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ABSTRACT

To follow a curriculum is to be inducted into a social order. From this perspective, curriculum practice has the intention to foster social identities. The visible curriculum and the hidden curriculum are rendered as inseparable. This paper discusses curriculum research in the United Kingdom, adopting the framework sketched above. The paper pays attention to the pre-figurative relationship that exists between curriculum and social structure. It assumes that courses of schooling foreshadow specific forms of social order, and, in turn, it recognizes that curriculum change has a functional relationship to changes in the social order. It also recognizes, however, that this functional relationship is problematic: curricula, like schooling, may work to maintain the social order, or they may operate to change the social order. But, the paper asks, "What is the social order and how does it operate at local, regional, national, European and global levels?" To explore these questions, the paper focuses on four areas of curriculum and practice: (1) the association of curriculum with social order; (2) the growth of curriculum federalism in the United Kingdom under the shadow of the fragile hegemony of the super-national state; (3) the advancement of new pedagogic identities as a means of injecting social justice into curriculum practice; and (4) the centralist promulgation of a school effectiveness ideology/discourse as a technology of professional and pedagogic differentiation. (Contains 43 references.) (BT)

Subjects, Not Subjects: Curriculum Pathways, Pedagogies, and Practices in the United Kingdom.

by

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Subjects, not subjects: curriculum pathways, pedagogies and practices in the United Kingdom

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Courses of study entail notions of social order. To follow a curriculum is to be inducted into a social order. From this perspective, curriculum practice has the intention to foster social identities. The visible curriculum and the hidden curriculum are rendered as inseparable.

In this discussion of curriculum research in the United Kingdom, we adopt the framework sketched above. We pay attention to the pre-figurative relationship that exists between curriculum and social structure. We assume that courses of schooling foreshadow specific forms of social order. In turn, we recognise that curriculum change has a functional relationship to changes in the social order. However, we recognise that this functional relationship is problematic: curricula, like schooling, may work to maintain the social order, or they may operate to change the social order. But, whatever form or content, courses of schooling cannot be indifferent to the social order, whether it is real, imagined or desired.

But what is the social order? How does it operate at local, regional, national, European and global levels? And how are curricula and social identities configured by these frames? To explore these questions, we focus on four areas of curriculum and practice: (1) the association of curriculum with social order: (2) the growth of curriculum federalism in the United Kingdom under the shadow of the fragile hegemony of the super-national state; (3) the advancement of new pedagogic identities (e.g. those nurtured by education feminism) as a means of injecting social justice into curriculum practice; and (3) the centralist promulgation of a school effectiveness ideology/discourse as a technology of professional and pedagogic differentiation.

Curriculum and Social Order

The word *curriculum* first appeared in the European educational lexicon during the sixteenth century. The much older term, *curriculum vitae* (course of life), was reworked to denote courses of schooling. This neologism, however, was not an isolated occurrence. It was linked to other educational innovations, notably the appearance of the words *class* and *didactics*, and the transformation of earlier conceptions of *method* and *catechism* (see, variously, Gilbert, 1960; Martial, 1985; Hamilton, 1989).

This crop of educational innovations was, in turn, linked to two other historical processes. First, educational thought became reflexive as attention focused on the view that human beings could redirect their own destiny. For this reason, the European Renaissance is sometimes regarded as the expression of a *humanist* aspiration - in politics as much as in art. Individuals, families, communities, and nations could begin to reconcile their own desires with the dictates of earlier paradigms of social order (pagan or Judaeo-Christian).

Second, educational thought began to be drawn to the idea that human powers of redirection could be applied not only reflexively, but also to other people. New additions to the European educational lexicon were the outcome of these changes in European thought. Attention turned from learning to instruction. The link between curriculum, class, method, catechism and didactic was that alongside the emergence of these notions, educational practice turned

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towards the conceptualisation, organisation and accomplishment of instruction.

In its earliest form, dating from the 1570s, a curriculum denoted the pathway (or pathways) that students were expected to follow across a socially-approved map of knowledge. In turn, these pathways were reproduced in the educational institutions that emerged in the Renaissance and Reformation - as, in the first instance, pathways of study and, later, as pathways of instruction. For these reasons, early curricula were associated with two conceptions of order, political and temporal. On the one hand, curricula were an expression of the social *order* and, on the other hand, curricula were *ordered* in a sequential and, therefore, chronological sense. A curriculum, then, was an instrument that not only supported ordered instruction delivered by teachers and followed by learners; it also promoted different conceptions of social order.

