhill emphasised being clear about meeting the needs of children who might be considered poor readers, those with specific reading comprehension problems. These are children who face difficulties whether they are reading the text themselves or the text is being read to them. Some teachers struggle to identify children who don't understand the text. Having a depth of vocabulary helps to elicit all sorts of associations which are highly supportive of reading. This requires a personalised approach.

One guest stressed how important it is to provide a learning-rich environment at home as well as at school. His concern was that his child's schooling was drilling the love of reading out of the child because they were thinking too hard about the words and breaking down words (phonics), so reading was becoming a chore.

Christopher Jolly acknowledged that there was some apprehension about the use of phonics in teaching; that it might be killing a love of reading. There is international evidence though that phonics teaching is not just popular but effective in teaching children to read. There are two issues:

the mechanical skills in decoding the word; and knowing the meaning of the word.

Mark Lehair supported this view, saying that we must work out what literacy and education is for. Basically, it enables us to be ‘authors of our own destiny’. Teachers must get the sequencing right in their literacy teaching. For a vast majority of students systematic phonic works, he suggested.

Jean Gross said emergent readers decode words and can self-correct. Phonics is important, but vocabulary knowledge takes over where phonics stops, so vocabulary is not there to support phonics.

Why literacy matters

Andrea Jenkyns, co-chair of the APPG on education, pointed out that the disadvantaged are not word-rich and this holds them back and undermines social mobility. Children’s learning styles are important, and you must take these into account when teaching reading, she said.

Not every child is capable of loving books. From an early age, she loved factual books to improve her knowledge, but disliked fiction. Fellow Conservative MP Jack Lopresti attested to the power of books. He had left school with few qualifications, but – the love of books and reading had supported his ambition to become an MP. Reading is essential to enable social mobility by raising your aspirations and not letting your background get in the way, he maintained.

Anita Kerwin-Nye reminded the roundtable that the government has set up 35 English hubs’ [since reduced to 32] across the country in an attempt to improve child literacy. The hubs will be set up by a new Centre of Excellence for Literacy Teaching, with a focus on raising standards in schools, led by an outstanding school or college, and bring together

education professionals to develop and spread good practice. But schools in these hubs need to have at least 95% of pupils achieving the phonics standard. Some children react well to phonics, others need other explicit interventions and teaching strategies to improve their reading. It's not one size fits all.

We also need to focus on what every child should know and wants to know in literacy. There are a range of reasons why literacy is so important – well beyond the requirements of the curriculum and what happens in the classroom. At a basic level, functional literacy needs to be taught, as it is important, for example, in opening a bank account.

Summary and next steps

Tom Middlehurst, the chair, summed up the key points of discussion. The success of all our students rests predominantly on their ability to become proficient and fluent readers. Literacy skills and a rich vocabulary open up greater opportunities for learning across the curriculum.

It is the core business of every teacher to understand not just how children learn to read and acquire vocabulary, but also how they read to learn.

There is much focus on supporting and developing a love of reading and books in children: good teachers and parental support helps even with those children who will never develop this love.

There seems to be a balance to be struck between teaching literacy systematically, through phonics for example, and inculcating a love of reading in students. If you get the balance wrong, it can be damaging. And you can't simply rely on the love of reading. Reading needs to be taught systematically.

The importance of a good vocabulary and a word-rich environment and its cross-curricular impact and multiplier effect

on learning was accepted; the learning gap between disadvantaged students and mainstream pupils can be attributed, in part at least, to the lack of a rich vocabulary.

Most seem to agree that funding, the accountability framework and incentives and disincentives in the system impact on literacy outcomes and therefore need to be carefully thought through.

We must pay attention not just to reading and writing, but also to oracy skills and the value of talking, which are too often

neglected. A structured approach to wider reading should accompany a focus on oracy, with both being wedded to direct teacher instruction of academic vocabulary and reading.

Should a key goal of social justice be the universal acquisition of systematic reading skills?

Training and development of teachers (ITT and CPD) need to improve in literacy – reading,

writing and oracy. We need to train teachers to become more knowledgeable and confident in explicit vocabulary teaching.

Several guests mentioned that sequencing is important. Learning vocabulary is a sequence that moves from learning to recognise and produce the sound of a word, to learning the meaning of the word, and then how to develop the representation of the word and use it in different contexts.

Literacy – reading, writing and oracy – is very much part of the inclusion agenda because of its impact on learning across the curriculum and on the performance gap between disadvantaged and mainstream pupils.

Should a key goal of social justice be the universal acquisition of systematic reading skills?

EDUCATING FOR 21ST CENTURY CHARACTER

Sponsored by NCFE

On 22 May 2018, Nicky Morgan, MP for Loughborough and former secretary of state for education, was invited to introduce a discussion based around the title of her book, *Taught not Caught: educating for 21st century character*. Morgan's book builds on the idea that character education is a key part of the social mobility agenda, and that disadvantaged students often lack the experiences and opportunities open to their wealthier peers. But, asserts Morgan, the good news is that character doesn't develop by chance: it can be systematically taught and planned for in the school curriculum.

Introduction

Nicky Morgan said that character education is the entitlement of every child from every background. Character can be taught, though she accepted that it has no one agreed definition. She referred to Dr Neil Hawkes, who advocates values-based education (VbE). This aims to give students a dynamic compass at school and throughout the rest of their lives, strengthening their resilience and wellbeing, and aiming to nurture the development of good character, deep thinking and altruistic behaviour. He explores what is called the inner

Round table guests included:

Jenny Barksfield
Deputy Chief Executive,
PSHE Association

Neil Carmichael
Senior Advisor, *PLMR*

Keith Ellis
Headteacher,
Oakthorpe Primary School

Annamarie Hassall MBE
Director of Practice and
Programmes, *NCB*

Chris Hildrew
Headteacher,
Churchill Academy

Julie Hyde
Associate Director, *CACHE*

Peter Hyman
Headteacher, *School 21*

Angela Idun
Director of School Improvement,
SSAT

Deb Khan
Founder, *She's Back*

Emily Larson
Director, *IPEN*

Gary Lewis
Chair, *Association of Character
Education* and Headteacher,
Kings Langley School

Ani Magill CBE
Executive Headteacher,
St John the Baptist School

Tom Middlehurst
Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
SSAT

David Moody
Executive Principal,
Harris Academy Battersea

Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Author,
Taught not Caught

Ian Morris
Head of Wellbeing,
Wellington College

Allan Osbourne
Executive Headteacher,
Burnt Mills Academy Trust

Tim Ramsey
Chief Executive,
Just Like Us

Tom Ravenscroft
Chief Executive,
Enabling Enterprise

Matthew Sherwood
Chief Executive,
PACT MAT

Neil Smith
Research Director,
NatCen

Lucy Thompson
Schools Product Manager,
NCFE

Rt Hon Baroness Tyler of Enfield
Chair, *APPG on Social Mobility*

Patrick Watson
Managing Director,
Montrose PA

Sue Williamson
Chief Executive,
SSAT

curriculum and how to implement it, the idea being that wherever you cut through the curriculum and what is happening in schools, you find evidence of character and values.

