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INTERIM REPORTS

Research Survey 3/1

PRIMARY CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT: ENGLAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES

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PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

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Primary Review Research Survey 3/1

Kathy Hall and Kamil Øzerk

This is one of a series of 32 interim reports from the Primary Review, an independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. The Review was launched in October 2006 and will publish its final report in late 2008.

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A briefing which summarises key issues from this report has also been published. The report and briefing are available electronically at the Primary Review website: www.primaryreview.org.uk. The website also contains Information about other reports in this series and about the Primary Review as a whole. (Note that minor amendments may be made to the electronic version of reports after the hard copies have been printed).

We want this report to contribute to the debate about English primary education, so we would welcome readers' comments on anything it contains. Please write to: evidence@primaryreview.org.uk.

The report forms part of the Review's research survey strand, which consists of thirty specially-commissioned surveys of published research and other evidence relating to the Review's ten themes. The themes and reports are listed in Appendices 2 and 4.

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PRIMARY CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT: ENGLAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

This report offers a comparative analysis of primary curriculum and assessment policy in England compared to other countries. The purpose is to enhance understanding of England's curriculum and assessment priorities by providing an account of the ways in which primary curriculum and assessment policy in England conforms to and deviates from international trends.

The report is in three parts. The first part offers an overview of current curriculum and assessment policy in England and goes on to compare England with 21 other countries. The focus of analysis is curriculum orientation, subject headings and the official arrangements for primary assessment. This first part of the report draws primarily, though not exclusively, on secondary sources, specifically the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive[1] which is an ongoing compilation of information on education in some 20 countries.

The second part attends more closely and in more detail to curriculum. It compares curriculum policy in England with policy in the other countries/parts of the UK: Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and with three countries outside the UK: France, Norway and Japan. By comparing primary curriculum as detailed in government websites and other official sources of the respective countries, this part of the report enables a more penetrating exploration of differences and similarities in curriculum policy in England.

The third part of the report follows the pattern of the second but with reference to assessment.

The identification and discussion of the convergences and divergences may support policy makers as they deliberate about future reforms of curriculum and assessment in England.

PART ONE: ENGLAND IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Curriculum and assessment policy in England[2]

Schooling is compulsory in England from the age of 5 years, although most schools admit children from the age of 4 into 'reception' class which is part of what is called 'the foundation stage' of school. There is a 'foundation stage curriculum' which specifies 'early learning goals'. At the end of the foundation stage children take part in a compulsory school entry assessment scheme based on their performance throughout the phase known as the 'foundation stage profile'.

Our focus in this review is compulsory primary education. This comprises two 'key stages': Key Stage 1 (KS1) which spans ages 5 to 7, and Key Stage 2 (KS2) which spans ages 7 to 11. England has a statutory National Curriculum (NC), which is prescribed by central government. The NC is defined, for both key stages, in terms of subjects which are categorised as 'core' or 'foundation'. There are three core subjects: English, mathematics and science. There are seven foundation subjects: design and technology, information technology,

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1 The International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Archive www.inca.org.uk

2 See http://nc.uk.net/ and http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/about/

history, geography, art, music, and physical education. In addition, all children in state primary schools are entitled to religious education and to be involved in a daily act of collective worship.

Furthermore, five cross-curricular elements are specified that are intended to provide a basis on which work in particular subjects is built, although these elements are non-statutory. These include creativity; information and communications technology (ICT) capability across all subjects; education for sustainable development; literacy across the curriculum; and numeracy across the curriculum. A further non-statutory element is personal, social and health education and citizenship. Modern foreign languages (MFL) is not yet a compulsory national curriculum subject, although it is government policy that by 2010 all children at key stage 2 should have the right to learn a language other than English.

All children in state schools are entitled to access the NC, including children with special educational needs (SEN). While access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all is expected, elements of the NC may be 'disapplied' for some children with SEN. While all state schools are obliged by law to implement it, they are also expected to cater for local circumstances by offering additional learning fitted to particular local needs. The school curriculum therefore is broader than the National Curriculum in that it consists of all the learning experiences that schools plan for their pupils' education.

The NC is designed to be used by schools as a framework and, as such, there are no time allocations laid down for the various subjects. Pedagogic recommendations are offered however and, as we will show later, policy provides a strong steer in relation to how to teach some aspects of the curriculum.

Curriculum-based, criterion-referenced assessments are a formal part of the curriculum in England. This means that, unlike intelligence or aptitude tests which seek to assess potential, the assessments seek to assess curriculum achievement against a) national curriculum criteria or national standards (level descriptions[3]) and b) expected standards of performance. Statutory teacher assessment and statutory testing take place in relation to national curriculum subjects although the tests cover only a limited range. At the end of each of the two key stages children's attainment in the curriculum is assessed in two ways: through teacher assessment and through external assessments, known as standard assessment tasks and tests (SATs).

At the end of KS1, when children are typically 7 years of age, teachers have to summarise their judgements of each child's attainments in reading, writing, speaking/listening, mathematics, and science, taking account of progress and performance throughout the KS. This summative teacher assessment (TA), which is distinct from ongoing day-to-day formative assessment, is an obligatory part of the national curriculum assessment and is the main focus for end of KS1 assessment. It is carried out as part of teaching and learning in the classroom. The aim is to make a rounded judgement based on knowledge of how a child has performed over time and across a range of contexts. In addition to this summative assessment, children are assessed through external tests/tasks in reading, writing and mathematics. The purpose of these SATs is to help inform the final teacher assessment judgement. Schools do not have to report the results of the external tasks and tests separately.

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[3] Level descriptions are summary prose statements that indicate the types and range of performance which children working at a particular level of the national curriculum should characteristically demonstrate. These descriptions are the basis for judging children's levels of attainment and teachers have to judge which level description 'best fits' a student's performance.

At the end of KS2, when children are typically 11 years of age, they are assessed through an external testing programme in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. In addition, summative teacher assessment covers the full range and scope of the programmes of study within the various subjects, taking into account evidence of achievement in a variety of contexts. At the end of KS2, the results from teacher assessment are reported alongside the test results from the external tests (this is no longer obligatory at KS1). Both sets of results have equal status and are intended to provide complementary information about a pupil's attainment.

In addition to the statutory assessment arrangements, there are optional English and mathematics tests available for schools to use during KS2. These are intended to support schools in monitoring progress during the key stage. Finally, so called 'world class tests' which measure performance in problem solving in mathematics, science and design technology have been made available recently for the most able nine year olds in primary education. In these tests children are expected to apply what they have learned to new situations and use their thinking skills to solve unfamiliar problems.

The statutory assessments at the end of KS2 are used to design league tables of schools whereby a school's results can be interpreted against the results of all schools nationally and against other schools with a similar catchment profile. These results are reported in school prospectuses and websites and in the media generally. League tables rank schools in order of their success in the assessments, the intention being that parents are equipped with the necessary information on which to select the school which best suits their children.

England's primary curriculum and assessment arrangements in broad international context

This section provides an account of the primary curriculum and assessment arrangements in England with reference to provision in other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and selected countries worldwide for which relevant information is accessible. It allows a comparison, albeit at a cursory level at this stage, of curriculum and assessment arrangements in England and other countries. While the authors have sought to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, it is noteworthy at the outset that the tendency towards frequent and sometimes wide ranging reform in matters of curriculum and assessment in many countries suggests that caution has to be exercised in the interpretation of summaries of provision. Moreover, there were some grey areas where establishing the status of a curriculum area was not straightforward and judgements had to be made (especially in relation to the information contained in Table 1 – see Appendix 1). Furthermore, we are concentrating on official curriculum as opposed to accounts of what happens in actual classroom practice. However, the official curriculum is an appropriate starting point for exploring how England compares and contrasts with other countries in the areas of study it endorses for its primary pupils. We are drawing primarily, though not exclusively, in this section on material from the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive which is an ongoing compilation of information on education and structure and policy in about 20 countries. We supplement this information with details about Norway and other countries which is derived from official and other sources.

Table 1, Appendix 1, offers a visual display of the range of subjects in the primary curriculum, and Table 2 gives a visual display of the assessment arrangements. Together these two tables serve our purpose of identifying the extent to which England's approach is in line with, or deviates from, international curriculum and assessment trends. These tables are modified versions of the evidence presented in the comparative tables by Andrews *et al*. 2007; Le Metais 2003; and INCA/QCA. There is no attempt at this point to describe the

relative status of different areas of study, to indicate time allocations, or to suggest anything about the integration or otherwise in teaching and learning.

The major point to note from Table 1 is the broad convergence in curriculum provision across all of these countries. England is in line with international trends in its provision of all the following: first language, mathematics, science, information technology, history, geography, physical education, art and craft, music, and religious education. All of these areas of study are now standard in the primary curriculum of all the countries listed in Table 1. However, England differs from many other countries in not as yet making PSHE, citizenship and a modern foreign language compulsory at the primary stage. There is also a grey area where matters like education for global awareness are concerned: they are increasingly encouraged though not obligatory.