A concise illustration of ordered schooling is available in the work of Johann Heinrich Alsted, a teacher of Jan Amos Comenius, whose *Didactica Magna* (Czech edition, 1632; Latin edition, 1679) is regarded as one of the most influential educational texts of the modern era. As a mapping exercise that built on earlier work, Alsted created a 3500-page Systema systematum (system of systems) in 1613, the same year that the word *didactic* appeared in Germany. In 1620, Alsted published the second fruits of his synthesis of knowledge in the form of an Encyclopaedia, to be followed by a second edition in 1630 which included 'didactica' as one of it subject categories.

Alsted's chapter on didactics comprises 40 pages of text. The final page, however, comprises three tables used, collectively, to represent a *curriculum universa vita scholastica* (universal school life curriculum). Taken separately, these tables illustrate a day, a month and an entire course of studies for students between the ages of seven and twenty-five. The daily timetable, from 05.00 until 21.00 hours, indicates a pattern of private study, oral examinations, and public lectures. The monthly timetable (January is used as an example) indicates which chapters of the Bible should be studied; what arithmetic, algebra, astronomy and arithmetica deodaetica (geometry?) should be taught; and what activities should be included in the oral examination of students. The entire programme was divided into four stages: (1) one year for teaching students to read Latin; (2) seven years of 'philologia (grammar) and catechesis'; (3) three years of philosophy (i.e. further study of Latin and Greek texts in Logic, Rhetoric, Oratory and Poetry); and (4) eight years study of higher texts (e.g. theology).

Taking our cue from these earliest conceptions of curriculum, we prioritise form over content. Further, we eschew the more recent conceptions of a curriculum as a cluster of different subjects - a view linked to discussion of the division of labour in the USA during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Instead, we choose to associate curriculum with courses of schooling and, in turn, with research on courses of schooling available in the United Kingdom during the last three final decades of the twentieth century.

Curriculum Federalism

When originally invited to contribute to this volume, we were asked to write about 'England'. We choose not to follow this request since, to do so, would be to conceal a critical issue of social order that also envelops educational and political thought in the United Kingdom - the prospect of federalism. This federalist prospect has two dimensions: federalism within Europe, and federalism within the United Kingdom. Associated curriculum discussions are similarly polarised, relating to the reconstruction and/or affirmation of *national* and/or *European* curriculum and social identities.

These federalist tensions first arose at the time of Britain's entry into the European Common Market during the 1970s. Questions were raised about the 'inter-relations' of existing

educational systems and, at the same time, pressure came from the smaller nations within the United Kingdom for greater control over their affairs, itself linked to the renewed assertion of national identities (Bell & Grant, 1977, p. 7).

At that time, four major educational systems existed in the British Isles - one each for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (see Bell & Grant, 1977, for a discussion of other, smaller systems). The creation of the United Kingdom has been a process of cultural amalgamation that had taken over 400 years. Wales was annexed when a Welsh family (the Tudors) succeeded to the English throne in the fifteenth century. The parliaments and crowns of England and Scotland were merged in 1603 and 1707, respectively. And Ireland, which was originally united with England in 1801, was divided into Northern Ireland (remaining in the United Kingdom) and the Irish Free State (its original name) after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.

For the remainder of the British Archipelago, sovereignty was centralised in London, but nationhood remained. Economic, military and political power was replaced by a range of national-cultural institutions, including religion and education, that were accepted by the English authorities. Thereafter, parliament in London could pass laws for the different systems which, in turn, were administered by local interests in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

At times, such local interests became prominent, notably around questions of national identity, language and culture. But these interests have also been linked, through time, to parallel discussions of race and ethnicity. Who, for instance, are the Scots, Irish, and Welsh? Or, better still, who are the English? And what language should they speak? More recently, migration within the United Kingdom, and the arrival of British citizens from elsewhere in the Commonwealth (the former British Empire) has fostered a complementary discourse about the 'new' Scots, Welsh and Irish, who also include the 'black' British Thus, the national independence movements that arose in the nineteenth century are not the same as those that came to prominence in the wake of the United Kingdom's entry to the European community.

In terms of this paper, three distinct currents flow through the course of schooling. First, there is the national question; second, there are issues relating to national history; and third, there are issues relating to cross-national identity (cf. the Europe question). These currents do not flow easily. Indeed, they flow in different directions.

