should be avoided in educational planning.

This fifth edition, then, while yielding no ground in relation to the values and principles which have been consistently advocated since 1977 by all four of its antecedents, must continue to advocate the need for changes not only in emphasis but also in conception, and for continued discussion of all aspects of Curriculum Studies.

The concern continues to be to identify the key questions which the student of curriculum and the responsible professional educator must address in the current social and political context. And it is encouraging to know that the number of people who are still interested in addressing them is sufficient to warrant a fifth edition of a book which, unlike many others, will continue to affirm the values and principles which prompted its first publication twenty-seven years ago.

'The Curriculum:
Theory and Practice'

A V Kelly

2004

1
The Curriculum and the Study of the Curriculum

It is stating the obvious to assert that education has changed drastically in the last twenty or thirty years. Both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere many important modifications have been made to all aspects of the education system. Nor is it surprising that the nature and structure of our education system should have been changing so extensively at a time when we have been experiencing social change of an equally dramatic kind, much of it prompted by rapid technological advance. The education system is a social institution which should be expected to change along with other such institutions. It would be more surprising, not to say disturbing, if the education system were to stand still while all else changed. And it is the need to ensure that it continues to develop, and that it responds appropriately not only to other changes in society but also to our increasing understanding of the educational process itself, which is, or should be, the central concern of educational studies and especially of Curriculum Studies.

One feature that has characterized the curriculum change of recent years is the increased incidence of planning and preparation in curriculum development. Most of the curriculum change that we saw in the past was of a kind best described as unplanned 'drift' (Hoyle, 1969a). Over the last three decades or more, however, educationists have begun to see the need for planned innovation, to recognize that if educational change is to keep pace with and match changes in society, if it is at the same time to maintain also those standards and values which may be seen as transcending particular times and particular societies, and if it is to respond to that increased understanding of education and curriculum which has come from recent work in the field of Curriculum Studies, it must be deliberately managed rather than merely left to happen. To recognize this is not, of course, to be committed to a totally revolutionary approach to curriculum development. The advantages of evolution over revolution are at least as evident in education as elsewhere. It is, however, to acknowledge that the process of evolution can be smoother, quicker and more effective, if it is not left to chance but implemented according to carefully thought-out strategies.

Recent experience, especially in England and Wales, has reinforced the case for curriculum evolution rather than revolution. For the shift we have seen

towards central political control of the school curriculum has sometimes been revolutionary in its effect, so that it has often been far from smooth and thus less effective than it might have been.

One reason for this has been that there has been a failure to recognize that the changes which have occurred in society have been social, moral and political as well as, indeed as a consequence of, technological and economic developments. The natural evolution of the curriculum was reflecting this, especially in terms of attempts to overcome privilege and inequality and to move towards a more truly egalitarian system. Direct political intervention, by concentrating on the economic functions of the educational system, has largely ignored that dimension of educational provision along with its responsibility for promoting the personal development of the young, thus activating all of the consequences which that omission has for the quality of life in society.

It has also led to a technicist approach to the study of education by ignoring all or most of the insights which had been derived from explorations which had sought to go beyond concerns of mere methodology, to ask the 'why' questions concerning educational provision as well as those restricted to the 'how'. These insights have thus been placed at risk, and it is the central concern of this book, as has already been pointed out, to regain those insights and to reaffirm this kind of study of education and curriculum.

It is the aim of this chapter, then, to identify what is involved in this, to outline some of the essential ingredients both of the practice of curriculum planning and development and the study of curriculum. All or most of these points will be examined in greater detail in the chapters that follow, but an overall framework, a rationale, a cognitive map offered at the outset may help to establish and maintain the interrelationship of the many factors involved in curriculum planning.

What is the curriculum?

The first need is to achieve some clarity over what we are to understand by the term 'curriculum'. It is a term which is used with several meanings and a number of different definitions of it have been offered, so that it is important that we establish at the beginning what it should be taken to signify throughout this book, and, perhaps more importantly, what it should *not* be taken to mean.

The educational curriculum

From much of what follows in this book it will be clear that the term 'curriculum' can be, and is, used, for many different kinds of programme of teaching and instruction. Indeed, as we shall see, quite often this leads to a limited concept of the curriculum, defined in terms of what teaching and instruction is to be offered and sometimes also what its purposes, its objectives, are. Hence

we see statements of the curriculum for the teaching of the most basic courses in many different contexts. And we shall also see that much of the advice which has been offered for curriculum planning is effective only at the most simplistic levels, for teaching of a largely unsphisticated and usually unproblematic kind.

For this kind of definition fails to take account of the educational or moral dimensions of the school curriculum. To take an extreme view, this kind of model could be used to help us plan a curriculum which most people would regard as being quite immoral – to limit the pupil's scope for criticism, for example, to ensure political conformity and obedience or even to promote racist or religious intolerance.

Throughout this book, however, the concern will be with what we will be advocating as the *educational* curriculum. The focus will be not just on how one might plan any kind of curriculum, but on what it is that will ensure that our curriculum is justifiable in *educational* terms.

It is important, therefore, that at the outset we briefly define what we will mean by the term 'educational', because in all the many different dimensions of the curriculum which we will be exploring the concern will be to identify those which are acceptable educationally, i.e. those which satisfy our educational criteria, and, perhaps more importantly, those which do not.

It is not the intention here, or at any stage, to debate these criteria in detail. It is important, however, that they be clearly stated. There is a sense in which the adjective 'educational' is as problematic as the adjective 'moral'; indeed, this is because the educational principles we are propounding are fundamentally moral principles, so that it must be accepted that they must be open to debate. There is also a sense, however, in which, if we accept that the curriculum we are discussing is a curriculum for education in a democratic society, its problematic nature, along with that of its moral base, begins to evaporate or at least to become less complex.

For few would wish to argue – at least openly – with the claim that, within a democratic society, an educational curriculum at all levels should be concerned to provide a liberating experience by focusing on such things as the promotion of freedom and independence of thought, of social and political empowerment, of respect for the freedom of others, of an acceptance of variety of opinion, and of the enrichment of the life of every individual in that society, regardless of class, race or creed.

Conversely, it is also the case that few would be prepared to argue – again at least openly – against the claim that the opposites of these principles have no place in an educational curriculum. Some of them, such as, for example, the promotion of intolerance, must be positively excluded from it. Others, however, such as that vocational focus which has become increasingly in evidence in recent years, while not meriting exclusion from the curriculum, must be recognized as not fitting appropriately with this definition of education, so

that, to the extent that the emphasis of the school curriculum is on its vocational concerns and dimensions, to that extent it will fail to meet our criteria for an educational curriculum.