Research conducted almost twenty years ago (Benavot *et al.* 1991) showed that first language, mathematics, science and social studies are not merely standard in primary curriculum internationally but the amount of time devoted to each is almost identical across nation states, regardless of a country's level of industrialization, urbanization or political structure. On the basis of their detailed analyses, these researchers demonstrated that national characteristics are only weakly linked with curricular emphases. In their words:

> The real surprise of our findings lies not in the unimportance of social influences, but in the relative unimportance of national influences on curricular structure. Similarities clearly outweigh differences. The few differences observed tend to be unstable and seem to arise as a matter of chance in national societies differing dramatically in wealth, political structure, and cultural and religious tradition. We may speak with some confidence about a relatively standard world curriculum.
>
> (Benavot *et al.* 1991)

It would seem that as countries have reformed their curricula over the past two decades greater convergence in curriculum provision is the result not only in Anglo-American countries and in Europe but in developing countries as well (Davis and Guppy 2007; Le Matais 2003).

All countries seek to adapt their curricula to fit their changing social, economic and political circumstances. More recent adaptations in most countries, including England, pertain to the higher status attributed to literacy and mathematics, but also even more recently to the emphasis on application of knowledge and understanding, and the development of individual capacity to learn (learning how to learn). England and Wales (also Sweden) have identified some subjects as 'core' and others as 'foundation'. France, too, has conferred higher status on literacy. Other countries have not weighted subjects in this way. In Ireland for instance all subjects are explicitly given equal standing. England is in line with several other parts of the world (for example Australia, Ireland, Singapore and Wales) in its emphasis on civics education (Le Metais 2003), although this is a relatively recent emphasis and, as noted, it is not compulsory.

As we noted above, our account in this section deals primarily with the specified curriculum. Intended subject content and pedagogy represent a deeper level of engagement with primary curriculum which we will return to in the next section with reference a smaller number of specific countries against which we will compare England. We now place England's approach to assessment in the wider international context.

As in the case of curriculum, there is also convergence in assessment arrangements across countries although here convergence is far more limited than in the case of curriculum. In all countries teachers routinely assess and report on their pupils' progress over the primary phase. There has been a strong trend in the past ten years towards external assessment, both

statutory and voluntary (Le Metais 2003). There are multiple purposes advanced for the increased emphasis on assessment: to help teachers plan their teaching, to identify underachieving pupils so additional support can be obtained, to assess pupil progress and to hold schools accountable. To support the realisation of these multiple purposes many countries (about half of those listed in Table 2 – see Appendix 1) now have attainment targets in various subjects against which judgements of progress and achievement can be made.

Table 2 shows that England is in line with the vast majority of countries insofar as a standardised assessment system (standardised across the country) or end of phase/stage testing occurs in primary school. The USA and Australia operate external testing at the level of all and most states respectively, and several provinces in Canada implement provincial assessment programmes in the primary phase. England introduced its standard assessmentstasks and tests earlier than many other European countries. Some countries are currently in the process of reviewing their assessment systems. For example, Ireland's Department of Education and Science (DES) is making standardised testing a requirement from 2008. Similarly in Switzerland there is some agreement across *Cantons* on new national standards and their assessment. In Spain national sample surveys of pupil attainment are undertaken on completion of primary education, when children are aged 12 years, and national testing for 9 and 11 year olds is scheduled to begin in 2008/9 and 2009/10 respectively. Some countries, specifically Korea, Japan, New Zealand and Spain, limit external assessments by only requiring that samples of pupils rather than a full population be assessed.

It is noteworthy also that of the countries listed in Table 2 a dozen compulsorily assess primary achievement in literacy and numeracy and, less commonly, in science and/or social studies. Along with England, these countries are: Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Spain, the USA, and Wales. However, as noted in the previous paragraph, some of these countries assess only a sample of a given population.

When we consider the state of assessment arrangements within the primary phase the pattern is considerably more diverse than it is for curriculum, with the UK in general – and England in particular – appearing to be unusual in the high incidence of assessment. Although it should be noted that assessment at ages 8, 9, and 10 in England is not obligatory, England still stands out as exceptional in its emphasis on statutory external standard assessment for children at ages 7 and 11. Other parts of the UK, specifically Northern Ireland and Wales, have abandoned the use of external testing of 7 year olds in favour of annual teacher assessments only. These decisions were made in the wake of reviews of the national curriculum and assessment policies. In Scotland, teachers decide when primary children should undertake national assessments.

In relation to assessment at the point of entry to compulsory schooling, England is again different to most other countries listed in that assessment is required. Baseline (school entry) assessment must also be carried out during the first year of compulsory primary education in Wales. Hungary, where there is assessment throughout the primary phase, requires children to be assessed before progressing to the compulsory phase of school to determine readiness for school. Readiness is also assessed in Sweden. In Germany the local doctor assesses children's readiness for school. School entry assessment is not the norm across the countries listed in Table 2.

An important purpose of assessment at compulsory school entry in England is to furnish baseline evidence for value added analyses. Wales, New Zealand, and some states in Australia, for example Victoria, also require school entry assessment for this purpose. However caution is necessary in the interpretation of national policies as some countries, while not requiring assessment at this point, do in fact typically assess children – a good

example is France where a nursery school 'record of achievement' is kept and passed on to a child's first compulsory level school. In Scotland nursery schools pass on a record of achievement to schools with reference to literacy and oral language although this is not compulsory. The next section of our report will probe further the assessment regimes of selected countries, with a view to determining in more detail how England compares in assessment policies.

Finally, Table 2 indicates that England, like all countries with standardised assessment systems at primary level, makes the results available to various audiences but the nature of this publicity merits attention. It seems that England leads the emphasis on published league tables where individual schools are listed in relation to the aggregated attainments of their pupils, thus holding schools to account in a very public way. The USA and Norway are increasingly following this trend, but most other countries disseminate the results back to schools along with national aggregated results or they publish national trends only - the aim being to enable schools to compare their own school's performance with national trends and to alert schools to their relative weaknesses and strengths. Individual school results are not typically published in the form of league tables in the national press.

PART TWO: NARROWING THE COMPARATIVE FOCUS: CURRICULUM

We now turn to a more considered examination of curriculum policy in England by focusing on fewer countries but attending in more detail to the specific statements in relation to three aspects of curriculum; namely aims and principles, curriculum structure and subjects, and pedagogic directives. An analysis of England's curriculum compared to other parts of the UK is of interest on the grounds that traditionally England and the rest of the UK aligned in curriculum policy initiatives. For example, the Plowden Report in 1967 (Board of Education, Central Advisory Council for Education 1967) and the Scottish Memorandum in 1965 (Scottish Education Department 1965) both endorsed so called progressivism in curriculum and teaching methods in England and Scotland respectively. Until recently England and Wales were administratively aligned educationally but since the introduction of the Welsh Assembly Wales determines its education policies independently of England. NI, while traditionally aligning itself with developments in England, determines its own curriculum policy. How England continues to compare with its nearest neighbours merits investigation.

We have also chosen to benchmark England against three other countries: France because of the historical and cultural links as well as its proximity; Norway because of its renowned emphasis on equity issues and early years education, like other Scandinavian countries; and Japan, an Eastern country which is an economic competitor in the global market. In view of the increasing emphasis nations are placing on literacy, Japan is especially interesting as it has been described as one of the most literate societies in the world, despite the complexity of its language (Lessard-Clouston 1998; Crystal 1997; Akamatsu 1998). Like England (along with other parts of the UK), all three countries have centralised primary curriculum systems which means that what is expected to be taught is standardised and prescribed. It is noteworthy, however, that their centralising histories vary considerably in nature. In the case of Norway, the new national curriculum (Knowledge Promotion, see Øzerk 2006) is the first curriculum reform to have resulted in a common national curriculum for the 10 year basic school (6-16) [and upper secondary education (16-19) and training (16+)].

Table 3 in Appendix 1 draws on official sources in the case of each country to describe curriculum policy. The following text highlights and discusses their key similarities and differences.

Curriculum aims and principles

It is noteworthy that when the National Curriculum (NC) was introduced in England in 1988 there was no explicit reference to a philosophical base. Several curriculum researchers commented on this lack, Lawton for instance, arguing that while '[s]ubjects may be useful as means to curriculum ends, they are not ends in themselves' (Lawton 1989). On its revision in 2000, however, there were explicit statements about educational opportunity, respect for the individual, as well as choice and diversity for parents[4].

On the basis of official websites and curriculum policy texts there is considerable overlap and consistency in the stated goals and aims of the curriculum across all four parts of the UK and across our three selected comparator countries: France, Norway and Japan. Table 3 documents specified aims/purposes of, and rationale for, the curriculum in each country. Recurring in the various curriculum policy texts are all of the following foci:

- the development of all children's potential;
- the promotion of the rounded individual;
- the fostering of the good citizen;
- the cultivation of the lifelong learner; and
- the shaping of the flexible individual for life in a rapidly changing globalized world.

In the case of the four parts of the UK, the curriculum principles of breadth and balance ('breadth and depth' in the case of Scotland) accord with such wide ranging aims. Thus far, England aligns with its immediate neighbours. Across the UK there now appears to be a desire to promote 'excellence' in learning in a way that combines cognitive and affective aspects, and that prepares the learner for a changing future (for England see DfES 2003). This is how Peter Peacock, the then Minister for Education and Young People in Scotland, expressed his views in 2004 in the context of the current revision of their curriculum:

> The curriculum in Scotland has many strengths … However, the various parts were developed separately and, taken together, they do not now provide the best basis for an excellent education for every child. The National Debate showed that people want a curriculum that will fully prepare today's children for adult life in the 21st century, be less crowded and better connected, and offer more choice and enjoyment.
>
> (SEED 2007)

However, the curriculum documentation in England differs from that of Japan and France in two important interrelated emphases:

- the promotion of a shared common culture, and
- the promotion of basic skills, especially language, in the early years of compulsory primary schooling.