The work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

at Birmingham University provides practical support to those seeking to teach character throughout the curriculum.

The KIPP Charter schools in the United States discovered that an essential ingredient of their students' success was not so much intelligence as resilience and grit – character, perseverance, and ability to overcome obstacles and challenges.

The focus on character education and a strong values culture gives students the best chance of academic success. It is not either academic success or character, it is both, not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive.

During Justine Greening's time as education secretary there was a particular focus on life skills, rather than character education, and the idea of flourishing in schools. The new secretary of state, Damian Hinds, when he was chair of the APPG on social mobility, noted the importance of character and non-cognitive skills in enabling social mobility.

There is debate about whether character education should be implicit or explicit, discrete or embedded. But it's not just about what happens in the curriculum, and across the curriculum. It also relates to activities outside the curriculum (co-curricular and extracurricular), which help support the development of a child's character. Outward Bound activities, for example, including once a year expeditions, help develop character and supportive relationships between students and between them and their teachers and, importantly, parents.

There are plenty of examples of good practice evidenced in schools through the Character Awards. Babington Community College in Leicestershire has a pledge, which is read daily at assemblies, emphasising the importance of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, tolerance and respect for others and has character reference points to these. Kings Langley School, a secondary academy in Hertfordshire, has

built its ethos on perseverance, self-regulation and empathy. At School 21 in Newham, one of the most deprived boroughs of London, children abide by the six attributes of professionalism, grit, spark, eloquence, expertise and craftsmanship,

Character must permeate everything you do in a school... [but] it can be taught both explicitly and implicitly

which are developed through a focus on speaking skills and coaching. King's Leadership Academy, as well as encouraging pupils to take leadership roles in the school, provides weekly public speaking, philosophy and ethics classes. At Oakthorpe Primary School in Derbyshire the ethos

focuses on the traits of reciprocity, reflection, resourcefulness and resilience. The school council has developed a positive behaviour rewards system to help children reach their 'ideal selves'; this whole-school approach has led to an increase in pupils' self-reported ability to bounce back from challenges.

The record of personal excellence (ROPE), a useful way of recognising and incentivising positive traits in students both inside and outside the classroom, is used in many schools.

Every institution has an ethos and values, but it is vital that this runs through everything that a school does and is understood and practised by teachers, staff and parents.

Morgan said we shouldn't get too bogged down in defining character and values because we all know and can recognise positive character traits, and we can recognise it in schools where a strong values-driven ethos is in evidence throughout the taught curriculum and in extracurricular and pastoral activities. Don't make it too complicated. Focus on the basics. Go from the ground up and make sure it's embedded. These were her clear messages.

What do we mean by character?

One of the confusions in the debate is what we really mean by character, whether or not a shared definition is important, and clarity about certain oft- or over-used words.

Ian Morris from Wellington College referenced the influential eudemonism and Julia Annas' work on intelligent virtue (central concepts in ancient ethical theory are aretē, virtue and eudaimonia, happiness; eudemonism is roughly translated as happiness or human flourishing). Character education is moral education focusing on the development of virtues as stable traits of character. There is the teaching dilemma: do you try to explicitly teach character education using the latest science? Or should it be implicit in everything you do? Character education is about explaining a moral life. Character is about developing good habits through reflection, making children aware of the tools at their disposal within themselves to make good choices. Private schools tend to think that they have a monopoly over what character education looks like but in Morris' experience that is not always the case. Character qualities imply virtues. There are a range of virtues: performance, moral, intellectual, civic. Resilience, for example, is a performance virtue.

There was general agreement that character without virtue is not a desired outcome of education; and that we need to attend to children's moral education as well as skills like 'grit' and 'resilience'.

Deb Khan, former middle leader and co-author of *She's Back*, a guide for women and men returning to work, said she had been struck by two things. First, it's not so much what we do but how we do it that matters when talking about character. And we should deconstruct and drill down into how students or employees do things.

The language used is also significant, and we must concern ourselves with the semantics. If you come from a disadvantaged background, some of the language used in discussions about character is inaccessible and intimidating.

Explicit v implicit

Much of the discussion focused on the title of Morgan's book: can character be taught, and if so how? Is this done explicitly through dedicated classes on character traits, implicitly through constant opportunities and modelling, or something in between, or both?

Peter Hyman, reflecting on his leadership of School 21 in Newham, argued that an engaged education is one where we properly engage with the head, heart and hand. An academic education (the head) starts with the basics of literacy and numeracy, and progresses through depth of knowledge of key concepts and ways of thinking. A character education (heart) is one that provides the experiences and situations for young people to develop a set of ethical underpinnings, well-honed character traits of resilience, kindness and tolerance, and a subtle, open mind. A can-do education (hand) is one that nurtures creativity and problem-solving. Oracy is also an important and often neglected factor.

He referred to the learning model 70/20/10. This is where 70% is about learning through experience and being given space to try again; 20% is about learning and developing through others; just 10% is the taught element, learning and developing through structured direct instruction. School is about education of the whole child and most of what a school does is about character education, in Hyman's view.

Many guests commented that character can and should be taught explicitly. However, executive headteacher Ani Magill

has her reservations. She was concerned about what she saw as a consensus developing that character can be taught as a discrete subject. She did not agree. Character cannot be taught as a bolt-on or curriculum subject. It must permeate everything you do in a school.

Jenny Barksfield summarised by saying that it can be taught both explicitly and implicitly. PSHE if taught well can help develop personal attributes, skills and positive character traits. But it is being squeezed by curriculum changes and funding cuts.

Baroness Tyler reminded guests that there is a wealth of academic literature and research indicating that character and resilience can be taught. There is no dichotomy between character education and academic education. Character and resilience underpin everything that happens in education, and strong character traits deliver improved academic attainment.

Character education also improves students' chances of social mobility and access to the top professions. In an aside, she noted that little happens in the higher education sector to develop character; students are generally left to their own devices. There must be better co-operation in this sector and in the transition between secondary and tertiary education.