The rest of this book will be concerned to discuss and explore many dimensions of curriculum from this kind of educational perspective and to identify in all of these dimensions those aspects of them which satisfy these educational principles and those which do not.

With this in mind, there are several important aspects of the curriculum which we should immediately note.

The total curriculum

It will be helpful if, from the start, we distinguish the use of the word to denote the content of a particular subject or area of study from the use of it to refer to the total programme of an educational institution. Many people still equate a curriculum with a syllabus and thus limit their planning to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit or a list of the subjects to be taught or both. The inadequacies of this view of curriculum as content will be explored more fully in Chapters 2 and 3. It will be immediately clear, however, that this kind of definition of curriculum is limiting in more than one way and that it is likely to hamper rather than to assist the planning of curriculum change and development. Indeed, some of the inadequacies of previous attempts at curriculum planning can be attributed to the fact that it has tended to proceed in a rather piecemeal way within subjects rather than according to any overall rationale.

This dimension of curriculum development is, of course, important, but it is the rationale of the total curriculum that must have priority. 'Schools should plan their curriculum as a whole. The curriculum offered by a school, and the curriculum received by individual pupils, should not be simply a collection of separate subjects' (DES, 1981:12). At the very least, the total curriculum must be accorded prior consideration, and a major task that currently faces teachers and curriculum planners is to work out a basis on which some total scheme can be built.

Any definition of curriculum, if it is to be practically effective and productive, must offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to 'teach' or transmit or 'deliver'. It must go far beyond this to an explanation, and indeed a justification, of the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to such knowledge and such subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have, on its recipients – indeed it is from these deeper concerns, as we saw in the previous section, that any curriculum planning worthy of the name must start.

These wider concerns will be the focus of our discussions in this book, and we will understand by the term 'curriculum' the overall rationale for any educational programme. Much of what is said about curriculum development will,

of course, be of relevance to the problems of developments within individual subject areas, but the prime concern must be with the totality.

The 'hidden' curriculum

A further question that needs to be resolved is whether we are to place any limit on the kinds of school activity that we will allow to count as part of the curriculum when it is defined in this way.

For example, some educationists speak of the 'hidden curriculum', by which they mean those things which pupils learn at school because of the way in which the work of the school is planned and organized, and through the materials provided, but which are not in themselves overtly included in the planning or even in the consciousness of those responsible for the school arrangements. Social roles, for example, are learnt in this way, it is claimed, as are sex roles and attitudes to many other aspects of living. Implicit in any set of arrangements are the attitudes and values of those who create them, and these will be communicated to pupils in this accidental and perhaps even sinister way. This factor is of course of particular significance when the curriculum is planned and imposed by government.

Some would argue of course that the values implicit in the arrangements made by schools for their pupils are quite clearly in the consciousness of teachers and planners, again especially when the planners are politicians, and are equally clearly accepted by them as part of what pupils should learn in school, even though they are not overtly recognized by the pupils themselves. In other words, those who design curricula deliberately plan the schools' 'expressive culture'. If this is the case, then, the curriculum is 'hidden' only to or from the pupils, and the values to be learnt clearly form a part of what is planned for pupils. They must, therefore, be accepted as fully a part of the curriculum, and most especially as an important focus for the kind of study of curriculum with which we are concerned here, not least because important questions must be asked concerning the legitimacy of such practices.

Others, however, take a less definite and perhaps less cynical line on this but wish nevertheless to insist that teachers do have a responsibility here. They accept that some of the values and attitudes learnt via the hidden curriculum are not directly intended by teachers, but believe that, since these things are being learnt as a by-product of what is planned and of the materials provided, teachers should be aware of and accept responsibility for what is going on, for what their pupils are learning in this unplanned way. It is this view which is at the heart of attempts to eliminate implicit racism and sexism from the experiences children receive at school.

It is because of the all-pervasive nature of such experiences and hidden forms of learning, however, and also because of the assumed impossibility of eliminating such unplanned, and thus uncontrolled, learning, that some theorists,

such as Ivan Illich (1971), have recommended a 'deschooling' of society and have claimed that all forms of organized schooling must involve the imposition of the values implicit in the selection of the content of such schooling on its recipients, and thus constitute an invidious form of social and political control through the distribution of knowledge. This is an important point and one to which we shall return in Chapter 2. What it suggests which is of importance here, however, is that, if we are not to go to the lengths of abolishing schooling altogether, we cannot merely ignore these hidden aspects of the school curriculum, and certainly must not adopt a definition of curriculum which excludes them from all critical consideration. Rather our definition must embrace all the learning that goes on in schools whether it is expressly planned and intended or is a by-product of our planning and/or practice. For it is difficult to exonerate teachers completely from responsibility for these implicit forms of learning. Rather they need to be sensitized to them and helped to recognize and identify the hidden implications of some of the materials and the experiences they offer their pupils.

The planned curriculum and the received curriculum

Much the same point emerges when we consider the distinction which has sometimes been made between the official curriculum and the actual curriculum, or between the planned curriculum and the received curriculum. By the official or planned curriculum is meant what is laid down in syllabuses, prospectuses and so on; the actual or received curriculum is the reality of the pupils' experience. The difference between them may be conscious or unconscious, the cause of any mismatch being either a deliberate attempt by the teachers or others to deceive, to make what they offer appear more attractive than it really is, or merely the fact that, since teachers and pupils are human, the realities of any course will never fully match up to the hopes and intentions of those who have planned it.

Both of these distinctions are important and we would be foolish to go very far in our examination of the curriculum without acknowledging both the gaps that must inevitably exist between theory and practice and the predilection of some teachers, and more especially national planners, for elaborate 'packaging' of their wares.

It becomes even more important, then, that we should not adopt a definition of curriculum which confines or restricts us to considerations only of that which is planned. What is actually received by pupils must be an equally important, or even more important concern, so that the actual or received curriculum must be seen as the teacher's or planner's responsibility every bit as much as the 'hidden' curriculum.

Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that Curriculum Studies must ultimately be concerned with the relationship between these two views of the

curriculum, between intention and reality, and, indeed, with closing the gap between them, if it is to succeed in linking the theory and the practice of the curriculum (Stenhouse, 1975).