England's official documentation on curriculum endorses pluralism, diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism, themes which are especially evident in guidance for teachers in, for example, the programmes of study and schemes of work for RE, History, and Geography, and in the guidance on citizenship. It is more tentative, cautious and relativist than France or Japan in its statements and application of values[5]. In relation to the promotion of inclusion and enabling all children to participate fully in their learning, the principle of differentiation in the curriculum seeks to address diversity where the representation and accessibility of knowledge are to be considered by teachers. To exemplify, it is stated that teachers are

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4 See http://www.nc.uk.net/about/values_aims_purposes.html

5 See in relation to citizenship Starkey (2000)

expected to take 'account of pupils' specific religious or cultural beliefs relating to the representation of ideas or experiences or to the use of particular types of equipment, particularly in science, design and technology, ICT and art and design'[6]. With more particular reference to Religious Education, which is obligatory in England, the (non-statutory) national framework for RE of 2004 advises that all RE syllabuses must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'[7] Difference is recognised and has to be taken into account, not only in curriculum content but also in pedagogic approach.

Japan, in contrast, seems to resist pluralism. A relatively homogeneous country, Japan has one large dominant ethnic group and one dominant language. As one travel book (Taylor *et al*. 1997) noted, Japan intends that only a small number of foreigners settle in the country. While several researchers question the assumed monoculturalism of Japanese society (Weiner 1997; Denoon *et al*. 1996), and while the Japanese Government is keen to promote internationalism and the ability of young people to understand other countries, there remains embedded in curriculum documents a strong emphasis on Japanese national consciousness - 'the traditions and culture of Japan' (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2005).

The themes of multiculturalism and diversity do not feature prominently in the new primary curriculum in France, whereas expressions like 'republican values' do (MEN 2003). For example it is stated that the primary school system must adhere to republican principles of equal opportunity and effective integration into French society (MEN 2003: 46). The basis of state education in France is an initiation into a common culture through a single curriculum for all. Ten years ago President Jacques Chirac pronounced that 'The France we love and we want to preserve is not and never will be a mosaic of communities living alongside each other'[8]. France does not recognise difference in the way England does. As one commentator put it in relation to citizenship education, 'in France there is no 'multicultural citizenship' – just citizenship' (cited in Starkey 2000). Some education researchers in France are highly critical of what they see as an inadequate emphasis on cultural diversity and pluralism in the new elementary programme, particularly in relation to language, arguing that the approach endorsed is assimilationist rather than integrationist (Helot *et al*. 2000). The promotion of a shared culture and national identity is tightly bound to citizenship and French language and it is noteworthy that citizenship education or civic education features in relation to aims and curriculum rationale, as well as, of course, descriptions of curriculum structure.

While citizenship is now part of the English curriculum aims and rationale, it is a relatively late component, having been added in the 2000 revision[9]. Scotland and Northern Ireland, for instance, have had a much longer history of the inclusion of civics education at primary level, thus highlighting children's responsibilities as future citizens. Citizenship has been a compulsory part of the NI curriculum from 2007. The traditional emphasis in Japan on equality of opportunity led its curriculum, through its courses of study, towards uniformity, self and group discipline, and rigidity with little or no role for differentiation or flexibility of provision. While the recent reforms of 2005 have oriented curriculum towards greater flexibility and concern for individual needs, for creativity, and for critical thinking, an

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6 http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/inclusion.shtml

7 http://www.qca.org.uk/re and http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/schemes/

8 Cited in Starkey 2000

9 See http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship.

orientation to group effort and social co-operation remain strong features expressed particularly in 'moral education' and 'special activities'.

France, Norway and Japan expect that the curriculum in primary education, particularly in the early years of compulsory primary education, should prioritise basic skills of language and arithmetic. These aims are a more explicit feature in the policy texts of these countries than in England or the other parts of the UK.

England also deviates from the other countries in this survey in the scale of its explicit references to the purpose of raising standards. No other country appears to be so preoccupied with national standards – a preoccupation which is manifested not only in the aims and curriculum rationale but also in the structure of the curriculum and in the nature of the assessment system. Indeed raising standards was the *raison d'être* of the introduction of the National Curriculum in England in 1988, following what was assumed by policy makers to be a period during which England's more decentralised curriculum and assessment policies led to an inadequate emphasis on products and outcomes. Interestingly, given its traditional emphasis on child-centred approaches, decentralisation and teacher/school autonomy (Hall *et al*. 1999), Norway now resembles England in the discourse of standards, although not nearly to the same extent. Norway, as already noted, has just introduced a national curriculum. It was worked out under its former coalition government in which the Ministry of Education and Research was dominated by the Conservative party, but it was introduced by a new coalition government in which the Minister of Education and Research is from the Socialist Left Party of Norway. The rationale advanced for the national curriculum, entitled 'Knowledge Promotion', is very similar to that advanced for the introduction of a National Curriculum in England in the late 1980s, incorporating as it does references to raising standards; accountability and evaluation; national assessment; basic knowledge and skills; clear objectives; free choice and competition; and consistency of provision (Telhaug 2005; Øzerk 2006).

The internationalisation of the curriculum, by which we mean the standardisation of curriculum rationale (and areas of study) in response to globalisation and the availability of information, especially assessment and evaluation information of attainment, means that continuity in aims and rationale is to be expected. However, research tells us that the curriculum policy changes made in response to common external pressures occur in culturally specific ways[10]. As we show in the next section, closer attention to the curriculum subjects and the status attributed to them, even at the level of national policy, more than hints at this cultural influence.

Curriculum structure, subjects, and cross-curricular elements

As already demonstrated there is considerable convergence internationally in curriculum policy, with all countries surveyed demonstrating a commitment to a similar range of areas of study. However, this more probing part of our analysis suggests some significant differences of emphasis within that range. Table 3 lists the curriculum areas and cross-curricular themes of each country.

The first point of difference to note is that England structures the curriculum in terms of subjects, while other parts of the UK (specifically NI and Scotland) have moved in their current reforms to broader domains of learning; for example, the Arts around Us (NI) and expressive arts (Scotland), compared to the two subjects of Art and Music in England. Similarly, England's non-core History and Geography are combined in Scotland and in Japan as 'social studies' and in Norway as 'social science'. In its most recent reforms France, too,

10 See for examples Alexander 2001; Osborn *et al*. 2003; Broadfoot 2000.

stresses a more interdisciplinary approach. For instance, in the basic learning cycle, 'discovering the world' combines science, technology, and history and geography in one domain whilst 'artistic education' refers to music and art. In the consolidation cycle in France, covering the last three years of primary education, 'scientific education' covers experimental sciences, technology, and, interestingly, maths. It is possible that the subjects-focused arrangement of curriculum in England makes for less coherence in the learning experience and for reduced integration of subject matter in teaching and learning. The focus on raising standards and enhancing accountability generally in the English system is a key factor in explaining the emphasis on subjects rather than learning domains. To some extent the cross curricular areas of creativity, literacy across the curriculum and education for sustainable development temper this, along with the specified range of skills that are assumed to underlie all learning in the curriculum - although it should be noted that these are not compulsory.

The second noteworthy difference pertains to the status attributed to various areas of knowledge, and specifically the relative status accorded to language, natural science, citizenship and the status attributed to different language modes within the study of language.

The priority that England places on English, maths and science as core subjects is not matched by a similar priority in any other country in our survey, including other parts of the UK (Wales and NI having deviated from this model in their recent reforms). In England, English has equal status with maths and with science. In all of our other countries language has more significance in the curriculum than science, and in France, Norway and Japan language also has more significance than maths in the early phase of primary education. In the Preface to *The New Programmes* in France this is how the then (2003) Minister for Education, Jack Lang, expressed the significance of the French language in the elementary/primary curriculum:

> I will repeat it every day: the national language constructs and unites us. Every child should be equipped to enter this common house, and feel at ease and at home there. A child who cannot achieve this aim or who reaches it imperfectly remains an outsider, is wounded and humiliated, and as a consequence, excluded. This feeling of exclusion generates aggressive or violent reactions in young people.
>
> (MEN 2003: 8).

The New Programme itself states that 'competence in the national language is the fundamental objective. Feeling at ease in the French language is essential in order to access all types of knowledge. Throughout primary education, this requirement must be the permanent preoccupation of teachers' (MEN 2003: 95).

In Norway and Japan, as well as Scotland and NI, natural science and social science have equal status, whilst in France science is incorporated into the broad domain 'discovering the world' which includes science, technology, history and geography in the basic learning cycle. In the consolidation cycle 'scientific education', maths, experimental sciences and technology are incorporated. England is exceptional in its strong emphasis on natural science relative to social science. While all other countries in this part of our survey include maths throughout the primary phase, it is singled out (along with science and English) as core in England. Interestingly, France places maths in the realm of scientific education along with other areas as we have noted.