Those most in need of support (eg, those on FSM) are least likely to access it. Headteacher Keith Ellis said that his school in a deprived area had won a character award; he rated the ideas of Guy Claxton as important: building learning power (eg, growth mindset intervention and a learning-to-learn programme). Education's key responsibility should be to create enthusiastic learners. He commended the Jubilee Centre as a useful resource to support character education, and stressed the need to develop metacognition early in children.

Julie Hyde of NCFE CACHE, SSAT's partner in the event, stressed the importance of education of the whole child, a

holistic approach and the need to start character education early, in the foundation years, and right the way through education. WB Yeats allegedly said that education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire – that is what character education is about, she said.

Cross-cutting approaches

Following a recent school visit to Bradford, Sue Williamson, was struck by how important leadership was across a school, involving all stakeholders. Schools are rooted in communities and rely on all their stakeholders if they and their pupils are to thrive and flourish. Essentially they are part of and accountable to the communities they serve. This means that school leaders need the courage to have often difficult and awkward conversations with parents, to ensure their children are supported in character development and allowed access to the range of experiences that help develop character.

Likewise, Neil Carmichael commented that in his former role as chair of the education select committee and having visited hundreds of schools, he knew often within minutes when he was in a good school with a clear ethos of positive culture. High quality PSHE starting early in education and finishing late can help. It is unfortunate that league tables skew the whole system in the wrong direction, and this needs to be fundamentally reassessed.

He pointed out that Finland has thematic cross-cutting learning which can aid character development. We really need to value students, and people generally, for everything they do, and appreciate the value they add much more broadly. That's what character education is about. But we must also, as Greening has said, focus on the children who are left behind: they need access to character education the most.

Gary Lewis said character education at its heart is about ensuring that young people are equipped and enabled to make the right choices and decisions in their lives, both major and minor. He decided to develop a long-term strategy for Kings Langley that was entirely focused on developing ‘strong character’ in both students and teaching staff. Pupils were exposed to implicit and explicit character education working in tandem. There is something of a myth that it’s only middle-class parents who can set the boundaries for children and aid character development. Working class parents, if supported, can do just as well if not better. Character education is a great leveller. If you get Ofsted to measure character it will probably kill it, he concludes!

Tom Middlehurst, the event chair, asked whether character should be explicit in the new 2019 Ofsted framework. Most guests thought not: turning character education into a tick box exercise for school inspections would serve to kill it rather than enabling it to flourish. However, one speaker suggested there might be a case for a cross-cutting thematic review to provide an overview and aid identification of best practice.

Emily Larson reflected that she had recently been at a meeting with Anthony Seldon and James O’Shaughnessy on character; much of what was being said in this discussion was being said there. But we must get to the next stage. What do we all do now to advance this agenda in education and schools?

This is a key question for all stakeholders.

Summary and key questions

The question, should character education be taught explicitly or should it be implicit, is a continuing debate.

There is a need for explicit virtues to be implanted in and across the curriculum.

It should be evidenced across the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities.

How should character education feature in the accountability framework? Should it be part of Ofsted inspections? Or would this create a tick-box mentality and threaten the very nature of character education? The latter view was shared by the majority at the event.

However, there may be scope for Ofsted undertaking a thematic review of character education.

It can be taught, but not as a standalone subject or add-on; it has to be integral to the school's whole ethos and approach.

Character education is important in every phase of education, from foundation stage to higher education. Not enough importance is attached to this aspect in the transition from primary to secondary, and secondary to higher education.

To what extent should character education be included in ITT and incorporated in basic pedagogy?

As this discussion showed, there is much good practice in schools already.

There are good resources to support schools including from the Jubilee Centre.

IS ITT SUFFICIENTLY PREPARING NEW TEACHERS TO DELIVER THE CURRICULUM IN TERMS OF KNOWLEDGE, CONTENT, PEDAGOGY AND BEST EVIDENCE?

As part of our curriculum series of roundtables, one of the common threads was the importance of curriculum design in initial teacher training, and how intentionally we teach this. In a meta-sense, where does curriculum feature in our ITT curriculum, and is it fit for purpose? Is this a common feature of the course in our mixed economy including university courses, SCITTs, TSAs and Teach First? We asked Matt Hood, chief executive of the Institute for Teaching, to lead discussions. He has spoken passionately about the need to pay more attention to ITT and RQT training, and that we should apply the same disciplines of school curriculum design to ITT curriculum design.

Introduction

Matt Hood introduced the discussion by saying he wanted to change the question slightly – to say yes sounds complacent, to say no would suggest he was doing down the profession. Instead he would prefer to consider how we, as teacher educators, keep getting better. He would favour an extension of ITT programmes, building a curriculum for trainee teachers over a longer period of time; a year is nowhere near long enough. He has been undertak-

Round table guests included:

Mary Beadles

SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow
Chelsea Academy

Mark Beyer-Kay

Head of ITE,
Future Academies

Sean Cavan

Chair, *Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers*

Dr Tim Coulson

Chief Executive,
Samuel Ward Academy Trust

Charlotte Cutler

The Curriculum Fund,
Department for Education

Ann English

Lead Practitioner Moderator,
Leytonstone School

Alex Galvin

Senior Education Lead,
SSAT

Rachel Hare

Head of ITE,
Harris Federation

Andrew Hodkinson

Principal,
West Oaks SEN Specialist School

Matt Hood

Director,
Institute for Teaching

Professor John Howson

Director, *TeachVac*

Daria Kuznetsova

Director of Strategy and Research,
Teach First

Professor Kevin Mattinson

Head of School of Education,
Birmingham City University

Graham McNamara

SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow,
John Madejski Academy

Professor Norbert Pachler

Pro-Director,
UCL Institute of Education

Katy Parker

Founder, *Lexonik*

Claire Preston

Chief Executive, *Lexonik*

Malcolm Trobe CBE

Deputy General Secretary, *ASCL*

Martina Veale

Education Director, *ASDAN*

Sue Williamson

Chief Executive, *SSAT*

Dr Elaine Wilson

Senior Lecturer,
University of Cambridge

Mary Anne Wolpert

Deputy Manager of Primary PGCE,
University of Cambridge

ing some research looking at the design choices made by a group of teacher educators in the United States.

To keep getting better we need to become more and more intentional in our choices. We must determine what the right environment is for trainee teachers to succeed, and look at who the teacher educators are and the skills and knowledge

they require. The US research made it clear that the providers recognised as most effective were more intentional and had greater alignment on these key questions. We need to return to fundamental questions about the purpose of education and how best to train teachers.