The formal curriculum and the informal curriculum

Lastly, we must also recognize the distinction that is often drawn between the 'formal' curriculum and the 'informal' curriculum, between the formal activities for which the timetable of the school allocates specific periods of teaching time and those many informal activities that go on, usually on a voluntary basis, at lunch-times, after school hours, at weekends or during holidays. These latter activities – sports, clubs, societies, school journeys and the like – are often called 'extracurricular' activities and this suggests that they should be seen as separate from, as over and above the curriculum itself.

The reasons for this, however, are difficult to discern. For activities of this kind are usually regarded as having as much educational validity and point as any of the formal arrangements of the school. Indeed, some would even argue that in certain cases they have more point than many such arrangements. It was for this reason that the Newsom Report (CACE, 1963:para.135)) recommended that they 'ought to be recognized as an integral part of the total educational programme' and that to this end they be included in the formal timetable of an extended day. And the inclusion of this kind of activity in the formal provision made by the school has also been a major feature of the philosophy of many of those concerned with the development of community schools (Cooksey, 1972, 1976a, 1976b).

Again, it would seem that, if we are concerned with curriculum planning, it would be foolish to omit by our definition of the curriculum a whole range of activities which teachers plan and execute with deliberate reasons and intentions. In looking at curriculum planning, therefore, there would appear to be nothing to be gained from leaving out of consideration any planned activity. It is for this reason that John Kerr (1968:16) defined the curriculum as 'all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school'. Such a definition provides us with a basis for planning all the organized activities of a school.

However, there are real difficulties in attempting to operate with a definition of curriculum which excludes from consideration the unplanned effects of teacher activity, as the notions of the 'hidden' and the 'actual' or 'received' curriculum indicate. There are more aspects to curriculum than are dreamed of in the philosophy of most teachers, and certainly of most politicians, and a definition of curriculum which confines its scope to what teachers, or politicians, actually plan will omit many of those important dimensions of curriculum studies we identified earlier. We need a definition which will embrace at least four major dimensions of educational planning and practice: the intentions of

the planners, the procedures adopted for the implementation of those intentions, the actual experiences of the pupils resulting from the teachers' direct attempts to carry out their or the planners' intentions, and the 'hidden' learning that occurs as a by-product of the organization of the curriculum, and, indeed, of the school.

The problems of definition are thus serious and complex and the chapters which follow will reveal that in planning for curriculum change and development we need to be aware of all aspects and dimensions of the educational experiences which pupils have during any period of formal education, and with their underlying principles and rationale. The definition adopted here, therefore, is that the curriculum is the totality of the experiences the pupil has as a result of the provision made.

If we take this broad definition of curriculum as our starting point, then, it becomes possible to identify the kinds of issue which the study of curriculum must address – the issues which subsequent chapters will explore in greater detail.

Before we do that, however, there is a further preliminary point which must be made. For a major premise of what follows is that in all successful curriculum development and implementation the teacher is the crucial element. And we must pause for an explanation of why this stance has been adopted.

The centrality of the teacher

It must first be stressed that all that is said about curriculum planning and development in this book applies as much to the individual teacher in the preparation of his or her individual 'lessons' or other programmes of work with children as it does to those who find themselves charged with curriculum development at school, local authority or even national level.

A major reason for stressing this is not merely to remind teachers of the degree of responsibility they must accept for their own professional work, nor only to emphasize their consequent need for the kinds of understanding of curriculum which this book is seeking to provide; it is, perhaps more importantly, because of the 'make or break' role that teachers have in all curricular activities, even in relation to those which originate outside their schools.

'Teacher-proofing' does not work

There have been many attempts over the last three or four decades to bring about curriculum change, most notably those sponsored by the Schools Council during its lifetime, some of the later work of the Assessment of Performance Unit and, most recently, the decision to change the curricula of all schools to fit the demands of the new National Curriculum. All these strategies for external manipulation of the curriculum we shall explore in greater detail in later chapters.

The most important point to be noted here, however, is what we have learned from the experience of these projects and activities about the role of the individual teacher in curriculum change and development. We must especially note the failure of all attempts by the Schools Council to produce 'teacher-proof' packages – schemes of work, versions of curriculum, supporting materials and so on of a kind which teachers would accept, use and apply in the precise form that the central planners had in mind. In every case, teachers adapted and used what they were offered in their own ways and for their own purposes. Some project directors were inclined to throw up their hands in despair at this phenomenon, at what they saw, and sometimes described, as 'cannibalism'. Others went along with it eventually and built into their schemes proper forms of allowance for this kind of personal and local adaptation by teachers. The Schools Council itself, just before its demise, adopted a policy of supporting school-based curriculum developments, assisting teachers and groups of teachers with the process of developing their own curricula rather than attempting to 'sell' them prepackaged programmes which might not be geared appropriately to the specific needs of the individual school. And some of the later work of the Assessment of Performance Unit was concerned much more with offering its findings to teachers, while leaving it to them to decide whether and how they might use these in their own contexts, than with attempts at imposing the same solutions to teaching problems on all (Kelly, 1987). In short, there has come a growing awareness that each school is unique and that its curricular needs are thus largely idiosyncratic.

The implications of this kind of experience for the implementation of forms of centralized control such as the National Curriculum are interesting and will be explored more fully later. We have here another example of the failure or the refusal of the architects of these policies to take any account or cognizance of the substantial experience and findings of earlier research.

The teacher's 'make or break' role

What we must note here, however, is that the teachers have a 'make or break' role in any curriculum innovation. Teachers have been known to sabotage attempts at change; certainly it is clear that such attempts can succeed only when the teachers concerned are committed to them and, especially, when they understand, as well as accept, their underlying principles. The practice of education cannot be a mechanical, largely mindless activity; it requires constant decisions and judgements by the teacher, and these he or she cannot make properly without fully appreciating and accepting the underlying rationale of any activity. Teaching, interpreted in a purely technicist sense, may be undertaken in a mechanistic manner. If, however, our concern is with *education*, in the full sense, as we have indicated that it is, much more than this is required, since education is essentially an interactive process. 'The building block is the

moral purpose of the *individual* teacher. Scratch a good teacher and you will find a moral purpose' (Fullan, 1993:10). Take away that moral and educational purpose, and you have a teaching machine.

Practically, every piece of serious and objective research into what happens in classrooms has focused on the teacher as the central figure and his/her competence as the crucial factor in the quality of the educational experiences provided for the pupils. And most pupils and ex-pupils will corroborate this – 'I like (liked) subject "x" or my second year in Junior school, because it was taught by Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms "y"'.