The emphasis in England on natural science and maths, together with the attribution of equal status to English, maths and science, represents an orientation in English curriculum

policy towards the economy and employment[11]. This orientation is further underlined when one considers the status of citizenship education which is part of the non-statutory 'Framework for Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship'. As a non-obligatory element of the primary curriculum, unlike say in the case of NI ('Personal Development and Mutual Understanding') and Scotland ('Education for Mutual Understanding'), the social and civic dimension is comparatively weak in England. What is undoubtedly the case is that the curriculum in England, with its strong emphasis on maths and science, owes much to the perceived need of governments to make the education system align with the needs of the economy. Subjects perceived to be associated with economic advancement are therefore accorded higher status than subjects perceived to involve more personal interest, for example music and physical education. So strong is the emphasis on maths and science in some official reports that these subjects are sometimes viewed as synonymous with education. The OfSTED review entitled *Worlds Apart? A review of international surveys of educational achievement involving England* (Reynolds and Farrell 1996), for example, is about comparative achievement in maths and science but the title, as some commentators have pointed out, could be read as referring to educational achievement in general (Foster and Hammersley 1998). The authors of the officially-commissioned study justify their focus on both of these subjects, saying that 'mathematics and science are universally recognised as the key skills needed in a modern industrial society, and particularly in the new "information age" economies' (Reynolds and Farrell 1996: 1). It is taken as axiomatic that the greater economic success of the Pacific Rim countries is down to their superior performance in these subjects, as measured by international tests.

Also associated with the economy is Information Technology which, in addition to being an obligatory subject in its own right in England, is expected to permeate the entire curriculum. Our judgement is that all countries are promoting IT in their curricula, but that Japan, rather surprisingly, places far less emphasis on it than Western countries.

The third point is about the status of elements within subjects. A content analysis of the documentation pertaining to language across our comparator countries suggests that within language (French, Norwegian, Japanese) the status attributed to literacy in England is higher than that attributed to oracy. Evidence for this stems from the Primary Strategy/ Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics[12] and from the preoccupation of Government in England with the teaching of early reading – or, more precisely, with how to teach phonics. Although oracy (listening and speaking) has equal status with literacy in terms of the detail in the Programmes of Study and within the attainment targets and level descriptions (*English in the National Curriculum*), other official documents belie this apparent parity of esteem. Other parts of the UK do not exhibit this unequal emphasis on literacy and oracy – a situation that is further exacerbated by the assessment regime. Having said that, France, Norway and Japan all enhanced the status of literacy in their most recent curriculum reforms - a trend that began in the English-speaking world. In France and Japan literacy is expected to permeate all other aspects of the curriculum. Norway also raised the status of literacy but not at the expense of oracy – both are emphasised equally. Japanese is the most emphasised subject in curriculum policy in Japan, with almost twice as many hours devoted to it than to maths (the next most significant subject in terms of centrally-determined teaching time allocated) in the early years of compulsory schooling[13]. Moreover, the diversity of the spoken forms of Japanese means that oracy receives much attention at this early stage.

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11 See Alexander 2001; Hamilton and Weiner 2000; Hall 2004.

12 http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/about/

13 INCA (nd) Primary Education: an International Perspective http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/probe_japan.pdf

The introduction of a modern foreign language into England's KS2 curriculum from 2006[14], albeit (still) non-statutory, represents a significant shift in curriculum policy towards a closer alignment with our European neighbours, or at least with Norway and France. By 2010 all children at KS2 will be entitled to learn a modern foreign language. Elsewhere in the UK, modern foreign language or regional language learning (apart from Welsh in Wales) has traditionally not been prioritised. However, in recent reforms Scotland introduced MFL in the final two years of primary school. France has recently introduced MFL or a regional language into the basic education cycle, while Norway has had a long tradition of endorsing the teaching of several languages from the beginning of primary schooling. Japan does not require primary schools to teach a language other than Japanese although its official documentation encourages the teaching of a modern foreign language (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2005).

Before leaving the issue of emphases within subject areas it is worth pointing out a further key difference between Japan and all other countries in our survey. Within the broad area of citizenship and social studies, there is a common theme of the democratic citizen and participation in a democracy alongside issues of multiculturalism in all our European countries. These themes are not nearly as strong in curriculum in Japan which (instead) priorities moral education. The latter has four fundamental principles: self-control; living and communicating with others; respect for the environment, nature and beauty and the importance of life; respect for the rules by which people live incorporating justice, equality and enjoyment of one's work.

All countries (Table 3) incorporate a range of elements into cross-curricular areas of study, thus broadening the base of curriculum in every country in our survey. There is some degree of similarity in the nature of these elements, typically including learning how to learn and lifelong learning, creativity and literacy across the curriculum. England, along with other countries, places additional emphasis on protecting the environment within cross-curricular themes. The elements included here apply across the curriculum and are deemed important for learning all school subjects. England is not dissimilar to other countries in highlighting within its cross-curricular themes those areas that policy makers have decided need to be given further emphasis. For example, the theme of creativity in England is a response to the many criticisms levelled against the curriculum in recent years, specifically that the inordinate emphasis on summative, high stakes assessment in narrow curriculum areas hinders the creative and more aesthetic aspects of the curriculum, thus challenging the curriculum principle of breadth and balance. Similarly, the rigidity of the Japanese curriculum in the recent past prompted the cross curricular elements, creativity, thinking skills, creativity, and problem solving to be introduced in the 2002 reforms.

Pedagogic Prescription

Before leaving this part of our survey, some points about the extent to which policy determines the kind of teaching approach are appropriate. A common theme across all of our countries is flexibility in pedagogy. There are statements in all cases that the official curriculum is a framework and that there is an expectation that teachers will implement it as faithfully as their local circumstances allow. England, in line with other parts of the UK, does not prescribe the amount of time which is to be allocated to the teaching of any subject. Legislation prohibits the central prescription of time to be allocated to each subject in England. That said, and unlike other parts of the UK, literacy and numeracy are each recommended an hour per day through the (non-statutory) Renewed Primary Framework

14 See http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languagesstrategy and http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languages/

for Literacy and Maths (2006)[15], and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) offers guidance on timetabling the curriculum. It suggests, for example, that PE should be taught for two hours per week (QCA 2002). In addition, QCA's schemes of work for each curriculum subject guide pedagogy in particular ways[16]. The QCA invites teachers to 'customise your curriculum' and provides examples of how teachers 'have taken ownership of the curriculum, shaping it and making it their own', usually by integrating and combining units. France, Norway and Japan (Table 3) all specify how much time should be spent on each subject, although Norway can modify the specified times if the schools and homes agree that the 'competency aims' would be better served by doing so [17]. The subject syllabus, however, cannot be modified. In addition, the textbooks used in France and Japan need to be Government-approved - there are no such restrictions in any part of the UK.

On the basis of our analysis of the pedagogic guidance available on official websites and other sources we conclude that there is a tendency across all of our countries towards greater specificity in how to deliver the curriculum. With the exception of the teaching of early reading in England, which is becoming increasingly prescriptive[18], we suggest that the programmes of study (syllabuses) in non-UK countries – together with their pedagogic guidance – leave less room for teachers to decide on their own preferred methods and approaches.

PART THREE. NARROWING THE COMPARATIVE FOCUS: ASSESSMENT

What is and what is not assessed, the nature of assessment and how it takes place, as well as the purposes and effects of assessment all provide insights into what knowledge and skills are valued by a society. In this part of the report we develop our analysis beyond that offered in Part One to examine the extent to which England's primary assessment system aligns with that of its nearest neighbours and with that of three sample countries. To highlight similarities and differences and to avoid undue repetition with details already presented, we have selected two broad assessment purposes which suit this comparative analysis: firstly, assessment designed to monitor and hold to account, and secondly, assessment designed to support pupil learning. Table 4, which draws from the official sources in each country, presents the documentary evidence on which our analysis here is based.

Assessment designed to monitor and hold to account

All parts of the UK and France, Norway and Japan seek to monitor the quality of learning of their pupils at national level through assessment of pupil achievement against national norms or competencies within specific subjects. By doing so, national governments hold their education systems to account and obtain some degree of evidence about the health of their systems over time. Assessment of pupil achievement is a typical vehicle in our sample countries for monitoring standards and evaluating education systems.

Table 4 in Appendix 1 shows that national policy in all countries specifies outcomes, competencies or curriculum criteria that pupils at given ages or stages would typically be expected to reach. Assessment is criterion- and curriculum-referenced. The specification of assessment expectations or criteria in terms of curriculum achievement fits with the emphasis in all of our review countries on opportunity to learn. In other words, assessment

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15 See QCA 2006, available at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframeworks/

16 See http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/

17 In Norway the solo class teacher model no longer exists - a team of teachers is now responsible for classes of children.

18 See Hall 2006; also Hall 2007.

is focussed on the curriculum and not on attributes like potential or on aspects of learning that are not part of the official curriculum.