Hood finished with two provocations:

1. How intentional are we about teacher education?

We have a growing number of exceptional schools in our system who are very clear in their thinking about intent on curriculum, on teaching and learning and on the environment for students. These schools have a strong degree of alignment among their staff about these things, even if their approach might be disputed by others in the system.

2. Where else can we look for ideas?

Coherence across the system

Sean Cavan put it to the group that there is no golden truth, it is about how we get the best out of the community that we have. The key question is how we best develop people.

Hood countered that there is something important about coherence – there are often inconsistent messages between the ITT provider and the school a trainee is placed in. It is hard for the trainee to sift what they are hearing. ITT programmes require more structure and sequencing over time to enable providers to be intentional about content. We need to question some approaches – eg, do twilights work? Have we deliberately chosen the way we do things? Is everyone pulling in the same direction?

New teachers are not equipped to teach in a special school setting, argued one special school headteacher. This school has found that they have to retrain and remodel staff join-

ing them – new teachers often require a lot of coaching. The school tries to provide specific training pathways for its new teachers. Teachers also lack training in catering for students below national curriculum levels. Different teaching techniques are needed – for example, often a resource may be used for only a few minutes. This contributor held that university-based PGCE routes tend to provide better preparation.

What's important; and what does this look like?

Elaine Wilson of Cambridge University said it is important to be clear on the basic things that people should know – to understand how children learn, to be able to make deliberate judgements. New teachers need this basic training in core ideas and can then go on and specialise. Many teachers lack a career trajectory; she hopes that the Chartered College of Teaching can help with this. There is an element of luck about which school new teachers end up in, but we do have a good idea about the core ideas that new teachers need as part of their basic training.

There is a fundamental problem in operating as a market-based economy, argued John Howson. Not enough focus is placed on later career progression, so there is a danger of overlooking the needs of trainees at different stages. Good leadership is absolutely fundamental.

Graham McNamara, one of SSAT's inaugural Leadership Legacy Fellows, reflected that there is a different approach in Ireland, where many teachers take a combined academic and teaching degree so the academic content can be tailored to the curriculum they will be teaching. It means that people who know from early on that they want to teach can get the right training. Should we be looking to support aspiring teachers from earlier on? Sense of teaching as a vocation is key. Time

is a key issue – not all schools have time to support ongoing professional development in the way that they should.

Andrew Hodgkinson argued the ITT curriculum should be based on stage rather than age – making sure that people have access to the right training to enable them to achieve their ambitions.

Other routes into teaching

Daria Kuznetsova from Teach First said they are seeing many career changers coming in – we need to be open to anyone who is interested in coming into the profession and be able to offer them the right support.

Likewise, Sean Cavan said he would like to see the apprenticeship levy looked at as a way to attract young trainees. We must find financial support to enable young people to train while staying where they live. Often people wanting to do postgraduate studies are reliant on the financial support of parents. The number of people applying to train is down – there are a range of reasons for this and so there is no obvious solution. Employers, the profession and providers of training all need to be more joined up.

Malcolm Trobe argued that professional development is key. We should look at teacher standards: currently, there is one set of standards for people at every level, you either meet them or you do not. He wants to make them relative – where people should be at different stages of their training and development. What specialisms may they take on? What are the different routes they may take? High quality CPD is a very effective means of retaining people.

"High quality CPD is a very effective means of retaining people."

Malcolm Trobe

What's in ITT?

One speaker noted that many groups lobby to add more and more content to ITT. When we only have one year, we have to decide what makes it in and what is left out – wouldn't it be better to be saying 'that's something to look at in year 4 or year 5'?

Politicians are the biggest problem, answered John Howson: they have brought about big changes in teacher education without always allowing time or resources to address them – for example the decision in 1991 that the majority of training time should be spent in school. This has been a major restraint on ITT work.

Norbert Pachler brought the discussion back to intentionality – he would be very concerned if providers don't have this. We need a combination of intentionality and high leverage practices. There is a lack of good research about high leverage practices and how to sequence them.

Matt Hood suggested that this is a particular challenge with smaller providers. It is particularly difficult when training and professional development is done in limited time by someone who is unable to provide more.

Retention of staff

Sue Williamson said that as a head, she could always tell who had been properly nurtured in their first couple of years. Research from Becky Allen looking at schools that were responsible for a huge proportion of early year teacher attrition was cited: <http://bit.ly/2TQMPlc>.

Part of the answer lies in the training and development of teacher educators. If we accept that teacher quality is a decisive element in the classroom, then the same must apply to teacher educators. The role of teacher educators is often undervalued: there is no obvious gateway for people moving into teacher edu-

cation and limited training and development are available.

The transition from being a successful teacher to a successful teacher educator is hard, suggested Kevin Mattison. A good teacher educator requires a particular set of skills and understanding.

Everyone who is awarded QTS has been approved by both the school and the provider. The current standards are a real issue, and the language around QTS has always been problematic. It doesn't make sense to reform QTS before revisiting the standards. There is a need to revisit the principles of gradualism and professionalism.

Tim Coulson asked: how far is ITT responsible for poor retention after the first few years? Or is the problem with schools and the system? Do we need to set people up better to manage the pressure they will face three or four years in?

The big change in the last few years has been the number of people leaving the profession after 4-7 years. Has the collapse of advisory services for professional development played a part here? John Howson pointed out that people are vulnerable if their school isn't good at providing the right professional development. Conversely, Elaine Wilson argued it is difficult to link teacher retention and teacher education. There is real inconsistency in what happens in schools. We need to look at why some schools are better at retaining staff than others. We also need to look at the wider picture: curriculum changes, funding and other factors have a bear-

*Professional
development has
a cultural element:
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individuality
while achieving a
consistently high
standard for everyone*

ing. Self-determination is important: if you feel that you are competent in your role and that you have autonomy, you are more likely to hang in there. Camaraderie is also important and often enables people to work successfully in challenging schools. Likewise, Malcolm Trobe said the inconsistencies in the system probably go back to leadership and the quality of mentoring and support. It is important to resolve these.

It was agreed we must consider workload: people have a strong sense of commitment, but can find their workload unmanageable over a longer period of time

On the question of young teachers moving abroad, Daria Kuznetsova suggested maybe we should ask the question ‘what would we need to do to get people from overseas wanting to come and teach here? How can we differentiate ourselves?’

Mentoring and support

There was agreement that mentoring and support is key to this issue. Both Claire Preston and Katy Parker from Lexonik voiced this, saying we ought to think about how we keep people beyond training: we must ensure there is good support after training, to avoid burnout in a few years.

Likewise, Kevin Mattinson commented that mentoring is really important, but there is often a significant turnover of mentors. Professional development has a cultural element: we need to maintain individuality while achieving a consistently high standard for everyone.