The quality of any *educational* experience, then, will depend to a very large extent on the individual teacher responsible for it; and any attempt at controlling the curriculum from the outside which does not recognize that must be doomed to failure, or at best to triviality. An alternative strategy for ensuring compliance to external requirements is of course to introduce stringent measures for controlling the activities of teachers, through schemes of pupil assessment, regular inspections, teacher appraisal and accountability. Indeed, one can reasonably view the activities of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England and Wales as those of a kind of 'thought-police' designed to prevent teachers from indulging in acts of 'sabotage' by acting on their own professional judgements. This aspect of current policies we must also consider later. Such a strategy, however, cannot ensure commitment or understanding; and obedience to authority on the part of teachers may not be the best basis for the practice of education as we are viewing it here, although it may well be adequate if the concern goes no further than teaching or instruction.

The corollary of this is that it becomes even more important for teachers to work at developing the kind of broader understanding of curricular provision which a study of the curriculum at the level we are advocating should bring. Indeed, it might be argued that there is a major professional obligation on them to do so, since this is the only route to effective practice. Hence, we have seen the emergence of concepts such as that of 'the teacher as researcher' (Stenhouse, 1975) and of 'action research' as a key element in continous professional development.

On the other hand, increased centralized control of teachers' work has had the effect of discouraging this kind of professional activity on the part of teachers. It has always been important, even when we acknowledge the central role of the teacher in education, not to lose sight of the fact that he or she is operating in a context hedged about with many constraints and pressures, social and political as well as physical and organizational. No curriculum planning of any kind can go on in a vacuum; it must take place in an environment which is prey to pressures and constraints of many kinds.

Recent developments, however, most notably the constraints imposed on teachers in England and Wales by the statutory requirements of the 1988 Education Act, have converted these indirect constraints into direct control.

The more direct influences of central government on the school curriculum have been slowly converted from influence to intervention and from intervention to direct control. The most important effect of this is that teachers now have little or no say in the official curriculum of the nation's schools, so that they are now expected to operate a curriculum which has been imposed upon them from without and to implement curricular policies over whose framing they have had little or no influence.

This latter point raises some interesting issues in the light of what we said earlier about the need for teachers to be committed to the curricular provision they are making if they are to make it properly and effectively. One of the strengths of the previous system was that most teachers did believe in what they were doing, or at least enjoyed a good deal of scope to make of it something they could believe in. No doubt there will be many who will believe in what they are now required to do. But for those who do not there are clearly important problems to be faced. At a more theoretical level, these are problems which highlight the distinction we referred to earlier in this chapter between the official and the actual curriculum, between the intention and the reality, between theory and practice. They also resurrect those difficulties we have also noted which arise from earlier attempts to manipulate teachers by remote control or to create teacher-proof curricula.

There is thus every discouragement in the present political climate for teachers who wish to view their professionalism in 'extended' terms and to pursue a study of curricular issues at levels beyond that of the mere 'delivery' of their subject knowledge. Indeed, the processes they are subject to have been described by many commentators as processes of deprofessionalization. If, however, their role is central, and if, further, the effective fulfilment of that role is dependent on a breadth of understanding of curriculum, the implications of the loss, or the suppression, of these insights are extremely serious for the long-term quality of educational provision.

Key aspects of Curriculum Studies

Now that we have established and explained the definition of 'curriculum' and the view of the role of the teacher within it which provide the major premises of the discussion which follows, we can identify briefly the broad issues which the rest of the book will seek to address in greater detail. All of these will be seen to reflect insights which have been gained from curriculum change, taken in its broadest sense, and reflection on that change. And all of them will be seen to be at risk in the current political climate.

Strategies for curriculum change and control

One family of issues we must concern ourselves with is that of the lessons

which have been learned from the many attempts which have been made to change the curriculum.

We have just noted that one of those lessons has been that the teacher's role is central to the effectiveness of any attempt at curriculum change or development. The converse of this is what we have also learned concerning the role, effectiveness and, indeed, the value of national agencies for curriculum development and change. In particular, as we have seen, the work of the Schools Council and other national agencies of change in England and Wales taught us much about how such bodies, external to the schools themselves, might most effectively promote change and development within the schools – especially, as we have also seen, by supporting developments within rather than seeking to impose change from without. These are lessons which those responsible for the implementation of the National Curriculum are currently relearning, or, in their case, learning for the first time. The notion that all curriculum development is teacher development was first promulgated several decades ago (Stenhouse, 1975), and, indeed, had become almost a truism until it was rejected in favour of more coercive methods.

Those coercive methods, in addition to including the application of sanctions of various kinds, have also embraced more subtle strategies of change. We will see, for example, how effectively rhetoric, metaphor and the control of discourse generally have been used to bring about the changes which government has sought to impose on the school curriculum. And, at a more readily discernible level, we can recognize how testing and inspections have been employed as part of the same kind of coercive strategy.

This takes us to a second major family of issues the student of curriculum must address.

Assessment, evaluation, appraisal and accountability

Among the many insights into the workings of curriculum which emerged from the research and studies of the 1970s and 1980s were many in the related areas of pupil assessment, curriculum evaluation and, perhaps to a lesser extent, teacher appraisal. There was significant development both in techniques (for example the introduction of some highly sophisticated forms of pupil assessment) and in our understanding of the effects and implications of the adoption of particular forms and approaches (for example the ideas of self-evaluation and action research).

However, that move towards direct political control of the school curriculum which we have just noted has been accompanied by a major shift in the view taken of the purposes of these related elements of educational policy and practice and, as a consequence, in the procedures adopted to achieve those purposes.

For pupil assessment, curriculum evaluation, teacher appraisal and, indeed, school inspections have come to be regarded, and used, as key instruments in

the establishment of direct political control, of combating that centrality of the teacher we have also just noted and of imposing a narrow and bureaucratic form of teacher accountability. We have experienced an era of 'assessment-led educational reform' (Hargreaves, 1989:99).

Thus sophisticated forms of pupil assessment have given way to regular, and somewhat simplistic, tests, marking a shift from a formative and diagnostic function to a largely summative one, designed to provide figures for 'league tables' rather than to offer information about individual pupils which might guide the planning of their future provision, and using graded tests rather than pupil profiling (Hargreaves, 1989). The focus of evaluation has moved from a concern with the value of what is being offered to a concentration on the effectiveness of its 'delivery'. And teachers and schools are appraised also in terms of the effectiveness of their 'delivery' of whatever is dictated rather than in relation to the wider concerns of education.