However, the scale of assessment for the purpose of monitoring and accountability is of quite a different order in England compared to our other review countries, confirming the conclusion drawn earlier when we took a broader approach. Assessment for accountability purposes features strongly throughout the English assessment policy documentation. It is significantly less stressed in other parts of the UK and in France, Norway and Japan. The following evidence (see Table 4) supports our conclusion about the uniqueness of England's assessment policy:

- there is more external, standard testing in England;
- external, standard testing occurs more frequently;
- external, standard testing begins at a younger age;
- external testing occurs in more subjects/subject areas;
- science is tested through external, standard tests;
- external test results are published in league tables that rank schools according to the success of their pupils in the tests;
- testing is 'high stakes'; and,
- external, standard testing is accompanied by obligatory summative teacher assessments at the end of each key stage, the results of which are reported to parents, and at KS2 also reported to Government agencies and used to hold the system to account.

In summary, assessment in England, compared to our review countries, is pervasive, highly consequential, and it is more generally assumed by the public to objectively portray the actual quality of primary education in schools. There are a number of features of the curriculum and assessment policy as a whole that facilitate this assessment regime. Firstly, the curriculum success criteria are detailed very explicitly for the various elements within subjects (attainment targets) and within a levelled scale, making it possible to design tests to align with the criteria. Secondly, statutory external tests are designed and administered at least twice during a pupil's life in primary school (that is to say, at the end of each key stage). Thirdly, schools have to predict the scale of their pupils' expected success in the tests (target setting) and report not just on their actual test results but also on the divergence between their targeted and actual results. Fourthly, every year their actual results are set not just against the national curriculum norms but also against the actual results of other schools of similar profile (in terms of pupil catchment), thus indicating a strong element of norm-referencing as well as criterion-referencing. Most significantly, the assessment results are used to monitor standards over time and to hold schools accountable to parents and prospective parents so that they can choose which schools best suit their children.

As a result of the foregrounding of assessment for accountability, there is a complex assessment industry and machinery within and without schools in England that is not paralleled at all in our comparison group of countries. Within schools, teachers administer and mark the externally-designed tests (with some external moderation and monitoring) within specified time frames, while externally there are various national and local agencies that design, monitor, collect, check, record and publish the results. Many researchers have demonstrated the negative impact on pupil learning of the priority accorded to assessment for accountability over assessment that is designed to support learning directly. This has been found to impact not only in terms of motivation and self esteem but also in terms of the principle of the broad and balanced curriculum, whereby the high stakes nature of

assessment forces schools to privilege teaching in the areas that are tested (literacy, numeracy, science)[19]. Such 'teaching to the test' prompts the criticism that while standards in tests might increase it may not follow that achievement in the relevant learning has changed at all (Broadfoot 2000).

Assessment designed to hold the primary system to account is not insignificant in other countries but it is less intrusive, less comprehensive, and considerably less frequent. This applies as much to other parts of the UK as to France, Norway and Japan. Interestingly, Wales and NI have significantly tempered their emphasis on testing in recent reforms such that they are now arguably as different from England as are other European countries in this regard. Scotland's approach was never as heavy-handed as England's, taking the line that national standards can be monitored by assessing national samples of a given population from time to time. The latter approach aligns with monitoring practices in France, Norway and Japan. Very recent reforms in Norway have resulted in the introduction, for the first time, of 'mapping tests' last year (2007) at 2nd and 5th grade in Norwegian reading while 5th graders are also tested in a modern foreign language (that is, English). The radical shift to testing in Norway stems from the country's concern about its standing in international assessments. While results in Norway are forwarded to government agencies, the results are not published or reported at school level. Individual pupil results are fed back to individual schools and parents; assessment in Norway is not high stakes (yet). Japan introduced national testing in Japanese and mathematics for all 12-year-olds from 2007.

To explain the divergence between England and other countries in our survey in relation to the prominence of assessment for accountability purposes, one has to revisit the aims of and rationale for the introduction of the English National Curriculum in the late 1980s. As shown in Table 3 of Appendix 1, the need to raise standards and to provide evaluative information about the education system to the parent as tax payer (cast as consumer) was fundamental, a need which arose in turn from the perceived link between educational achievement and international economic competitiveness. This requirement meant that curriculum and assessment had to be framed in a manner that allowed learning to be reliably measured and monitored over time. The preoccupation with obtaining reliable measures of performances has continued since the advent of the National Curriculum and its original assessment framework.

So what distinguishes assessment policy in England is the degree to which it is used as a tool, a) to control what is taught; b) to police how well it is taught; and c) to encourage parents to use the resultant assessment information to select schools for their children. Unlike other countries in our survey, the concept of education as a commodity that can be traded in the market place is an explicit and officially endorsed feature of assessment policy in England. English, maths and science, as core subjects, are privileged by the assessment system insofar as these, or elements of these subjects, are selected for statutory assessment. Given the 'high stakes' nature of assessment, the plain message delivered by the assessment system is that these curriculum areas represent the knowledge that is most highly valued by society. In line with our analysis in Part Two, the emphasis on statutory assessment in maths and science fits with the assumption that the education system should privilege the needs of the economy over, say, personal or other social needs.

Assessment designed to support pupil learning

All countries, including England, refer to the procedures that they have in place to address this assessment for the purpose of supporting pupil learning. Whatever the nature and

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19 For examples see Hall *et al*. 2004; Harlen and Deakin Crick 2002; Reay and Wiliam 1999.

format of its assessments, the importance of using the assessment information to feed back into teaching and learning is highlighted. For example the new curriculum and assessment policy introduced in France in 2004 means that 8-year-olds do pencil and paper tests every second year in French, and maths at the point of entry into the second cycle – the consolidation cycle. These tests are intended to be diagnostic and to inform subsequent teaching and learning, as well as to aid national monitoring of achievement. That they occur at the beginning and not the end of the school year clearly raises their potential to aid learning. Teachers in Scotland select from a bank of available tests and administer these when they judge that children are ready. The results provide them with a measure of their pupils' achievement which they can use alongside their own teacher assessments to determine pupils' strengths and weaknesses[20]. Moreover, some local education authorities in Scotland don't require schools to use the standard national tests if they can show that they have a system of assessment that is equally robust and better fitted to their school context.

Assessment policy in France, Norway and Japan endorses on-going teacher assessment, including classroom-based, curriculum-oriented tests administered by teachers. Results are recorded and reported to parents to inform them about their children's progress. It is also assumed that this information will enable teachers to decide on next steps for learning and help them to plan suitable learning experiences. The emphasis throughout is strongly on the teacher as assessor. There is limited emphasis in France and Japan on assessment that involves negotiation with learners, on pupils as self and peer assessors, or on qualitative, prose descriptive accounts of learning and learning contexts. There is some evidence of this in Norway. In France, for instance, the pupil record which is an elaborate account over the school years of a pupils' achievements tends in the main to be based on numerical marks and grades, mostly the results of teacher-based tests.

However, policy in the UK in general explicitly recognises the role of the learner in the assessment enterprise and gives much attention in its guidance material to what is commonly called 'assessment for learning'. NI and Wales have scaled down their use of testing and now, like Scotland and England, prioritise assessment for learning. The official policy documents of all parts of the UK offer much guidance to teachers on the conduct of this kind of assessment. The language used and the strategies recommended are similar, something which is not altogether surprising since the recommendations stem largely from the work of a key group of researchers who come from all parts of the UK[21]. The recommendations place the learner at the centre of the assessment activities and the guidance is replete with references to negotiation with pupils about what they could do, and how they could go about bridging the gap between what they can do and need to be able to do. Self assessment and peer assessment are recommended for helping learners to understand, and sometimes frame, the criteria against which their work is judged.

Qualitative accounts and prose descriptions of performance, as opposed to marks or grades, are encouraged, the intention being to focus learner attention on descriptions of quality and understanding of success criteria rather than merely obtaining 'high marks'. Having learners assess themselves in relation to their own previous performance, rather than normative evaluations involving ranking with peers, is also encouraged. This approach to assessment invites learners to negotiate and discuss their learning, to set targets for themselves, to monitor and describe their own progress and to consider their achievements in relation to evidence. It privileges talk and discussion about learning and links well with the cross curricular theme of learning how to learn. In summary, it integrates learning and assessment.

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20 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/06/2393450/34518

21 See Black and Wiliam 1998a; Black and Wiliam 1998b; Assessment Reform Group 2002; Black *et al*. 2003.

It is now recognised that this type of assessment is complex and difficult to do well, and therefore the guidance on it is extensive.

England is in line with the rest of the UK regarding its emphasis on assessment for learning. However, while policy in England promotes assessment for learning purposes, the high stakes nature of the assessments (designed to make the system accountable) compromises its potential benefits for learners. The very recently announced Government review of the primary curriculum in England makes quite clear that curriculum, and not assessment, will be its focus, suggesting that an overhaul of the assessment system in England is not likely to occur in the near future[22].

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions from comparing England and 21 other countries

There is strong convergence in curriculum provision across all 21 countries surveyed. England is in line with international trends in its provision of the following: first language, mathematics, science, information technology, design and technology, history, geography, physical education, art, music, and religious education. All of these areas of study are now standard in the primary curriculum of all the countries in our review. However, England differs from many other countries in not as yet making PSHE, citizenship and a modern foreign language[23] compulsory at the primary stage. There is also a grey area where matters like education for global awareness are concerned: they are increasingly encouraged though not obligatory.

All countries surveyed seek to adapt their curricula to fit their changing social, economic and political circumstances. More recent reforms in most countries, including England, pertain to the higher status attributed to literacy and mathematics but also, more recently, to the emphasis on the application of knowledge and understanding, and on learning how to learn.