The main source of this historical difference is that the constituent parts of Great Britain have changed. They are no longer univalent in their composition, politics and religion. They have become pluralities, not least through migration and secularisation. Nevertheless, the emergence of mass schooling in the latter part of the nineteenth century was designed to harmonise a previously dispersed schooling provision. Thus, throughout the history of schooling in the United Kingdom, curriculum practice has been tension-laden, as local and national interests have not necessarily co-incided (typically over religious questions).

The more recent diversity of formal educational provision in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be easily mapped from the web site created and maintained by the British Council (the 'United Kingdom's international organisation for educational and cultural relations'). Nevertheless, one notable feature of the British Council's web pages is that they have been assembled under a common rubric. This centralist rubric, however, is not a rubric that marks stability. Rather, it notes that the pages have been assembled during a period of curriculum change. The structure of the UK educational system has 'changed considerably' during the 1990s', under the impact of successive government's aims to 'improve quality, increase diversity and make institutions more accountable to students, parents, employees and taxpayers' (British Council, 2000).

This educational rubric marks, above all, a market-oriented, neo-liberal discourse in education. It accepts that formal education is a service rendered to individuals rather than to the state or to a commonwealth of citizens. In effect, the British Council web site avoids the national question because, arguably, it is a political embarrassment in England and a political project elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In the words of one influential commentator, Tom Nairn, the 'breakup' of the United Kingdom - the cause of the political embarrassment - has been replaced by an 'aftermath' in the 1990s - the devolution of greater political power from London to Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast (Nairn, 2000, p.1).

All that remains common to educational provision in the United Kingdom is that compulsory schooling is divided into two stages: primary and secondary. But even this division is not uniform: while statutory schooling begins at four years in Northern Ireland, the equivalent figure for England, Wales and Scotland is five years of age.

The National curriculum in England and Wales is statutory. It accounts for approximately 80% of a pupil's time in school. The curriculum in England is divided into nine subjects, but extends to ten subjects in Wales (to take account of Welsh language teaching). Further, these subjects are divided into two categories: core subjects and foundation subjects. The core subjects (English, mathematics, science and, in Wales, Welsh) are followed throughout the years of compulsory schooling. A different model of distribution characterises the foundation subjects. Technology, history, geography, music art and physical education are followed up to the age of fourteen (plus Welsh in non Welsh-speaking schools), a modern foreign language is introduced for 11-14 year-olds, and 14-16 year-olds must study the core subjects, technology, a modern foreign language and physical education, plus either history or geography or short courses in both.

In contrast, the national curriculum in Scotland is not determined by statute or legislation. It is determined by advice from the Scottish Executive Education Department. Here, the curriculum aims to provide breadth, balance, coherence and progression through broad curricular areas, not subjects. These areas are language, mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts and religious, moral and social education. In the first two years of secondary education, all pupils undertake a common course covering a range of subjects; and, near the end of the second year, they choose courses from a menu of up to 75% of a core, and 25% of optional, subjects. An emphasis is placed on preparation for more specialised study and training, but all pupils are required to continue to the age of sixteen, with the study of English, mathematics, a science and a modern foreign language.

In Northern Ireland, the legislative basis for curriculum practice is not stated on the British Council basis.. Pupils study a common curriculum made up of religious education, five broad areas of study and six compulsory cross-curricular themes. The broad areas of study are English, mathematics, science and technology, creative and expressive studies, and language studies; and the cross-curricular themes are education for cultural understanding, cultural heritage, health education, information technology and, only in secondary schools, economic awareness and careers education.

There are at least three noteworthy features in the United Kingdom's curriculum pattern. First, the English and Welsh curriculum is dominated by subjects, with a concentration on knowledge or, at least, the prescribed use of old subject labels. This subject dominance can be read as a further sign of neo-liberalism. It is homage to the knowledge society where, through knowledge, pupils are equipped to meet their eventual responsibilities as workers. Their responsibilities as citizens remain secondary.

In the remaining countries, citizenship questions are paramount - the second feature of the United Kingdom's curriculum pattern. Consideration of personal and social relationships,

together with their moral and political implications suffuse school curricula. In these systems, a moral curriculum co-exists with a moral curriculum. School pupils are inserted into a national community with identities as both workers and as citizens. And such identities are linked as much to a global future as to a national past - through, for instance, the co-existence in Northern Ireland of 'economic awareness' and cultural understanding'.