Elaine Wilson said the pressures on mentors have to be considered: it is harder than ever for people to manage everything.

The challenge

If we are indeed to extend the induction period for ITT we need everyone across the system to be ready; this must be

properly planned for. We need to know that there is capacity and resource to maintain contact with trainees in year 2/3. No change would be better than a botched change. What should year 2/3 look like? Are we ready for this as a profession?

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN WIDENING PARTICIPATION AT HE

On 7 June 2018, SSAT invited a small group of policy-makers, policy-shapers, academics, and school leaders to discuss the specific role of the school curriculum in widening participation in universities. Widening participation (WP) is one facet of a broader endeavour for social justice. This discussion was held as part of SSAT's 2018 roundtable series on the curriculum. In other discussions in this series, people spoke about the curriculum as the most important lever at a school's disposal to enact change. We were therefore keen to think about the role of the curriculum, specifically, in encouraging and preparing young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, to apply for and achieve at universities. Professor Sir Anthony Seldon, vice chancellor of the University of Buckingham, introduced the topic. Before leading Buckingham, Seldon had been headteacher of both Wellington College and Brighton College; he continues to be a leading contemporary historian and political author.

Introduction

Seldon began by reminding attendees that, in any phase of education, moral purpose must drive our actions. Headteachers and vice-chancellors must provide moral leadership,

Round table guests included:

Tamara Baleanu
Impact Director,
The Access Project

Scott Barker
Headmaster, *London*
Academy of Excellence

Samantha Butters
Director, *The Fair Education*
Alliance

Mary Curnock Cook OBE
Education Advisor

Richard Dorrance
Chair, *National Extension College*

Dr Peter Fidczuk
Development and Recognition
Manager, *IBO*

Jasper Green
Head of Secondary Education,
Ark

Chris Hale
Director of Policy,
Universities UK

James Handscombe
Principal,
Harris Westminster Sixth Form

Angelina Idun
Director of School Improvement,
SSAT

Dr Harriett Jones
Senior Lecturer,
University of East Anglia

Sapreena Kumari
Director of Admissions and
Outreach, *Aston University*

James Lloyd
Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
AQA

David MacKay
Head of Stakeholder
Relationships (HE), *Pearson*

Tom Middlehurst
Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
SSAT

Julie Mizon
Access Manager,
Quality Assurance Agency for
Higher Education

David Palfreyman OBE
Bursar, New College,
University of Oxford

Neil Patterson
Principal, *Silverstone UTC*

Chris Ramsey
Headmaster,
Whitgift School

Julie Randles
Chief Executive,
Causeway Education

Professor Sir Anthony Seldon
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Buckingham

Anand Shukla
Chief Executive, *Brightside*

Helen Thorne MBE
Director of External Relations,
UCAS

Bill Watkin
Chief Executive,
Sixth Form Colleges Association

Patrick Watson
Managing Director,
Montrose PA

James Westhead
Executive Director of External
Relations, *Teach First*

Susie Whigham
Programme Director,
The Brilliant Club

Sue Williamson
Chief Executive, *SSAT*

leading by example. This has been undermined, Seldon suggests, by the huge salaries of some MAT leaders and university vice-chancellors, who send a message to students in their care that a high salary and a top-range BMW are things worth aspiring to. We have to move away from this obsession with the quantitative, and think more about quality of life, ensuring that everyone is able to enjoy and take control of their own lives, if we are really serious about social mobility. Huge salaries and unmerited remuneration packages serve to create division and show leaders to be remote, self-serving and inaccessible. We must support moral leadership in education as a starting principle.

Secondly, we have a schools system, both in the state-funded and independent sectors, that Seldon sees to be narrowing the curriculum and indeed restricting the idea of education. The current system in England does not, he argued, offer a holistic view of the education of the whole child. This has contributed to many of the mental health issues we see in schools and universities today.

When we talk about widening participation as part of social mobility, what do we really mean? Seldon suggested that we have allowed ourselves to become obsessed (as reflected in the media) by social mobility viewed through an Oxbridge lens. Why this obsession with Oxbridge? Oxbridge may be right for some, but is totally unsuited to the needs of many students who prefer to go to their local universities and stay close to families, friends and peer groups. For good academic, social and cultural reasons many young people are probably better catered for in other institutions, or in taking other routes into training and the workplace. Not getting into Oxbridge, or indeed not applying to Oxbridge, is no mark of failure. The current system is failing to improve social mobil-

ity while it continues with this obsession.

Seldon said that we have fantastic, dedicated teachers in our schools, but the current system does not help achieve social justice. In this ‘teaching to the test’ system, created by the assessment and accountability measures, there is not the time nor space to do the things that allow children to flourish as individuals, within a rich, rounded curriculum. The Goveian vision of education, now being realised, is overly obsessed with exams and qualifications, Seldon argued.

We must be supporting the development of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills to enable young people to thrive academically, socially and in the employment market. Too little attention is paid to the development of character, which can be taught explicitly, across the curriculum. Seldon believes that Michael Gove failed to understand this. He commented that Damian Hinds, the current education secretary, seems to be making the right noises, but is now being heavily influenced by the DfE model. There is good work being done here to support schools by the Jubilee Centre at Birmingham University and by the likes of former education secretary Nicky Morgan, whose book *Taught Not Caught: Educating for 21st Century Character*, is evangelical about character education. Evidence shows that it is not either academic education or character education; they are mutually supportive. If you teach non-cognitive skills well, it improves a student’s cognitive abilities.

We know that the transition from primary to secondary education is so important, though we clearly haven’t got this right yet as too often students’ performance regresses in year seven. Just as important, for Seldon, is transition from secondary to higher education. How do you equip students with the academic and personal skills they need to cope with the

demands of HE? Doing so would reduce mental stress and improve retention rates in the first year of university, particularly for the most disadvantaged students. Currently 40,000 students drop out of British universities before graduating. And whose responsibility is it? Secondary schools or HE? It has to be both, Seldon said emphatically.

The assessment and qualification system needs to be better attuned to the demands and requirements of HE. Teaching to the test and narrowing of curriculum options at KS4 due to the accountability framework, coupled with decreased funding, is restricting the richness of the curriculum and therefore individuals' ability to flourish. There is a failure to distinguish between the curriculum and qualifications. A rounded education along with getting the right qualification should be the aim. Seldon suggested that the International Baccalaureate (IB) should be integral to the qualifications offer in the state system, rather than an add-on being studied by a small minority. Too many claim it's too difficult for state pupils to study, but there are plenty of exceptions. Look at the work of Westminster Academy: with its disadvantaged intake, under its inspirational principal, Dr Saima Rana, it offers the IB precisely because it challenges its pupils and because it is difficult and raises their aspirations. This is a high expectations culture.