Teachers are expected to assess and report routinely on their pupils' progress in all of the countries surveyed. Assessment is expected to fulfil several purposes. England is in line with the majority of countries insofar as a standard assessment system or end of phase/stage testing occurs in primary school.

However, the pattern of arrangements for assessment is considerably more diverse than it is for curriculum, and England is unusual in its high incidence of assessment. It is exceptional in its emphasis on statutory external standard assessment for children at ages 7 *and* 11.

Conclusions from comparing England's primary curriculum with the rest of the UK and with France, Norway and Japan

There is considerable overlap and consistency in the stated goals and aims of the curriculum. Recurring in the various curriculum policy texts are the following foci:

- the development of all children's potential;
- the promotion of the rounded individual;
- the fostering of the good citizen;
- the cultivation of the lifelong learner; and

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22 See letter from Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, to Sir Jim Rose (dated 09.01.2008), available at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/pnattach/20080003/1.pdf

23 The reference to the MFL in the proposed review of the curriculum in England hints at the possibility of increased status of MFL in the future. See http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/pnattach/20080003/1.pdf

- the shaping of the flexible individual for life in a rapidly changing globalised world.

No other country appears to be so preoccupied with national standards.

The curriculum documentation in England differs from that of Japan and France in two key respects. Firstly in relation to the promotion of a shared common culture: England's official documentation places more emphasis on pluralism, diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism. Secondly in relation to the promotion of basic skills, especially language, in the early years of compulsory primary schooling: France, Norway and Japan expect that the curriculum, particularly in the early years of compulsory primary education, should prioritise basic skills of language and maths. These aims are a more explicit feature in the policy texts of these countries than in England or in any other part of the UK.

England structures the curriculum in terms of subjects while other parts of the UK, specifically NI and Scotland, have moved in their current reforms to broader domains of learning, for example, the Arts around Us (NI) and expressive arts (Scotland).

England differs from the other countries surveyed in the status attributed to various areas of knowledge, and specifically in the relative status accorded to language, natural science, citizenship, and the status attributed to different language modes within the study of language. England's priority to English, maths and science as core subjects is not matched by a similar priority in any of the other countries surveyed, including other parts of the UK (Wales and NI having deviated from this model in their recent reforms). The emphasis in England on natural science and maths, together with the attribution of equal status to English, maths and science, represent an orientation in English curriculum policy towards the economy and economic advancement. This orientation is further underlined in relation to citizenship education which is not obligatory, unlike say the case of NI or Scotland. The conclusion is that the social and civic dimension is comparatively weak in England.

The introduction of a modern foreign language into England's KS2 curriculum from 2006, albeit non-statutory, represents a significant shift in curriculum policy towards a closer alignment with our European neighbours.

Conclusions from comparing England's assessment policy with that of the rest of the UK and with France, Norway and Japan

All parts of the UK and France, Norway and Japan seek to monitor the quality of learning of their pupils at national level through assessment of pupil achievement against national norms or competencies within specific subjects. National monitoring is typically achieved through assessing the achievement of representative samples of pupils from a given population. The scale of assessment for the purpose of monitoring and accountability is of quite a different order in England compared to our other reviewed countries. It is significantly less stressed in other parts of the UK and in France, Norway and Japan. There is more external, standard testing in England; it occurs more frequently and starts at a younger age; more subjects are covered by the statutory assessments; test results are published in league tables; testing is high stakes; and external testing is accompanied by obligatory summative assessment carried out by teachers.

In summary, assessment in England, compared to our other reviewed countries, is pervasive, highly consequential, and taken by officialdom and the public more generally to portray objectively the actual quality of primary education in schools. Wales and Northern Ireland have significantly tempered their emphasis on testing in recent reforms such that they are now (along with Scotland) as different from England as are other European countries. What distinguishes assessment policy in England then is the degree to which it is used as a tool a)

to control what is taught; b) to police how well it is taught; and c) to encourage parents to use assessment information to select schools for their children.

All countries, including England, refer to the procedures that they have in place to address assessment for the purpose of supporting pupil learning and, whatever the nature and format of its assessments, the importance of using assessments to feedback into teaching and learning is highlighted.

There is limited emphasis in France and Japan on pupils as self and peer assessors or on qualitative, prose descriptive accounts of learning and learning contexts. There is some evidence of this in Norway. Policy in the UK generally recognises the role of the learner in the assessment enterprise explicitly, giving much attention in its guidance material to what is commonly called 'assessment for learning'. NI and Wales have scaled down their use of testing and now, like Scotland, prioritise assessment for learning. England also emphasises assessment for learning and the official policy documents of all parts of the UK offer much guidance to teachers on the conduct of this kind of assessment.

While policy in England promotes assessment for learning purposes, the high stakes nature of the assessments designed to make the system accountable compromises its potential benefits.

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APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1: PRIMARY CURRICULUM COMPARED[24]

	Lang	Alternative Lang/mother tongue	Foreign Lang	Math	Science	Envir' ment	IT	Tech	Hsty	Geog	SocStudies Civics	Arts	Art Craft	Music Dance	PE Sport	Health	Moral educ	Religious Ed	Home	Life Skills	Multi-cultural Ed
England	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional[25]	●	●	●
Ireland	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
N. Ireland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
Wales	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
Scotland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
France	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	[26]	●	●	●
Germany	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hungary	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	some[27]	●	●	●
Italy	●		●	●	●				●	●	●		●	●	●			optional	●	●	●
Netherlands	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
Norway	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●[28]	●	●	●
Spain	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	optional	●	●	●
Sweden	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Switzerland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			*some*	●	●	●
Australia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	*some*	●	●	●
Canada	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	*some optional*	●	●	●
Japan	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	some private	●	●	●
Korea	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	some private	●	●	●
NewZealand	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		some	●	●	●
Singapore	●	●	[29]	●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	some	●	●	●
USA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

24 Modified from Andrews *et al*. 2007: 27.

25 'Optional' means that a child's parents may request that the child does not study religious education.

26 Although public-sector schools in France are secular, which means that religious education is not taught as a subject in its own right, aspects of religious education are taught in other curriculum subjects to expand students' cultural knowledge and understanding of world events.

27 'Some' indicates that schools may choose whether to offer religious education within their programmes.

28 In Norway it is compulsory, but children have the right to get partial dispensation from some parts of teaching.

29 In Singapore English is regarded as an official/national language rather than as a foreign language.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 2: PRIMARY ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS COMPARED

	National Standardised assessment system[30]	Attainment Targets/Outcomes	During compulsory primary education	Published Results	Assessment at school entry
England	*Yes*	*Yes*	*7,8,9,10, 11*	*Yes (league tables)*	*5*
Ireland	Yes	Yes	No	Twice in primary phase	No
Northern Ireland	Yes	Yes	8, 11	No	4/5
Scotland	Yes	Yes	Teachers decide when children are ready to take national assessments	No	No
Wales	Yes	Yes	7, 11	Yes (for the country as a whole)	4/5
France	Yes	Yes	8	Trends only	No
Germany	No	Differs across states	No	No	6
Hungary	Yes	Yes	10	No	6
Italy	Yes	Yes	11	No	No
Norway	Some	Yes	7,11	Yes	No
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	12 for some	Yes to schools	No
Spain	Yes	Yes	9, 11	No	No
Sweden	Yes	Yes	9	No	No
Switzerland	Under review	Differs between cantons	No	No	No
Australia	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	(No)
Canada	Some	Varies	Varies	Varies	No
Japan	Yes	Yes	12	No	No
Korea	Yes	Yes	SAT	No	No
New Zealand	Yes	Yes	8/9	Yes	5/6
Singapore	Yes	Yes	10, 12	Yes	No
USA	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes (league tables increasing)	Varies

(Modified from Andrews *et al*. 2007: 31; Le Metais 2003; and other sources)

[30] Ongoing teacher assessment occurs in all countries, this is not represented in the table.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 3: OFFICIAL CURRICULUM FOCI COMPARED

	England	Wales[31]	NI[32]	Scotland[33]	France	Norway	Japan
Compulsory starting age & Primary ages/stages	5 years Key Stage 1 (5-7) Key Stage 2 (7-11)	5 years Key Stage 1 (5-7) Key Stage 2 (7-11)	5 years Foundation Stage: yrs1 & 2 KS1:yrs3 & 4 KS2: yrs 5&6	5 years Primary 1-Primary 7	6 years Elementary education: 6-11	6 years 6-12/13	6 years 6-12
National Curriculum/ Legally enforceable	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	No[34] No	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes

31 The curriculum in Wales in currently under review – the aim of the review is to establish a curriculum for the 21st century that meets the needs of individual learners whilst taking account of the broader needs of Wales. It is proposed that, following consultation in Spring 2007, revised versions of the Subject Orders will be available in Spring 2008 for implementation in September 2008. See http://www.accac.org.uk/uploads/documents/600.doc

32 See The Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary (2007) http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stages_1_and_2/northern_ireland_curriculum_primary.pdf

33 At the time of writing, piloting of elements of 'A Curriculum for Excellence' is in process and guidance is being finalised along with CPD for teachers. The year 2007-08 will be a year of familiarisation, preparation and development and it will begin in August 2008. This report concentrates on the new curriculum (a Curriculum for Excellence) available at http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/5-14/about5to14/acurriculumforexcellence