This does not, however, mean that there is no longer a need for teachers to familiarize themselves with the issues and the techniques of assessment and evaluation. Teachers will continue to wish to assess their pupils in order to make adequate provision for them and to evaluate their own work with the same purposes in mind; and they will still need quite sophisticated techniques and understandings in order to do so. The insights gained in this area too, therefore, need to be maintained. One hopes also that, even with little direct power to bring about change themselves, they will wish to continue to evaluate the official policies and practices, if only to assert their professionalism and to maintain that curriculum debate we are suggesting is becoming more rather than less important in the new era.

This, then is another major area we will need to explore in greater detail later in this book.

The politicization of curriculum

The uses and abuses of assessment and evaluation which we have just touched upon alert us to a further major area which the student of curriculum cannot afford to ignore, especially in the current social and political climate. For, as we have already noted, the flavour of the curriculum debate, as it has been conducted over the years which have passed since the publication of the first edition of this book, has become increasingly and strongly political.

The placing of the school curriculum in the hands of a series of politically motivated quangos, which reconstruct themselves – or, at least, rename themselves – almost annually, along with their use and abuse of devices such as assessment and inspections to achieve what are fundamentally political goals, has not only reinforced the need for continued and careful study of all of these aspects of curriculum; it has also called for a focussing of attention on this process of politicization itself.

We have long been familiar with the importance of education in the achievement of political goals. Indeed, it was the first exponent of education theory, Plato himself, who drew our attention to this and recognized educational provision as the key to achieving the kind of society he wished to see established. His advice has not gone unheeded by those engaged in social engineering of many forms since that time, most notably those seeking to establish and maintain social control in totalitarian societies – fascist Spain, for example, Nazi Germany and communist Russia.

The appropriateness of employing similar techniques in societies which purport to be democratic, however, demands to be explored. And so, it is no surprise to discover that the last decade or so has seen the appearance of a plethora of books and articles in the educational journals which have set about precisely this kind of exploration.

Hence, no attempt to fuel the curriculum debate at the beginning of the third millenium can ignore this crucial dimension of that debate. Indeed, we shall see, as perhaps we have seen already, that it is an area of concern which now permeates discussion of all other aspects of the study of curriculum.

Curriculum plannning

Finally, we must note another crucial theme which underpins all of these issues – a series of fundamental questions about human knowledge and the implications of these for the ways in which we set about planning the school curriculum.

The content of what we expect children to learn during their schooling is clearly a crucial element in curriculum planning, whatever view we take of education, curriculum or, indeed, knowledge itself. There are important questions to be addressed, however, concerning how the knowledge content of a curriculum relates to its other dimensions. Indeed, an important first step in any study of curriculum is the recognition that other dimensions exist. For it has too often been assumed, again notably by the architects of the National Curriculum for England and Wales, that to plan a curriculum is merely to outline the knowledge content to be 'delivered' and imbibed.

Tyler's four questions

It has been suggested (Tyler, 1949) that the curriculum has to be seen as consisting of four elements, and curriculum planning, therefore, as having four dimensions: objectives, content or subject matter, methods or procedures and evaluation. In short, the claim is that we must distinguish in our curriculum planning what we are hoping to achieve, the ground we are planning to cover in order to achieve it, the kinds of activity and methods that we consider likely to be most effective in helping us towards our goals and the devices we will use to evaluate what we have done. Tyler's own way of putting this point is to

suggest that there are 'four fundamental questions which must be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instruction' (1949:i). These he lists as:

1 What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2 What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3 How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4 How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

This analysis, then, if taken just as it stands, would give us a very simple model for curriculum planning, a linear model which requires us to specify our objectives, to plan the content and the methods which will lead us towards them and, finally, to endeavour to measure the extent of our success. It is, however, too simple a model for many reasons, as we shall see when we discuss the issue more fully later in this book.

What we must note here, however, is that rather than offering us a single, and simple, model for curriculum planning, Tyler's work can be seen as having alerted us to the possibility of adopting any of several planning models. For, if a curriculum can, or must, be viewed in terms of these four elements, different planning models will emerge according to the ways in which we might permutate those elements, the priorities we might give to them and the choice of focus we might adopt.

We have already noted that some planners see curriculum content as central, so that the acquisition of that content by pupils becomes the central purpose of the curriculum, the organization becomes a matter solely of effectiveness of 'delivery' and evaluation is focussed on the degree of attainment achieved by the pupils.

Tyler's own concern, however, as we have just noted, was with the purposes of the curriculum, so that he is usually seen as one of the founding fathers of the 'aims-and-objectives' model of curriculum planning. Within that model, the educational purposes of the curriculum take pride of place, content is selected not for its own sake but for its presumed efficacy at enabling us to achieve those purposes, organization is similarly designed with these objectives in mind, and evaluation is framed so as to assess how far those objectives have been achieved.

Yet a third model has emerged more recently, as some have placed the emphasis on the organization of the educational experiences. This model has been described as a 'process' model (Stenhouse, 1975) or as a 'developmental' model (Blenkin and Kelly, 1987, 1996). With this model, the planner begins from a concept of education as a series of developmental processes which the curriculum should be designed to promote. The selection of both content and methods or procedures is made with the promotion of these developmental processes as the central concern. And evaluation is focused both on the suitability of the content and procedures selected and on an assessment of the development which may, or may not, have occurred.

Ideologies and curriculum planning

Thus we can immediately see that curriculum planning is not the simple matter some would have us believe. For it must begin with the crucial choice of the most appropriate planning model for the work we have in mind. Furthermore, it must be accompanied by a justification of that choice. For it is not acceptable that we should plan something as important as a curriculum, at whatever level, by simply plucking a planning model out of the air without serious consideration of all possible alternatives.

This last point takes us into an additional complication. For it will already perhaps be clear that each of the three models which have been identified represents a quite distinctive concept of what education is about, what its purposes and functions are. In other words, each reflects a different educational ideology, which can in turn be related to a particular intellectual ideology and, perhaps most seriously, a particular political ideology.

It is this which makes curriculum planners, especially those working on behalf of political agencies, reluctant to advertise the fact that different models for planning the school curriculum exist. For to do so raises an obligation for them to justify their own choice and thus to make public the ideology they are seeking to impose. It is this also, therefore, that makes this an important area of exploration for the student of curriculum, and, indeed, for any teacher who wishes to lay claim to the title of professional educator.