Ironically, although we know that character education and co-curricular enrichment activities are so important for the development of the whole child, it is the young from the most disadvantaged communities (who need it and would benefit most) who have the worst access to co-curricular opportunities.

We have a rigid system, age not stage, which takes no account of the fact that children develop and learn at different speeds. Instead we have a one size fits all, inflexible approach

which leaves too many children behind. We need to ‘individuate’ the teaching offer to students, educating at the right time in the right way, from early years through the key stages. We also assume that there is only one type of intelligence, the sort tested by GCSEs and A-levels, when teachers and parents know from their own experiences that children have different types of intelligence. This is supported by the research of Howard Gardner; but is not always recognised by schools and politicians.

Seldon finished by outlining the different education revolutions humanity has so far experienced. The first started with the beginnings of learning from others, in family units, groups and tribes. The second was the advent of institutionalised education, through schools and universities. The third education revolution was brought about by the rise of printing and secularisation; education for the masses. The fourth revolution, Seldon suggests, artificial intelligence, is now upon us.

Too many universities, for their part, are interested only in research rather than the academic teaching of their students. Therefore, too often their teaching is poor, and does not have the holistic approach to a rounded education; nor does it adequately support students’ wellbeing. As the fourth education revolution has already dawned, in the form of the application of AI to teaching and learning, this can solve many of the challenges of both the school and HE systems. Joseph Aoun, president of Northeastern University and author of *Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, argued that learning has always been the surest antidote to technological redundancy. This remains true today; it is now the obligation of educators to ensure that our learners become ‘robot-proof’. Seldon referenced his recently published book *The Fourth Education Revolution*, all profits from which go to

the Jo Cox Foundation.

Seldon concluded by saying we are beginning to understand now that artificial intelligence can aid widening participation through accessing a broader curriculum along with extracurricular activities. And it can ‘individuate’ the student offer – from early years, through to higher education and well beyond.

The roundtable guests then gave their contributions to the discussion.

The right choice of subjects and qualifications

Many guests agreed with Seldon's opening assertion that the IB provides a better preparation for university learning than A-levels, but that too few students from state schools, especially disadvantaged students, have the option of doing this post-16. There was some consensus that universities do value students who have studied for the IB.

One of the challenges of this is funding, and because the IB requires more teaching time, it is too expensive for many schools and colleges to run in large numbers. Furthermore, because we know the education gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is already very evident aged 16, disadvantaged students might need more support and curriculum time, while paradoxically also needing a post-16 curriculum that offers a holistic educational experience.

Several school leaders commented that, unless the government is prepared to fund the increased cost of a qualification like the IB, it will largely remain the preserve of the independent sector in the near future.

For students studying A-levels, the extended project qualification (EPQ), which is a type of qualification offered by several exam boards that requires students to undertake independent study on a topic of their choice, has become

increasingly popular. One representative from the HE sector commented that they felt three good A-levels, an EPQ and a maths element provided a good basis for HE study. Recent research was also cited that indicates that those students who did an EPQ tend to perform better in their A-levels and were better prepared for university.

However, some attendees expressed caution in seeing any qualification (be it IB or EPQ) on their own as a magic bullet to achieve widening participation. More important are the skills that these qualifications help develop – this should be the focus, not a specific type of qualification.

These skills should be taught by high quality teachers, teaching a rounded curriculum well. We should therefore be more attentive to ITT, professional development and identifying and sharing best practice across the system. For all the hostility to testing, we do need a reliable, rigorous and valid means of assessing children's achievements and progress – particularly in the high-stakes accountability system that we have. There is scope for improving teachers' own assessment skills and helping to empower them.

No qualification on its own is a magic bullet to achieve widening participation in HE: more important is the skills that these qualifications help develop

Advice and guidance

Alongside the right qualifications being on offer, there was consensus that better advice and guidance is needed across the system, to help all young people make the right decisions about their future.

There was also a need for further support and guidance for families about how application for universities work, particularly for parents who did not attend university themselves. There could be better guidance for all families about the application process, how funding for university is handled, and the implications for students' time at university, and afterwards.

Early intervention

Although discussion largely focused on the KS4 and KS5 curriculum, there was general agreement that early interventions are vital. By KS5, it is too late for a new focus on social justice and WP; it must be embedded across the system.

There is a need to start preparation for higher and further education earlier, focused on independent learning, general literacy and academic literacy.

This has implications for schools' own curriculum visions; social justice should be an explicit outcome of every key stage. It also has implications for the policy landscape; ensuring that the systems are in place for all children to achieve and lead fulfilled lives in the future.

This also highlighted the importance of transition; not just between secondary and FE or HE, but at every stage of schooling.

Transition

As Seldon noted in his opening thoughts, the evidence is clear that we all too often get transition wrong. Young people are either not prepared for the next stage of their education, or curricula do not properly build on students' prior learning.

Meeting both of these challenges requires more collaborative working between different institutions.

Between primary and secondary education, we need to

ensure that learning is not allowed to deteriorate. During these times of curriculum change, secondary teachers need to be aware that each successive cohort of new year 7s until 2025 will have gradually more and more experience of the primary national, and so will need to adjust their KS3 curricula accordingly. Likewise, year 11s now sit new-style GCSEs in almost all subjects, and those starting year 7 experience the new national curriculum, making both groups different from previous years.

We also need to look at how universities can work with schools and colleges to help better prepare students for university, both academic learning and life.

Some guests felt that the kind of academic skills required in a new teaching and learning environment at university can be taught comparatively early in the transition. There are already courses written by HE lecturers to help prepare students in secondary schools for the new demands in HE, and to manage their expectations.

There should also be thorough and wide-ranging discussion of the school curriculum with universities. They have a role to play not only in articulating their requirements for academic study, but in supporting rigorous subject knowledge and subject curricula.

Being explicit about the curriculum

We must be explicit about the skills and attributes we want to develop through the school curriculum. This is not just for university preparation, but as general preparation for a fulfilling life and lifelong learning, whatever route students take.

We must ensure that our children have the ability to learn and opportunities to develop a love of their subject. They need support in character education and resilience, which requires

brave leadership and the support of governing bodies as well as informed and enthusiastic intervention by teachers.