34 There is no legally enforceable National Curriculum in Scotland and all curriculum and assessment guidelines are non statutory. There are 'national priorities' however which give a sense of direction for education and curriculum policy. Two of the five of these are especially relevant to the curriculum namely 'to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement; and 'to equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition'. See http://www.nationalpriorities.org.uk/schools/schools.html

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Overall aims/goals of the curriculum	2 broad and interconnected aims of the school curriculum: to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve; to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. The NC aims reflect these: it promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental & physical development and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The 'Primary Framework' seeks to support and increase all children's access to excellent teaching, leading	To develop children's full potential. The new (revised) school curriculum aims to promote personal development and be responsive to individual needs (still being developed: more flexibility for local schools called for; concern being expressed about the challenge to breadth of the strong focus on literacy and numeracy and perceived overload at KS235)	The Revised Curriculum seeks to prepare young people for a rapidly changing world. Through opportunities to engage in active learning contexts across all areas of the curriculum the intention is to develop children's personal, interpersonal and learning skills and their ability to think both creatively and critically. Providing equality of opportunity for all children The learning opportunities through the NIC help young people to develop as individuals, as contributors to society, and as contributors to the economy and environment.	To enable all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens. A fundamental aim is to encourage a wide range of achievements and high levels of attainment. Aims to promote learning across a wide range of contexts and experiences; to promote high levels of literacy, numeracy and thinking skills, & high levels of health &wellbeing. Aims to develop children's full potential through a broad range of challenging experiences, to develop	To provide children with the tools they need for life and future learning. In 2005 the Minister for Education proclaimed that the mastery of languages constitutes an absolute priority in primary education while new methods of science and technology teaching in school represent another priority in the primary school. The improvement of pupils' command of foreign languages is a further objective linked to the consequences of enlargement of the European Area. Civic education continues to have a key place intending that pupils develop a sense of belonging	A new NC-reform – Knowledge Promotion aims of which are the cultivation of the following 5 basic skills in all subjects: *1. the ability to express oneself orally* *2. the ability to read* *3. the ability to express oneself in writing* *4. the ability to do arithmetic* *5. the ability to make use of information and communication technology* These basic skills have been incorporated into each of the subject curricula (Norwegian, Maths, natural sciences, social studies etc.) All teachers are therefore responsible for	Along with the former principles like development of 'individual dignity', 'full development of personality' and ensuring 'builders of a peaceful state and society', the new reforms aim to cultivate people who a) are independent-minded and who seek personal development b) are warm-hearted and enjoy physical well-being c) are able to become creative leaders of Century of Knowledge d) are civic-minded e) will actively participate in the formation of a state and society befitting the 21st century f) are based on the traditions and culture of Japan g) to live in a

35 http://old.accac.org.uk/uploads/documents/1507.pdf

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
(Overall aims/goals of the curriculum - CONT'D)	to exciting and successful learning.			citizenship, enterprise and creativity.	to a national community.	enabling pupils to develop basic skills through their work in various subjects.	globalized world
Curriculum rationale/ principles	Balanced and broadly based The specific purposes of the NC are to establish standards; to promote continuity and coherence; and to promote public understanding of schooling. Importance also of respect for the individual and choice for parents.	A focus on the learner. Skills development stressed Continuity and progression Flexibility Relevance for twenty first century Bilingualism Access for all pupils	Broad and balanced curriculum Integration of learning across the areas of learning. Emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society. Coherence and progression Ongoing integrated assessment Active and hands on learning	Challenge and enjoyment Breadth Progression Depth Personalisation and choice Coherence Relevance Sees curriculum as a single framework from 3-18. Need to promote learning across a wide range of contexts and experiences.	Importance of equal opportunities and the building of a shared common culture emphasizing an essential base of a 'common core' of knowledge and basic skills: literacy and arithmetic. The common core established in 2006 is the basis for drafting curricula; it has 7 major skills: proficiency in French, knowledge of a foreign language, background in maths and science, openness to IT, knowledge of the humanities; social and civic skills; independence & initiative	Education for all Curriculum needs to address 7 dimensions of the human being: spiritual, creative, working, liberally-educated, social, environmentally-aware, and integrated.	Curriculum to secure the improvement of 'academic ability'& the promotion of 'moral education'. Curriculum aims a) to educate pupils to acquire basics firmly as well as the cultivation of the ability to learn and think independently b) to develop personally c) to enrich the experimental and problem-solving learning capacities of pupils.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Curriculum Structure: **Curriculum areas/subjects** **(Curriculum**	For each subject and for each key stage, programmes of study set out what pupils should be taught, and attainment targets set out the expected standards of pupils' performance. The PsoS provide the basis for planning schemes of work. Basic Curriculum: RE and PSE NC core: English, maths, science; NC non-core: D+T, IT, history, geography, art, music and PE. Non statutory guidance on Personal, social and health education and citizenship and modern foreign language at KS2	KS1 (which is part of the Foundation Phase): Personal and social development, well being and cultural diversity; Language, literacy and communication skills; Maths, Welsh language; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Physical development; Creative Development; RE; Sex Education KS2 Curriculum RE and PSE and sex education NC core: English[36], Welsh[37], maths, science; NC non-core: Welsh 2nd lang, D+T, IT, history, geography, art, music, PSE, and PE.	Curriculum structured in terms of 'areas of learning' RE Language & Literacy Maths & Numeracy The Arts The world around us Personal Dev & Mutual Understanding (which includes citizenship) PE	(Curriculum for excellence) 8 curriculum areas: mathematics; languages: expressive arts; health and wellbeing; religious and moral education; sciences; social studies; and technologies. Modern foreign language introduced in Primary 6 (10-11 years) and carried into Primary 7.	Curriculum structured in terms of domains. Basic learning cycle: last year of nursery & first two years of elementary: French maths, discovering the world (combining science, technology, and history and geography in one subject area); civics, PE and sport, artistic education (music and art); Foreign or regional language Consolidation cycle covering last 3 years of elementary school. French language; literary education and the humanities (combining literature – speaking, reading, writing, grammar, conjugation, spelling, vocabulary; a foreign or regional language; history	National Curriculum 'Knowledge Promotion' Norwegian, natural science, maths, social science, English, foreign languages, Christianity/Religion/Ethics, arts and crafts, food and health, music, PE. Additional subjects in the Sami Knowledge Promotion: Sami (as a first language) Sami (as a second language) Sami arts and crafts	School Education Law determines the objective, goal, curricula, number of educational weeks and course subjects. Japanese, Social studies, Arithmetic, Science, Life environmental studies, Music, arts & handicrafts, and homemaking, Physical education, Moral education and Extracurricular activities. English, as a modern foreign language, encouraged but not obligatory and no time allowances given (see below)

[36] There is no statutory requirement to teach English at Key Stage 1 in Welsh-medium schools.

[37] In Welsh-speaking schools Welsh is a core subject in both Key Stages of primary education. In other schools Welsh is a non-core foundation subject.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
areas/subjects – CONT'D)					and geography; and a weekly planned discussion on living together) ; Scientific education (covering maths, experimental sciences and technology); Artistic education (music and visual arts); Physical education and sport; Civics.		
Curriculum Structure: **Cross curricular areas/ themes/ skills**	Creativity, literacy across the curriculum, education for sustainable development. Thinking skills: enquiry, reasoning, information processing, creative thinking and evaluation; Economic awareness, environmental education, citizenship Key Skills: communication, application of number, IT, working with others, improving own learning and problem solving.	Development of communication, application of number, and ICT. Development programme for thinking skills in process the aim of which is improve pupil performance; increase engagement with learning; increase the frequency of creative lessons – this is linked with 'assessment for learning'.	Thinking skills and personal capabilities Communication Personal and interpersonal skills Managing information Problem solving and decision making Creativity Working with others Self management IT Education for mutual understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH) Health Education Economic Awareness	Organisational skills; creativity; teamwork; and the ability to apply learning in new and challenging contexts.	Literacy permeates all subject areas. IT as a tool for supporting all learning. Religious and moral education to be integrated into other subjects. Since public sector schools are secular, RE is not taught as a subject in its own right but since 2001 there is a move to expand children's cultural knowledge and understanding of world events and RE to be integrated into other subjects to support this aim.	5 basic skills to integrated across the curriculum: oracy, reading, writing, arithmetic, ICT.	Reading, writing, problem solving, ability to think, creativity, academic ability and moral education.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Competency outcomes/ attainment targets	Attainment targets (ATs) set out the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils are expected to have by the end of each key stage. Except in the case of citizenship. ATs consist of 8 Level Descriptions of increasing difficulty. Each LD describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate.	Attainment targets set out the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils are expected to have by the end of each key stage. Except in the case of citizenship. ATs consist of 8 LDs of increasing difficulty. Each LD describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate. *Currently under review.*	Under review	Attainment outcomes For each curricular area there are broad attainment outcomes, each with a number of strands or aspects of learning that pupils experience. Most strands have attainment targets at five or six levels: A-E or A-F[38]. National tests are marked to criteria and levels.	Attainment targets (notions) are set for the end of each cycle.	NC contains competency outcomes on what children should know in each subject by end of 2nd, 4th and 7th grades.	Each school devises its own standards based on the national 'Courses of Study' – the latter specifies objectives for the various curriculum areas.
Pedagogical directives/ guidelines **(Pedagogical directives/**	Schools to choose how they organise their school curriculum to include the programmes of study. The national frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics and the exemplar schemes of work show how the	Teachers can determine teaching methods. Teachers have flexibility to modify the curriculum. In many cases the action necessary to respond to an individual's requirements for curriculum access will be met through greater	Teachers to select from the curriculum areas that they consider appropriate; Integration of learning encouraged to make relevant connections for learners Flexibility to modify the curriculum to local and individual	Strong emphasis on flexibility Teacher choice in teaching methogs Strong emphasis on the promotion of active learning and on learning how to learn.	Teachers select teaching methods. They are expected to organize the curriculum according to pupil needs and their own teaching style. Teachers are expected to take into account the 'learning rhythms' of each child and tailor teaching	The schools / teachers decide teaching methods, working activities, organisation of teaching. They are expected to design teaching activities to ensure 'adopted teaching' to every individual within their natural group setting.	Courses of study define the number of days and hours of instructional activity, the subjects to be taught and the sequencing of topics. Schools/teachers decide methods, working styles, teaching activities and the