It is this too that prompted the section at the beginning of this chapter which sought to stress the book's concern with the *educational* curriculum and the definition of this in terms of its location in a democratic moral and social context. For that is the ideology which underpins the definition of curriculum adopted here and which will determine the view adopted and proposed in relation to all of the dimensions of curriculum theory and practice which later chapters will explore.

Human knowledge

We must finally note that a major issue which lies behind this debate about models is the view taken of human knowledge. For, among the many insights which we are claiming are currently being lost from the educational debate are those which relate to questions about the nature of human knowledge and, in particular, the ways in which the distribution of knowledge can be, and is, manipulated in society for political ends. What has been called 'the politics of knowledge' has come to be seen as a major focus of consideration by the student of curriculum and its claims to importance have been much strengthened by official policies and practices in recent years.

This becomes especially sinister when one notes that nothing has characterized intellectual development in the twentieth century more than a growing appreciation of the problematic nature of human knowledge. That current movement known as postmodernism, while in itself problematic, has over the

---

last two or three decades highlighted the dangers of dogmatism, raised important issues concerning the validity of knowledge claims and thus, above all, drawn our attention to the concept of ideology and the political dangers of ideological domination. Hence, there has arisen a recent emphasis on concepts of democracy and their implications for curriculum planning (Kelly, 1995).

It is with this fundamental debate concerning human knowledge that we will begin our serious explorations of curriculum in Chapter 2.

First, however, we must conclude this introductory chapter by asking, given the definition of curriculum which we have adopted and the consequent areas of concern we have identified, what are the key features of the kind of study we are about to embark upon.

What is involved in the study of the curriculum?

It is important from the outset to be clear about the kind of study we are involved in when we begin to explore issues related to curriculum planning and development. Curriculum Studies is an academic and intellectual exploration of all of the factors we need to take account of in order to devise an *educational* curriculum. In short, it is the kind of study which should be undertaken before planning the school curriculum for a democratic society and which, as far as England and Wales are concerned, has been ignored for many years. It is an attempt to analyse every aspect of curriculum, which later chapters of this book will examine, with a view to assessing how far the different views and perspectives offered on them measure up to the *educational* principles and criteria we have identified as appropriate, indeed essential, to a democratic context.

There are several particular features of Curriculum Studies which it may be helpful to identify at this early stage.

A study in its own right

The first is that the area of study which has come to be known as Curriculum Studies has emerged from the attempts, over the last two decades, of researchers and some of those who have been concerned to teach Educational Studies to develop an approach to the study of education which would not be limited by being conducted within the confines of other disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology and sociology. The traditional approach to the study of education through these 'contributory disciplines', as they were once and in some places still are called, has led to serious inadequacies not least because of the approach's consequent inability to handle issues in an interdisciplinary way, in spite of the fact that it would be very difficult to identify any single educational issue which does not require a contribution from all these disciplines and often several others too.

Quite serious and extensive problems have arisen when the solutions to educational questions have been sought, and accepted, from psychologists or philosophers or sociologists, since inevitably such experts have a limited, one-sided and thus distorted view of the educational issues or practices to which they are applying the techniques and the methodologies of their own disciplines. Thus, for example, major problems were created by the establishment of a whole system of secondary schooling on the basis of the psychologists' view of intelligence and intelligence testing without the complementary and modifying contributions of a philosophical analysis of the concept of intelligence or of a sociological comment on the implications of such a system for the nature of society. Many other examples could readily be found in the history of the development of the schooling system in the United Kingdom or, indeed, in any other country.

Curriculum Studies, then, has emerged from an attempt to study education and to explore educational problems in their own right and not as philosophical problems or as psychological or sociological phenomena. The concern has been to end the practice of viewing the study of education as a sub-branch of any or all of these other disciplines.

Practice as well as theory

Allied to this has been a concern to study education as a practical activity and not merely as a body of theory, to get to grips with the realities of educational practice and to do so 'from the inside', in a manner that the philosopher, the psychologist or the sociologist can never do. Their studies have essentially and inevitably been conducted from the outside; their concern has been with the effects of educational practice rather than with its nature, with the realities of the classroom. If recently they have begun to turn their attention to these realities, they have in effect been developing as sub-branches of Curriculum Studies.

We must not of course lose sight of the value of such empirical research to the curriculum planner. For the evidence which emerges from such studies is of immense value to the student of curriculum, and especially to those engaged in curriculum planning at whatever level. We need to be made aware of the effects of our policies and practices in areas such as curriculum planning, approaches to teaching, the organization of schooling, the use of testing and other assessment techniques and so on. In particular, we need to be kept apprised of the side-effects of what we plan and do, since these are the essence of that 'hidden' dimension of curriculum which we are suggesting should not be permitted to remain hidden. We will also discover as we explore these aspects of curriculum provision in detail in later chapters that it is research of this kind and the insights it offers which, along with the comparable insights which have arisen from reflection on practice, have been a major casualty of that centralized control of the curriculum which has been a feature of educational provision in recent years.

However, we must note a significant limitation on the value of empirical studies of this kind. For such studies must by definition be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is not the part of any of those experts to tell us what we *ought* to be doing in education, any more than it is the part of the scientist or the technologist to tell us what we ought to do with his or her findings or inventions. Yet educational practice must essentially be concerned with questions of what *ought* to be done. Teachers in their practice must make such decisions – by the day and sometimes by the minute; they must be prescriptive. And so, if they, and curriculum planners generally, are to be assisted in this quite crucial aspect of their task, they need the support of studies which can and do take full account of the value dimension of education.

Not an applied science

In general, these difficulties illustrate the problems and the inadequacies of all attempts to adopt a 'scientific' approach to the study or the planning of education and/or curriculum. Curriculum Studies cannot be seen as a science, and especially not as an applied science. The history of attempts to theorize about education is littered with examples of this kind of scientist approach, and all of them have been theoretically misleading and practically harmful. Human beings seem to need the security of certainty in all areas of experience, and thus they are prey to all illusory forms of such certainty. This tendency is particularly odd, since it is the case that the more specifically human an activity is, the less susceptible it is to understanding through a search for objective 'truths'. Education is one such human activity, and thus does not lend itself to study of a narrowly scientific kind. It is what Maurice Holt (1981:80) has described as 'a complex and ultimately impenetrable process'. And a major reason for this is that there are many areas, most notably those of values – moral and aesthetic (and thus educational) – in which knowledge with claims to some kind of scientific certainty cannot be attained. Indeed, when we come to look at the significance for the curriculum of that movement which has come to be called postmodernism, we will see that there are good grounds for questioning and challenging knowledge claims in all fields.