There are many different names used to describe a broad range of character, non-cognitive, cognitive and employ-

ability skills. This raises the importance of having a unified scheme, not just across the education sector but with businesses too. It was suggested that we should use a common framework, such as Enabling Enterprise Education's *Skills Builder Framework*, supported by all the members of the Fair Education Alliance. This has a focus on supporting students to develop the key strengths to support high aspirations; bringing the world of

The skills builder framework brings the world of work into the classroom through lesson-time projects, challenge days and trips out to businesses

work into the classroom through lesson-time projects, challenge days and trips out to those businesses; and helping students acquire the knowledge, skills and awareness to make choices. The framework helps assess young people's development of eight essential skills and builds on the charity's work with 3-18 year olds, developing skills such as problem-solving, communication and working with others. The work has involved more than 330 schools, 130 employers and 60 skills-building organisations.

There was recognition, building on earlier discussions in the series, that – whatever these skills are labelled – they can be systematically taught in the curriculum. Schools should explicitly discuss what the skills are and plan them into the curriculum in the same way as subject knowledge and understanding.

The impact of the accountability, assessment and funding system

One guest commented that any reform will ultimately come to two things: accountability and funding. It was suggested that while the government's industrial strategy is largely focused on the skills agenda and meeting the adult skills gap, it has not considered a holistic approach to early years, primary, secondary, further and higher education.

One school leader argued that the way we assess students is outdated. We assess how much information they have retained as if this is the most important thing. Surely we should instead assess how they work within a team, and what value they are adding. This is what happens in the workplace. Measure their outputs and contributions. This school leader also believed we have an outdated view about what a university education is for. If taxpayers are contributing it has to be much more about getting the skills you need to thrive in the workplace; and if you are being educated for employment, then essentially that's a vocational education and we should be honest about it and not be teaching students degrees that are worthless, it was suggested. Students are now looking at what their degree is worth in the employment market and in terms of destinations. There is a danger that the new T Levels will not help the WP agenda very much, and may even harm it, especially if employers don't buy into them and they become undervalued and so worthless.

Another school leader reflected on the current exam regime, saying that the system for assessment and exams is far too complicated. At exam times in their school, they had 19 rooms where students were sitting exams under different conditions.

There was also a discussion that, at a policy level, ministers seem obsessed by KS4 accountability measures; by com-

parison, very little attention is given to KS5. It was suggested that this over-emphasis on KS4 and lack of proper scrutiny of KS5 has allowed the government to get away with not funding sixth forms properly.

However, there was a recognition that although external exam and accountability pressures inevitably drive decisions and curriculum choices, there is room for schools to teach and assess a wider range of skills. For all the hostility to testing, we do need a reliable, rigorous and valid means of assessing children's achievements and progress. Particularly in the current high-stakes accountability system. Guests agreed there is scope for improving teachers' assessment skills and helping to empower them to teach and assess this wider range of skills.

The role of universities

As well as working collaboratively with schools, what more can universities do to encourage WP and social justice?

One lecturer suggested that universities already do develop students' skills – and that, for example, sitting 10 three-hour papers in quick succession at Oxbridge to secure a degree provides a powerful signal to employers of resilience, as well as other things. We have to work out what HE is for. How is it different from FE, and what skills and competences do you need? In this country we sort out students through A-levels. The Dutch, French and others open up universities to the many: however, what appears to be a more inclusive egalitarian system is no such thing, as around 40% leave university before they graduate. Is that a better system, or is it just wasteful? It is certainly no better, he suggested. This feeling was echoed elsewhere, with agreement that a free HE system, as found on the continent, has huge dropout rates and is therefore undesirable as well as unaffordable.

School leaders were also concerned at the huge rise in unconditional offers and low offers being made to 17 and 18 year olds, before they complete their A-levels. This can lead to demotivation in the final year of sixth form, meaning that students will not develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful later. There is a risk this could actually undermine WP and social justice as well.

Other routes to university

Just 40% of one university representative's students come through A-level qualifications, the rest through BTEC. But there is often a prejudice in HE against accepting students with BTEC qualifications, she felt, which has to be addressed. Little attention though is paid to supporting these students in the demands of studying at HE. We need more systematic institutional support mechanisms to retain these students and improve degree outcomes – demonstrating our moral leadership in doing not what's best for us but what's right by students. HE institutions should share the responsibility and offer help to shape the curriculum. This was a view echoed by other HE providers in the discussion.

Defining social justice

At the heart of this debate is a lack of shared understanding about what social justice means – but it's clear it's not merely about getting every young person into university. We need a range of routes for young people to take, and to ensure that the curriculum supports them with the skills and opportunities to realise their aspirations and be fulfilled in the future, regardless of their background.

To achieve this, it requires us all working together differently.

Next steps and actions

- We need a cross-party, cross-sector campaign or charter to tackle the underlying causes of social injustice in a systematic way.
- More research is needed on the particular skills, experiences and qualifications that allow students, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, to succeed – and how best these are arranged.
- We need a common language or framework to talk about these skills.
- An independent review of the accountability and funding arrangements for schools should examine the impact of the current system on schools' ability to contribute to and support social reforms.
- The challenge of vocational and technical education must be met; and the T Levels properly implemented without being rushed.
- A greater focus on a broad, rich, holistic curriculum is needed across the sector; with transition properly addressed, and secondary schools and colleges working with primary schools and universities in true partnerships.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SSAT'S FOUR PILLARS OF CURRICULUM DESIGN

S SAT have long advocated a principled approach to curriculum design. Dylan Wiliam's *Principled Curriculum Design*, written as part of SSAT's *Redesigning Schooling* series, is considered by many to be a definitive publication in this area. We welcome Ofsted's decision to focus on curriculum; we believe that all students deserve access to a broad and balanced curriculum that challenges and inspires them.

The four pillars of curriculum design are:

- Intent:** How you articulate and evidence what you are trying to achieve.
- Content:** Ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum, and making decisions about what to include.
- Delivery:** The link between pedagogy and curriculum.
- Experience:** How you assess the lived daily experience of young people in the classroom.

How to use this resource

SSAT believes that schools are best placed to formulate a curriculum offer that works for their community. On this basis, this resource does not attempt to tell you what your curriculum should look like, rather it poses the questions that you need to ask and be confident in answering. We recommend that you work through the questions, initially as a senior team, and then in discussion with your whole staff, your students, governors and all stakeholders. Highlight any areas that you need to look at in more detail and use these as the basis for the ongoing review of your curriculum. As you build a better picture of your current position, consider the pros and cons of your approach. For example, if decisions about content are driven by what you feel students will find most interesting, are you confident that you are providing sufficient stretch and challenge?

This framework is also not intended as a tool to redesign your curriculum from scratch – though it certainly could be used to, especially if opening a new school or provision. It's about how you, as a school, think and talk about your current curriculum, share this with external stakeholders, and identify gaps or areas to work on.