Overall, the different curricula in the United Kingdom display different responses to the changing political and economic status of the United Kingdom. The federalist question is absent from the curriculum for England, but is evident in Wales by reference to the teaching of Welsh, and in Scotland and Northern Ireland by reference to the changing histories of those nations (e.g. their unionist links with England). There appears to be more space in Northern Ireland and Scotland for discussion of identity or citizenship questions (viz. who are we, how did we get here, where are we going?). There is a stronger sense, too, that these political and economic systems, self-proclaimed Celtic tigers on the Celtic fringes of Europe - are actively re-positioning themselves not only with respect to their former economic and cultural status but also with respect to their future positions as small countries supported by, and contributing to, the European identities fostered by the European Union. Such federalist differences can help to account for the dynamism of late-twentieth century curriculum policy and practice in the United Kingdom.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

The creation of statutory national curricula in England and Wales after 1988 had a number of policy repercussions. Outside England and Wales, there was a continuation of the earlier consensus - that education is a national service delivered locally. In an important sense, this meant that different policy communities have grown in the constituent nations of the United Kingdom. This important difference is revealed in the production of two texts in the 1990s. The first of these is the report of a National Commission on Education that was set up, without government support, in 1991, to 'consider all phases of education and training throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and to identify and examine key issues arising over the next 25 years (*Learning to Succeed*, 1993). The second, and much shorter, text is a comment, by a distinguished English educationist on 'the end of curriculum' (Reid, 1998). In effect, the first group worked despite government, whereas Reid commented that as a 'nationally institutionalised form of education', curriculum is in 'cultural disarray' and, therefore, 'pretty well played out' (p. 499).

In contrast, the greater centralisation of the curriculum policy debate in England and Wales led practitioners to look elsewhere for non-curriculum opportunities to develop their practice (e.g. as action-researchers or reflective practitioners). In effect, these practitioners sought ways to maintain localism, with horizontal rather than vertical models of accountability. Teachers, parents and pupils were held to be educational stakeholders, just as much as central government.

In Scotland, the curriculum policy community reviewed the nation's education provision in a different way. A broader sweep of opinion was involved, for instance, in the creation of the 1050 pages and 110 chapters of *Scottish Education* (Bryce & Humes, 1999), a volume written by teachers, professors and administrators who were asked to provide a 'detailed, informed and critical account of Scottish Education at turn of the century' (p.3). Education was still regarded as a national question.

Thus, the UK curriculum policy arena of the 1990s was suffused with a profound set of tensions surrounding the neo-liberal, free-market reconciliation of unionism and devolution, centralisation and decentralisation. Moreover, this influence persisted after a change in government in 1997, from Conservative to New Labour. Federalism became fragmentation,

leaving cultural and institutional interstices where innovation could be considered and, in some cases, nurtured. One of these innovations - the subject of this part of the chapter - relates to discussion surrounding curriculum frameworks or codes, a discussion that has also linked curriculum codes to different pedagogies.

This new view of curriculum practice emerged, among other things, from two seminal publications: Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1971) and Basil Bernstein's 'On the classification and framing of educational knowledge' (1971). Freire contrasted the 'banking' conception of curriculum - where 'the teacher talks and the student listens - meekly' (p. 46) with a more liberatory perspective (i.e. a different pedagogy) which Freire had used to support the educational claims of 'oppressed' social minorities. Bernstein's paper on classification and framing had three features. First, it linked curriculum to 'formal transmission of educational knowledge'. Second, it identified 'educational knowledge codes' which denoted the 'underlying principles which shape curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation'. And, finally, Bernstein's model proposed that:

> Formal educational knowledge can be considered to be realised through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as the valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realisation of this knowledge on the part of the taught (p. 47).

The historical importance of Bernstein's argument, like that of Freire's 'banking' model, was that it injected a pluralism into curriculum studies. Bernstein's parallel reference, on the one hand, to different codes or message systems and, on the other hand, to differences in social class and control, cleared the way for new curriculum analyses that focused upon the interrelation and interaction of education and politics. Different forms of teaching and learning - embracing different notions of pedagogy, curriculum, didactics and assessment - could be analysed in terms of their historical and political modulations with respect to different social categories (.e.g. gender, race and class).

The net result of Freire's and Bernstein's efforts, particularly in the Anglo-American context, is that curriculum analysis came to be synonymous with pedagogic analysis. Curriculum analysis assumes, following Freire, that there are different pedagogies; it accepts, with Bernstein, that these different pedagogies entail different outcomes; and it recognises that a moral task for the educator - whether parent, teacher, or system administrator - is to deliberate and make choices among different curriculum codes or pedagogies.