Unfortunately, attempts to make the curriculum the object of scientific exploration, and, more seriously, the practice of offering educational prescriptions as if they are indisputable deductions from, or conclusions of, such scientific study, continue to be made. Nor are these confined to those working in the 'contributory disciplines'. This kind of not-to-be-questioned assertion is all too prevalent, as we shall see later, in those many pronouncements we are now offered from official sources. S.J. Curtis (1948:255) quotes a story about Robert Lowe: 'There is a story that when an HMI went to consult him, Lowe said, "I know what you've come about, the science of education. There is none. Good morning"'. Whether or not Lowe himself was fully aware of the signifi-

cance of that assertion – or, indeed, meant it in the sense in which we are taking it here – it is a pity that the said HMI did not pass this pearl of wisdom down to his descendants. For we are still beset by government officials, with little or no understanding of the realities of teaching, pressing on us the notion of teaching as an applied science and seeking to rubbish the 'quaint old-fashioned and ultimately highly damaging British view that teaching is an art' (Reynolds, quoted in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 May, 1998:2) – an assertion which could only be made by someone intellectually incapable, or, more likely, unwilling, to recognize the important conceptual distinction between education and teaching.

If, however, there is no science of education (as opposed to teaching), and thus no scientific and indisputable base for educational prescriptions, it must follow that all such prescriptions will reflect nothing more solid than the preferences, the values, the ideology of those who are offering them. And so, there is an obligation on such persons, first, not to behave as though this were not the case or as though their prescriptions enjoyed some kind of scientific objectivity that those of others do not, and, second, having recognized that, to see also the necessity of offering some justification of their views. To offer them as views without justification is to risk being totally ignored; to use a position of power to impose them without justification is to stand convicted of indoctrination and the abuse of authority.

Again we see, therefore, that the concept of ideology is an important one in Curriculum Studies, as is the concept of ideologies competing for dominance and of the curriculum as a battle ground for these competing ideologies. A study of curriculum, while not offering us spurious answers to questions of values, will, like Socrates of old, draw our attention to important questions which need to be asked about policies and practices and help us to achieve the kind of clarity which will enable us to see their underlying ideologies more clearly.

Beyond methodology

Curriculum Studies as it is being defined here, then, goes far beyond what is now often called by that name in many courses of teacher education. For the term is often now used to denote those courses which once were known as professional studies. The added ingredient of Curriculum Studies is the requirement it places on the student of curriculum to be critical and questioning in his or her approach, to face the value issues central to such studies and, in short, to recognize that the concern is not with mere methodology, with the *how* of educational practice, but much more with questions of the justification of such practice, with the *why* as well as the how. It is this critical dimension that is crucial to Curriculum Studies, at least as it is conceived throughout this book. Curriculum Studies must be seen as a form

of professional studies which takes full account of the need for teachers to adopt what has been called an 'extended' professionalism, that attitude to their work which makes them professionals in the full sense rather than merely practitioners.

We can take this further. At one level, Curriculum Studies can be seen, and is seen by many, as concerned largely with the mechanics of curriculum planning, development and innovation. There is no doubt that this is an important area of study and that there are many curricula which could profit enormously from the application of the understanding of the mechanics of curriculum planning which has been acquired through recent studies. There is much more to Curriculum Studies than this, however, and this further, and crucial, dimension is lost when we settle, or allow ourselves to be forced into settling, for a purely technicist approach. We have already seen that, if it is to help teachers and other curriculum planners with the most difficult theoretical task they face – that of justifying their curricular practices or proposals – it must go far beyond this rather limited scientific and technological level. As Bill Reid (1978:29) has suggested, curriculum problems 'are practical problems which are moral rather than technical in nature'. To deal with such problems, Curriculum Studies must embrace and tackle questions of what education is, or at least of what different approaches to schooling one might adopt. It must recognize that for some people the term 'education' means little more than instruction or the transmission of certain agreed bodies of knowledge; for others it carries connotations of the value of what is being transmitted; and yet again for some its central concern is the impact it makes, or is intended to make, on the development of the individual educands who are to be exposed to it.

To evaluate any curriculum plan or practice credibly, therefore, we need not only an understanding of the technicalities of curriculum planning and innovation but also the ability to discern the underlying values and assumptions of the curriculum specification. Indeed, it would not be difficult to argue that the latter may be far more important than the former. For to be subjected to some form of indoctrinatory process through lack of the ability to analyse critically and identify the value positions implicit in the forms of curriculum we are offered or exposed to is, in the long term, inimical to educational development in a way that some lack of understanding of the technicalities of curriculum innovation or planning or dissemination can never be. For, while the latter may diminish the quality of the educational experiences offered, the former must have the effect of rendering those experiences positively anti-educational.

The view of Curriculum Studies which underpins all that follows in this book will include, indeed emphasize, considerations of this deeper kind. For it is a major assumption that the narrower, mechanical, technicist version of Curriculum Studies, while important, does not in itself warrant a book of this scope or kind. In particular, it does not warrant a book whose prime concern is with the need for a critical approach to the study of the curriculum, since the

mechanical view is by definition non-critical, value-neutral and raises no questions of whether the particular curriculum we might be planning is of educational value or not; its concern is merely with the mechanics of planning and 'delivery'.

Too much of what is called 'Curriculum Studies' these days is concerned with nothing more significant or more intellectually demanding than issues of methodology, usually within particular subject areas. Whatever one calls it, there is a need for a study of curricular theories and practices which goes far beyond this; and it is with that kind of study that we shall be concerned here. Perhaps we should call it 'pedagogialogy', or some such, a term which might have the advantage C.S. Peirce once claimed for one of his linguistic creations, namely of being 'ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers'.

Curriculum Studies, then, is seen throughout this book as a critical, analytical exploration of the curriculum as a totality, a theoretical/conceptual and practical/empirical examination of all the many dimensions of the curriculum debate and of curriculum planning, a critical evaluation of curriculum theories and practices, and a form of inquiry which goes far beyond considerations of mere methodology and transcends both particular subject specialisms and particular age ranges.

Conceptual analysis

It follows, therefore, and this must be stressed, that a major concern is conceptual analysis, since its prime purpose must be to achieve conceptual clarity in thinking about the curriculum as a basis for ensuring practical coherence in the implementation of that thinking – again a proper matching of theory and practice. Its concern is to conceptualize the practice of education – at both the general and the particular levels. It requires, therefore, as was suggested earlier, the development of an understanding of a wide range of theories, views and empirical insights of the kind generated by the work of psychologists, sociologists and many others but, more than this, it demands the ability to sort through these ideas, theories and insights to identify and, if possible, resolve logical and conceptual mismatch and its resultant practical incoherence and confusion.