1. INTENT

What is your curriculum intent/vision?

What principles underpin your approach to curriculum?

- Growth mindset?
- Belief in a traditional academic curriculum?
- Achievement for all?
- Preparation for work?
- Developing cultural capital?
- Social justice?

What is distinctive about your offer?

- All students learn a language? Mandarin?
- Creative curriculum in KS3?
- Global perspectives?
- High degree of challenge?
- Focus on cultural capital?

Who informs your vision?

- Headteacher?
- Senior leaders?
- All staff?
- Students?
- Parents?
- Governors?
- National policy makers?

How do you shape your vision?

- What processes do you have for engaging stakeholders?
- How do they feed into the ongoing review of your curriculum intent?

Who owns your vision?

- Who knows what your curriculum intent is?
- Could they describe it in one sentence?
- Do all stakeholders buy into your vision?

What does a broad and balanced curriculum look like in your context?

- Curriculum content?
- Subject choices?
- Wider learning?

2. CONTENT

Who makes the decisions about content/specifications?

- Heads of department?
- Teachers?
- Students?
- Senior leaders?
- Parents?
- Governors?

On what basis are decisions made?

- What is most interesting for students?
- What will challenge students?
- What students will find easiest?
- Teacher subject knowledge?
- Teacher preference?
- Whole school curriculum intent?
- Requirements of exam specs at a later key stage?

How is curriculum content quality assured?

- What metrics are used?
- How are curriculum choices measured against your curriculum intent?
- How consistent is quality assurance?
- Whose job is it to approve decisions about curriculum choice?
- What are the risks/benefits of the way that you make decisions about curriculum – eg if you are led by student preference, is there sufficient challenge?

How does curriculum content meet the needs of all learners?

- Is the content sufficiently challenging for all students?
- How do you plan for and monitor the wider curriculum (beyond lessons)?
- Do all students find the content motivating and interesting? How do you know?

What goes before and afterwards?

- How do you build on prior learning in KS2?
- How far is decision-making at KS3 driven by the demands of KS4?

3. DELIVERY

How does your pedagogy support your curriculum intent?

- Do all staff have a shared understanding of the kind of learning that will support your vision?
- How does professional learning support successful delivery of your curriculum?
- Do all students have a clear understanding of where they are and what they need to do to improve?

How far do departments work collaboratively to support curriculum delivery?

- Do departments work together to contextualise learning for students?
- Do teachers know what is being delivered elsewhere and when?

How does your use of curriculum time support your curriculum intent?

- How does the structure of your school day support successful delivery?
- Do you use time creatively to enhance students' experiences?

How far do departments work consistently to support curriculum delivery?

- Are there shared approaches to teaching key skills and techniques – eg literacy and numeracy?

Do teachers have the subject knowledge required to deliver your vision for curriculum?

- Who reviews teachers' subject knowledge?
- How is teachers' subject knowledge supported?

How is delivery of your curriculum quality assured?

- What benchmarks do you use to quality assure your offer?
- Who decides whether curriculum choices and delivery are good enough?
- How is best practice celebrated and shared?
- What happens when it is not good enough?

How does your curriculum accommodate the needs of different students?

- How much flexibility is there for personalisation?
- How far does formative assessment drive adjustments to the curriculum to meet the need of classes and individuals?
- What opportunities do students have to direct their own learning?
- Is the quality of delivery the same for all students?

4. EXPERIENCE

How far is your curriculum intent lived out in students' experiences?

- Who informs your view on this?
- How engaged and motivated are students? How do you know?
- What metrics are used to measure this?

How is the entirety of students' experiences monitored and evaluated?

- How do you look at students' wider development?
- How do you monitor engagement in activities beyond lessons?
- How do you intervene to ensure that all students are accessing the full offer?
- How do you recognise the entirety of students' achievements, within and beyond lessons?

What processes do you have in place for ongoing review of your curriculum offer?

- How often do you revisit your vision for curriculum?
- Whose job is it to assess how far your curriculum intent is being achieved?
- Who feeds into this evaluation?
- What happens when there are concerns?
- How do you ensure that all middle leaders are making decisions that support your curriculum intent?
- How does data analysis and review of assessment practice feed into quality assurance of your curriculum model?

How far are you willing to adapt your curriculum where needed?

- How often do you change what you deliver?
- When changes are made, what drives those changes?
- How have you amended your curriculum over time – eg embedding learning technologies?

Tom Middlehurst

Tom is head of policy and public affairs at SSAT, where he leads on the organisation's responses to government policy and explores the implications of policy on school practice. He sits on several DfE advisory boards, is a regular speaker at national and international conferences, and spends much of the year travelling the country giving policy updates at headteacher association meetings and other leadership training days. Since 2013, Tom has also directed the annual SSAT National Conference.

Among his roles at SSAT are programme coordinator and head of research; his first job with SSAT was on his gap year, working in the personalising team with David Hargreaves, Sue Williamson and Kai Vacher. A qualified English teacher, he gained his PGCE through Teach First while teaching at a sponsored academy in Essex. Tom has been a governor or trustee of several schools and MATs, as well as a trustee or fellow of other charities.

SSAT on Curriculum

Curriculum: the ‘lived daily experience of young people in and out of the classroom’

Discussions around curriculum are sometimes divisive and hotly argued. What is surprising, perhaps, is how infrequently these ideas are discussed at a school level and result in positive changes in the school curriculum – especially considering that the vast majority of educators would agree with Dylan Wiliam’s definition, above, which emphasises the crucial nature of a school’s curriculum. The real curriculum is always created by teachers, or indeed any individuals coming into contact with students, rather than politicians or even school leaders.

This pamphlet is designed to prompt discussion in schools and introduce SSAT’s *Four Pillars of Curriculum Design* as well as the seven principles of a good curriculum outlined in Dylan Wiliam’s SSAT pamphlet, *Principled Curriculum Design*.

While it is the government’s prerogative to determine the national curriculum, school leaders and teachers have the right to enact this as they see fit, based on their professional expertise. A national curriculum is a powerful tool for social justice; it ensures that all young people, in theory, have access to the same knowledge, understanding and experiences, regardless of where they come from or where they go to school. This has to be welcomed.

But there must also be room for local contextualisation and content. The percentage of the school curriculum that should be defined centrally is always open for debate – and readers will have different views on this. The fact remains that, compared to many education systems, English schools have a great degree of freedom on what their curriculum looks like, and how they deliver it. So teachers and school leaders have it in their power to provide a curriculum that best serves their students’ needs.