A crucial feature of such curriculum analysis is that teaching is as much about *codes* as it is about *methods*. Put another way, a code may be understood as a framework or structure for practice, not a prescription of method. One of the best illustration of this difference between method and code can be found in McLaren's Life in Schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education (3rd edition, 1998). McLaren starts with the assumption that 'pedagogy must be distinguished from teaching' and continues by quoting Roger Simon who, in turn, echoes Basil Bernstein:

> "pedagogy" [refers] to the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose and methods. All of these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in classrooms. Together they organise a view of how a teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others and our physical and social environment. (p. 165)

In the United Kingdom, such curriculum analysis were pioneered by Stenhouse (1975) and Simon (1981) and, more recently, have been explored in Murphy & Gipps (1996) and Mortimore (1999). In these later writings, a clear distinction is made between definite and indefinite conceptions of pedagogy. The definite conception is that pedagogy is *the* science of teaching, and that educational inquiry should be devoted to the search for such a science. The indefinite conception suggests, in contrast, that there are many sciences of teaching that, in their turn, are dependent upon specific teaching conjunctures (viz. ideological, political and economic circumstances).

In many respects, these forms of curriculum and pedagogic analysis stem from Freire's analysis; namely, that they connect to socially-excluded sub-populations of the education system (e.g. black pupils, girls, pupils with special needs). But Freire's thinking, linked to Bernstein's has also been extended towards consideration of the overall pedagogy that is appropriate to European democracies at the start of the twenty-first century. Again, this harks back to the neo-liberal turn in educational thought. Are schooling and to be regulated by up-dated versions of nineteenth century social-darwinism (cf. segregation and survival of the fittest); or are they to be subject to, and framed by, forms of regulation that also respond to the social justice interests of oppressed and ill-represented groups?

Emergent pedagogic identities: the case of gender and education feminism

Forms of curriculum regulation and pedagogical adaptation in the interests of social justice for a particular oppressed group – that of girls – has been a key focus of curriculum analysis and activism in the final few decades of the twentieth century. And nowhere is there more evidence of the relationship between curriculum and social order than in the ways in which feminist pedagogical concerns have been expressed and addressed in the United Kingdom. As we have already suggested and Riddell and Salisbury (2000) have recently confirmed, concepts of educational equity and inclusion have come to mean different things in different parts of the United Kingdom in the post World War II period 'depending on which aspects of social identity are seen as having greater salience' (Riddell & Salisbury, 2000, p. 8). In Wales, the importance of Welsh culture and identity has been reflected in a minority, yet widespread, concern to promote schools with Welsh as the first language of instruction. In Northern Ireland, the focus of equality has been improving the parity between Potestants and Catholics via, for instance, the creation of 'integrated' schools. In Scotland, social class has been the prevailing equity concern; and, in England, the term 'equal opportunities' has been associated primarily with questions of gender, 'race' and ethnicity.

This has meant that those wishing to introduce equity-focused or more inclusive curricula and pedagogical forms have needed not only to address and mesh with governments and their policies, formal and hidden curricula, pedagogy and classroom practice but also to consider different national ethnicities, identities and priorities. Some of the most active and to some degree, most influential individuals and groups which have campaigned for educational equality and inclusion have been feminists. Stone (1994) coined the term 'education feminism' to refer to those seeking to address the specific conditions surrounding the lives of girls and women studying and working in education. In order to mount a challenge to the social and educational order, education feminists have needed to understand political and ideological trends. In the United Kingdom, these have bee shaped, first, by governments between 1945 and 1979 which created and developed the British welfare state according to conventional gender stereotypes and narrowly-held conceptions of nation and identity.

In the case of gender, women were assumed to have greatest responsibility for the family (private sphere), while men were assumed to provide financially for their families through paid work (public sphere). Nationhood during this time was perceived as a unity of interests

between the countries forming the United Kingdom, though England was hegemonic. After 1979, the political scene shifted as the neo-liberal policies of the Thatcher, Major and Blair administrations rejected collectivism and welfarism in favour of individualism and orientation towards the market. Paradoxically for education, such shifts were centrally administered and tightly controlled, yet they also signalled a movement away from the public/private male/female dualism that had hitherto prevailed.