Many, perhaps most, of the concepts essential to any properly rigorous discussion of the curriculum or any attempt to implement curriculum proposals are highly problematic in nature, are complex in meaning and cannot, without detriment to the quality of both that discussion and its implementation, be treated as though they were simple, self-evident and non-controversial. This is another aspect of that attempt, which we commented on earlier, to treat educational planning and policy-making as forms of applied science. Concepts such as 'aims', 'objectives', 'processes', 'approaches', 'standards', 'ability', 'progression', 'continuity', 'coherence', 'evaluation', 'appraisal', 'accountability' and even 'subjects' or individually named subjects are far from being non-problem-

atic in their meanings, just as they are equally far, as we saw above, from being value-free. Nor are they matters of empirical 'fact' or scientific 'truth'. One does not, or at least one should not, go out to 'discover' by empirical experiment aims, objectives, standards or any other of those things. This is another major intellectual flaw in many current policies and practices.

Further, the kind of deliberate obfuscation of these central educational concepts which characterizes recent official pronouncements on education and curriculum, such as that confusion of the concepts of education and teaching which we noted earlier, is intellectually dishonest as well as politically sinister. For one of its effects, and indeed intentions, is to sabotage and stifle the kind of open debate about the school curriculum which is essential to any genuinely democratic social context.

In any curriculum debate, therefore, a major concern must be with an analysis of what these concepts may mean, what, in the context of any particular debate or policy pronouncement, they are intended to mean, and, crucially, what, in that particular context, they actually do mean. In any curriculum planning conceptual clarity is a *sine qua non* of effective practice. In particular, it is crucial that the many concepts used in any statement of policy or practice be compatible with each other, and a major purpose in subjecting them to such conceptual analysis is to ensure that they are. A good example of this, and one we will find ourselves returning to constantly throughout this book, is the question of the compatibility of many of the concepts which are central to current policies with the notion of democracy.

Worthwhile and productive research into curricular matters, then, must embrace conceptual as well as, indeed perhaps moreso than, empirical inquiry.

Engagement in Curriculum Studies of this kind, therefore, involves the development of skills with which to make this kind of challenging critical analysis and evaluation of curricular schemes, proposals and theories – whether these are one's own or are offered by others – to explore rigorously their underlying conceptual structures and to make similarly critical evaluations of educational practices – again both one's own and those of others – in terms not only of their effectiveness but also of their educational worth and their conceptual coherence. In short, it necessitates a raising of levels of perception and awareness in relation to all aspects of curricular theory and practice.

Finally, we must again note that many of the insights which had begun to emerge from this kind of critical questioning of the school curriculum have been lost as that questioning has been largely pre-empted at the practical level by the imposition of centralized political control, such as that which has characterized schooling in England and Wales since the 1988 Education Act. Teachers have now been told what they are to teach, and their trainers are required to train them to 'deliver' the stipulated curriculum rather than to reflect on its major features, so that questions of the purpose or justification of this curriculum, or even of its logical or intellectual coherence, have effectively

been removed from their sphere of influence. If, however, as a result of this, teachers and educationists generally cease to face these questions, even if at present they can approach them only in a largely theoretical way, then those questions will be faced by no one, and there are issues encapsulated in those questions which many would see as vital not only to the future of education but to the quality of the society in which future generations will live. The debate must go on, centralized control or not, and it must be conducted at a properly rigorous and critical level. It is that kind of debate Curriculum Studies endeavours to fuel. And it is that kind of debate whose importance this book is seeking to reaffirm and to which it is attempting to contribute.

All that follows, therefore, should be seen by the reader as an attempt to provide him or her with the understanding and, particularly, the critical apparatus needed to engage in this kind of rigorous study of curricular practices, both as a sound underpinning for his or her own practice and as a firm basis for evaluating official policy, especially when this is being imposed by force of law, and making appropriately professional contributions to what must be a continuing professional debate.

It is in this sense rather than in that of the purely mechanistic or technicist that the book seeks to improve the quality of educational provision at all levels.

Key issues raised by this chapter

1 What form of school curriculum is most compatible with education in and for a democratic society?
2 What is the most appropriate form of intellectual study of education and the school curriculum?
3 Why is this kind of study important – for teachers?
                 – for society at large?
4 How prevalent is this kind of study at the present time?

Suggested further reading

Carr, W. (1995) *For Education: Towards Critical Educational Enquiry*, Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

2
Knowledge and the Curriculum

Our exploration of the issues which are key to curriculum planning must begin from an analysis of the status of human knowledge for several reasons. First, it will be obvious that, however we conceive of education and curriculum, learning of some kind is central to it, so that what is to be learned must be a major planning consideration.

Second, it will become plain that what is crucial to curriculum planning is not merely what knowledge our curriculum should be concerned to transmit, but how that knowledge relates to other aspects of curriculum planning. We saw in Chapter 1 that there is a strong case for claiming that in curriculum planning and, indeed, in any debate about the curriculum, we must look beyond considerations of content alone and recognize that questions of the purposes or reasons for our decisions are logically prior to those about their substance. If we accept that curriculum planning must begin with statements about the purposes we hope to attain or the principles upon which our practice is to be based, all decisions about the content of our curriculum must be subsidiary to those prior choices. For, as Ralph Tyler said (1949:1), such decisions will be answers to the question, 'What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?'

A third reason for starting with a discussion of knowledge arises from this. For it will already be apparent that there are different ways of conceptualizing the curriculum, and how we conceptualize it will depend on how we conceive human knowledge. One of the most significant, and also one of the most dangerous, fallacies with which the curriculum debate has been, and continues to be, beset, is the failure to recognize the problematic nature of human knowledge and the consequent assumption that it is possible to identify non-problematic elements which must form the core of the curriculum without further debate. Thus, decisions concerning the knowledge-content of the curriculum become the first, indeed the only, stage in curriculum planning. And the curriculum debate proceeds at the superficial level of shared assumptions about human knowledge – uncritical assumptions which do not acknowledge its problematic nature, what Wittgenstein (1980) called question marks which do not go deep enough – rather than at the deeper level where these assumptions themselves are recognized as a significant part of the debate.

Finally, this in turn draws our attention to a major consequence of recogniz-