Thus in the 1990s education feminists in the United Kingdom were confronted by three phenomenon. First, they saw collapsing boundaries between the female private sphere and male public sphere largely because of women's increased entry into the workforce at the same time as 'traditional' male jobs in factories and industry began to disappear. Secondly, they came to terms with a series of attempts, starting in the 1970s, to 'modernise' gender relations in education, regardless of which political party was in power. For instance, the requirement for gender equality in education was first enshrined in the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act by a Labour government, yet it was the Conservative administration of Margaret Thatcher which put an end to the sex-divided curriculum with the introduction, in 1988, of a national curriculum which aimed to provide 'entitlement' to all pupils. Thirdly, in pursuing educational equality for girls and women from the late 1970s onwards, education feminism as a politics, epistemology and practice and always as 'a theory in the making', as the bel hooks (1984) termed feminism, needed to be flexible, adaptable and alert in order to capitalise on the contingencies of the present. As pragmatic strategists, feminists fused their demands for equality and autonomy for girls and women working or studying within education, with individualistic 'anyone can make it' ideas of neo-liberalism, and changes in culture, family life and work patterns following de-industrialisation and the growth of the service sector.

How they and others responded to the particular circumstance of the British education system in the post war period is the main focus of this part of the paper, particularly with regard to formal and hidden curricula and regional diversity.

a. Formal and Hidden Curricula

Early gender work in the 1970s and early 1980s in the United Kingdom focused on identifying evidence of female disadvantage and gender discrimination in order to promote the discussion of girls and women's issues in schools (e.g. Cornbleet & Libovitch, 1983). Particular emphasis was placed on educational differences between the sexes: for example girls' lower examination results and their poorer showing in maths, science and technological subjects, compared with boys (e.g. Burton, 1986). The main argument made here was that the nation could not afford to lose half of its intellectual and skills potential because of outdated and discriminatory attitudes towards girls and women.

Feminists were also critical of the forms of knowledge sanctioned by the school, especially the formal school curriculum and the invisibility and/or stereotyping of girls' and women's experience, say in science or history (e.g. Kelly, 1981). They castigated prevailing psychological and sociological theories about gender because of their endorsement of female inferiority and exclusion as 'natural', and even functional to society (Acker, 1994). The point made was that school subjects had been distorted in order to portray British nineteenth-century and twentieth century conceptions of women as domestically-orientated and confined to the sphere of the family and that this was no longer tolerable. Feminists also focused on gender differences in classroom interaction, showing, the different ways in which schools informally disadvantaged and disciplined girls and how such disadvantages could be challenged (e.g. Boaler, 1997).

Education feminism developed different orientations, due to variations in the conceptual, material and cultural perspectives of feminism itself, always critically and dynamically

engaged with the social forces it was attempting to transform. For example in the United Kingdom, *liberal* feminists focused on girls' 'failure' or underachievement in the schooling system, in order to campaign for change (Byrne, 1978). *Radical* feminists challenged the male-orientation of school subjects, the ways in which power is exercised unequally in the classroom, and girls' and women's oppression in class, in the playground and in the staff-room (e.g. Clarricoates, 1978). *Marxist* and *socialist* feminists were more interested in the degree to which education and schooling reproduce sexual inequality alongside and in relation to class inequality, and the complex relationship between the family, schooling and the labour market in maintaining dominant class and gender relationships (e.g. David 1980). *Black* feminists focused on the endemic nature of racism and sexism and their interaction within schooling (e.g. Mirza, 1992). See Weiner (1994) and Mirza (1997) for a fuller discussion of the range of British education feminisms.

As a consequence of a range of political, historical and cultural shifts and new influences, including that of education feminism, schooling in the early 1990s in the United Kingdom, broke with 'the traditions of the old gender order' (Arnot, David & Weiner, 1999, p. 156). One consequence of this change is that boys and young men have begun to be seen as the losers in the examinations market. Emphasis among politicians and, to some extent, among education feminists, switched in the late 1990s away from girls, and towards boys' and young men's responses to the new demands facing them in family life, schooling and the labour market (e.g. Epstein et al, 1998). Indeed, such has been the so-called moral panic about boy's academic under-achievement that recent work on gender in the United Kingdom has overwhelmingly concerned boys and masculinity.

Despite the apparent success of feminists and others in gaining visibility for gender issues in education in the post-World War II period, the 'normal 'subject' of education remains the white, able-bodied male of average or above average attainment and the working-class boy of below average academic attainment, the latter of whom is seen as a threat to the social order. Females, minorities and students with disabilities continue thus to be constituted as the 'other' within schooling and education more widely (Paechter, 1998).

b. National diversity

The previous section has attempted to characterise the intricacies related to development of educational ideas about gender in the United Kingdom; however these have come mainly from England, and from the major conurbations such as London and its surrounding area. When we consider how gender has been treated in other parts of the UK, there are both similarities and differences to the English story. Similarities are to be found in the predominance of interest in gender differences in academic performance and examinations (rather than on gender relations in the classroom, or relating to harassment or violence as in other countries), and more recently, on the better overall performance of girls compared to boys.

However there are also striking differences. For example, conventionally both Scotland and Wales have given a higher priority to the importance of education compared to England. In Scotland which has a separate education system as we have seen, however, this has concentrated on widening access to boys from working-class families, where, in the archetype, 'the sons of the laird, the minister and the ploughman, seated at the same bench, [were] taught the same lessons and disciplined with the same strip of leather' (quoted in Anderson, 1985). While there has been thus an idealisation of the hard-working, gifted 'lad

o' pairts' who could rise to the highest levels in the land, there has been no similar conception of the 'lass o' pairts'. One outcome has been that high achieving girls from Scottish working-class families have tended to be funnelled into the lower levels of the teaching rather than being encouraged to aspire to other intellectual and career horizons (Riddell, 2000). In contrast, Wales, which has been more closely connected to the English educational system, has no such tradition. Yet there are proportionally more girls who leave school without any examination qualifications in Wales than anywhere else in the UK though, according to Salisbury (2000), this has not been accepted or addressed by policy makers or educators.

Northern Ireland has yet another gender profile. Due to the political conflict in recent times, anti-discriminatory legislation has been more stringent than elsewhere in the UK. While mainly devoted to reducing religious divisions, its effects have been important to other social dimensions such as that of gender. Also, boys' relatively poor showing in examinations is not new in Northern Ireland. A longstanding feature has been that Catholic boys leave school with fewer qualifications than any other group of young people. As a consequence, gender has become a more important area of education policy making, evoking greater expectations of success than in other parts of the United Kingdom.

> We would argue that the particular context created in Northern Ireland is one where the government has been obliged to take equity concerns more seriously and within which the expectations of and demands made on government are higher than is the case in Britain (Gallagher, Cormack & Osborne, 2000, p. 81).

To summarise, we can see that education feminism in the United Kingdom has played a part in challenging conventions and inequalities regarding gender, covering a range of issues in the formal and informal curriculum and emphasising the subordination of girls. However what has also become evident is that in the last decade of the twentieth century, the political agenda has been re-interpreted and to some extent subverted by patriarchal centralism as well as through cultural and economic priorities that are regional.

Emergent pedagogic discourses: the school effectiveness cause

A significant movement in the United Kingdom, which is the focus of this section of the chapter, has avoided attention to the pluralism of curriculum codes. The school effectiveness cause has captured not only the enthusiasm of illustrious educational researchers but also of senior policy-makers and politicians across the political spectrum. Drawing on management and systems theory, and complex statistics, school effectiveness studies have sought to establish that 'school matters' and that 'schools can make a difference'. This stance was partly a response to longstanding research evidence from the 1950s onwards in the UK and elsewhere (e.g US research published in Coleman et al, 1966) which showed that school variables made little difference to school outcomes when matched against students' social class and ethnic background. The belief that 'education cannot compensate for society' (Bernstein, 1970) sustained, for several decades, the assumption that education systems on general, and schools and teachers in particular, are hapless and helpless dupes in a capitalist project of creating winners and losers.

The view that teacher were powerlessness to influence their students' destiny was challenged, among others, by school effectiveness researchers. Encouraged by a study suggesting that there was a 'causal' relationship between school process and children's progress (Rutter et al, 1979), subsequent studies sought to extend and refine this work. This, for many, was a welcome departure. According to Thrupp (1999):

> After the pessimism that characterised the research of the1970s, the popular appeal of SER [school effectiveness research] rested largely on its central message – 'schools *can* make a difference' to speak in an optimistic and 'commonsense' way to the needs of educators and policy makers....SER soon became an international success story with its own 'congress' membership, journal.... and annual conference circuit. It rapidly took on the trappings of a movement complete with almost religious overtones (Thrupp, 1999, p. 17).

In the 1990s when educational change (both neo-conservative and neo-liberal) was on the political agenda, the SER movement's claimed ability to identify schools that were 'effective' in achieving set targets relating to specific assessments and examinations, was, not surprisingly, very attractive to policymakers and politicians. School effectiveness advocates were successful in gaining public acceptance and influencing state agencies. Effectiveness discourses became predominant. As advocates joined major policy-making bodies in England and Wales (e.g. the Teacher Training Agency, the Department for Education, and the Office for Standards in Education), school effectiveness discourses began to suffuse the work of school inspections, in-service courses and, not least, research and development funding.

Nevertheless, school effectiveness researchers were sometimes candid about their inability to realise the more ambitious claims of the SER movement and also about their inability to harness school effectiveness with school improvement - that is, in transforming so-called 'failing' or 'bad' schools into more 'effective' or 'good' schools. As two senior advocates of school effectiveness practices admitted.

> Little is known about so-called 'ineffective' schools in contrast to the work on effectiveness. Moreover much less is known about how to effect change in schools. More research is needed on the context specificity and generalisability of results. And of course the controversial topic on what can be learnt from international comparisons remains a little explored although increasingly important theme (Sammons & Reynolds, 1997)

In what ways did the school effectiveness movement 'order' curricula? How did it help to shape the social order of schooling and its pupils or 'clients'? Its main instrument was a taxonomy of up to 11 characteristics of school effectiveness that, explicitly or implicitly, were advanced with 'almost algorithmic certainty' (Morley and Rassool, 1999, p.122) as a basis uppon which to prepare for school inspections. These effectiveness characteristics that were assumed to be associated with effective schooling were: professional leadership; shared vision and goals; a learning environment (e.g. orderly and attractive); concentration on teaching and learning (e.g. academic emphasis); purposeful teaching (e.g. clear, structured); high expectations; positive reinforcement (e.g. fair discipline, feedback); monitoring of progress; identification of pupils' rights and responsibilities (e.g. raising esteem, control of work); home/ school partnership; and a learning organisation (school-based staff development). Forced on an often unwilling, reform-tired and sceptical teaching force, these characteristics were deemed as absolutely central to the development of an effective school.

Critics, however, suggested that such an interpretation 'bleaches context from analytic frame' (Slee & Weiner, 1998, p. 5), projecting the image of a universal subject:

> Student, teachers and headteachers are a homogenised, ungendered, non-racialised or social classed group. They are disembodied players in a larger project....The 'child' has become an undifferentiated cognitive unit, and the teacher a disembodied

intermediary' (Morley and Rassool, 1999, p. 122).

Few concessions were provided, for example, in lower resourced schools in the poorer urban areas which were thus inevitably, at the bottom of any 'effectiveness' or examination league table. It was a league-table discourse that no-one in education in the UK could avoid or remain outside.

Whilst considerable success was claimed by those advocating school effectiveness strategies, for example, regarding striking improvements in previously 'failing' schools and in raising, academic standards generally, the impact on schools and institutions in poorer areas seemed less certain. Rea and Weiner (1998), writing from the perspective of those working in such institutions, identified the way in which 'success' and 'failure' were measured as crucial to the ranking of schools. Staff ands pupils could *never be good enough.* They were rendered demoralised and powerless. Teachers and schools in poorer or inner city areas were unable to frame educational values according to the needs of their pupils and the surrounding community. Nor were they able to challenge the dominant shift in educational values which no longer met their school and community needs. Rather they were confronted with a pathologisation of themselves and all those living and teaching in poor urban areas.

It cannot be denied that many in the school effectiveness movement have been devoted to making schools better place in which children can flourish. But the pressure to find a simple solution to schooling's many complexities and ills, has led them into murky politised territory, escape from which is difficult. A discourse of improvement and success which promises pedagogical certainty in a climate of uncertainty and instability will fail, leaving behind the kind of rejection and ignominy heaped on other so-called failing strategies and organisations.

Conclusion: subjects, not subjects

This chapter has discussed recent curriculum deliberation in the United Kingdom, largely a product of and/or reaction to the centralist, neo-liberal, free-market policies of the 1980s and beyond. It focuses more upon human subjects than school subjects in its consideration of curricula as pathways through schooling, themselves also pathways through life. Thus, it regards curriculum practice and curriculum research as about the reconciliation of knowledge and pathways – about 'what should they know?' and 'what should they become?'. In the process, it identifies several specific processes that have animated and will continue to animate curriculum research in the United Kingdom into the twenty-first century. These are first, the impact on curricula and pedagogy of devolution, federalism and globalism in the United Kingdom; secondly, the breakthrough texts of Freire and Bernstein in linking curriculum and pedagogy to the social and educational order, and in offering the possibility of pedagogical plurality; and thirdly, two educational movements of late modernity - educational feminism and school effectiveness research - which have sought, in different ways, to challenge both curriculum order and social order. The extent to which the balanced is tipped towards the human subject and away from subject-knowledge in forthcoming curriculum considerations (or vice versa) will be important, we suggest, for the curriculum analysts and researchers of the future.

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