[38] See http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/index.asp and http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/5to14/about5to14/curriculumforexcellence/introduction.asp

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
guidelines – CONT'D)	programmes of study and the attainment targets can be translated into practical, manageable teaching plans.	differentiation of tasks. Strong emphasis on skills especially learning how to learn.	needs. Varied to suit learning style. Enquiry based.		accordingly. across the curriculum 2.5 hours per day to be devoted to reading and writing for 6-8 year olds.		organisation of teaching. Replacement of social studies and science in the first 2 years of primary by 'Daily Life' intending to allow more integration and experienced-based learning
Curriculum time allocations **(Curriculum time allocations –**	2 hours of physical activity per week within PE recommended Generally no times specified.	No times specified.	No time allocations specified.	No time allocations. Existing time allocations discontinued.	Defined by central government. Min/Max weekly hour allocations, varying slightly for different grades. The following is for chn aged 6-8 Literature(speaking , reading, writing) 4.5-5.5 French language 1.5-2 Foreign or regional language 1.5-2 history and geography 3-3.5 living together/collective life 0.5 maths 5 experimental sciences & technology 2.5-3 music & visual arts 3 Physical education and sports 3 Cross disciplinary/integrat	Allocation of minimum total number of hours to each subject is done by the central government. Municipalities can increase the numbers, but they have to pay the extra costs by themselves. But the number of allocated hours to each subject can be changed up to 25%. This change must contribute to a better achievement of 'Competency aims'.	The number of hours per week in each subject is decided centrally. The following yearly hours allocation for year 2 (age 7) pupils illustrates the status accorded different subjects: Japanese 210 Maths 116 Life Environment Studies 79 Music 53 Art & Craft 53 PE 68.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
CONT'D)					ed into different subjects: French lang 13 Civics 1		
Current curriculum reform	Revised in 2000 Government announced in December 2007 that the curriculum will be reviewed (Rose Review).	'Foundation phase' (Children's Learning) integrating 'Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age' and the PoS for KS1 NC being trialled in 41 settings between 2004-2008.	Framework for the revised curriculum in place in Aug06 being phased in from Sept07. The Revised Curriculum includes a new Foundation Stage to cover P1& P2 placing more emphasis on skills and confidence and introduction to more formal learning when children are ready.	The Scottish[39] curriculum is currently going through a national review called 'Curriculum for Excellence' with the aim of developing a streamlined curriculum for 3-18 year olds and implementing new approaches to assessment.	Strengthened emphasis on literacy across the curriculum Foreign language at an earlier (in the basic education cycle) Civic education.	A National Curriculum was introduced under the name of : 'Knowledge Promotion' in the academic year 2006-2007.	National 'Courses of Study' for elementary education in 2002.
Most recent changes **(Most recent changes – CONT'D)**	Greater emphasis on creativity and the arts. Also on phonics in the early years of school; personalised learning; strengthening of emphasis on mental arithmetic.	Discontinuation of obligatory end-of-KS testing at KS2 from 2005 onwards. So phasing out of the statutory tasks and tests on grounds that they impact negatively on teaching and learning especially at KS2. Now teacher assessment to be	Greater emphasis on developing skills preparation for life and work and on a 'more appropriate' curriculum for the early years. KS 1 now comprises Years 3 and 4 and KS2, Years 5, 6 and 7.	More emphasis on active learning; assessment geared to the promotion of learning and teaching; Fewer, more broadly spaced levels.	A common core curriculum established in 2006 specifying content of primary education officially at national level. Changes introduced in Sept 2002 brought in some new subjects. The major change is the strengthened status of literacy	Increased status to language, maths and science - Emphasising the importance of 'adopted teaching', 'inclusion' and promotion of basic skills in all subjects: 1. the ability to express oneself orally	More emphasis on 'improving academic ability'. 'moral education', 'enhancement of individual oriented instruction'.

[39] This report draws on the existing official document about this Curriculum rather than the one it will replace

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
		the sole means of end of key stage assessment.			especially across the curriculum and the study of a foreign language from age 6 onwards.	2. the ability to read 3. the ability to express oneself in Writing 4. the ability to do arithmetic 5. the ability to make use of information and communication technology.	

TABLE 4: OFFICIAL ASSESSMENT FOCI COMPARED

	England	Wales	NI[40]	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Purposes/ Rationale	To raise standards. The purpose of end-of-key-stage summative assessment is to assess pupil achievement in relation to the expected, national standards. The aim overall is to provide schools and parents with evidence about achievement and to help parents and the public generally judge the quality of the education being provided. The purpose of ongoing formative assessment is to support teaching and learning.	Teacher assessment (ongoing) for diagnostic purposes, to support pupil progress, to record attainment, and to report to parents; Day-to-day teacher assessment seen as integral to teaching and learning. TA to record pupil attainment at end of KS2; to inform curriculum planning at school and class level; to monitor national performance.	The Annual Pupil Profile is designed to inform parents, teachers and pupils themselves.	The major emphasis is on assessment to support learning and teaching.	(with reference to national testing) To support teaching and learning through providing teachers with a tool to monitor pupil progress and to inform teaching decisions and planning; To monitor the education system; to provide comparisons of achievement over time.	At the primary level teacher assessment is for diagnostic purposes and to support pupil progress and provide information for parents. The use of marks is forbidden. A quality assessment system was introduced in 2003. Aims of this system are a) contribution to an open dialogue about the schools activities b) Supply state authorities with information about the school system c) Supply data & information about the school. National mapping tests are seen as part of this system.	National standardized tests were introduced in 2007 in Japanese and mathematics The major emphasis is on assessment to support learning and 'evaluate the effectiveness of teaching'.

[40] Assessment policy is under review at the time of writing and all obligatory assessment suspended for 06/07 year and the assessment units (tests and tasks) are to be made available on a voluntary basis in 06/07 and 07/08 depending on the extent of demand from schools.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Assessment format	KS1 tests and tasks in English (reading, writing, spelling) and a maths test. These individual test results are not reported in isolation but are used to inform the teacher assessment levels. At KS2 three maths tests, two science tests, and three English tests (reading, writing and spelling). Optional tests available within key stages (i.e. years 3, 4 and5) designed to help teachers raise standards by verifying their TA allocations.	Teacher assessment (informal, ongoing) used throughout primary; pupil self assessment encouraged. Statutory end of KS TA41 Optional task/testing material available to schools.	Statutory assessment suspended while the revised curriculum is being introduced from 2007 but an annual report in the form of a Pupil Profile report is being phased in and will be statutory for all children at KS2 from 2009/10. Emphasis on 'assessment for learning' involving: building a more open relationship between learner and teacher; clear learning intentions shared with pupils; shared/negotiated success criteria; individual target setting; taking risks for learning; advice on what and how to improve; peer and self assessment; and celebrating success.	Assessment for learning prioritised. Pupils sit national tests linked to levels in reading, writing and maths when the teacher judges them to be ready – these levels are now being revised.	Ongoing teacher assessment reported via report books. National diagnostic testing every alternate year for all 8 year olds as these children enter the consolidation cycle consisting of written tests in French and maths. National diagnostic testing at age 10 (on entry to final year of elementary ed) in some schools. End of year testing of samples for national monitoring.	National mapping tests are intended to provide feedback to the teachers, pupils, parents and the local decision makers. The results cannot be published in the media and the ranking of schools on the basis of results is prohibited.	Tests for 12 year olds in Japanese and maths.

[41] From 2005 teacher assessment is the only means of statutory assessment in Wales

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Subject/areas assessed and range of evidence collected	National curriculum assessment is a formal part of the NC Assessment tasks/tests for English and maths for pupils at end of KS1 Tests in English, maths and science for pupils at end of KS2 + Teacher Assessment for both key stages	Reading, writing and oracy in English (and Welsh) maths and science; Statutory TA covers the full range of the PoS in these areas and takes account of evidence in a range of contexts. Standard tests and tasks are now optional at both key stages	Schools will be required to assess and report annually on each pupil's progress in: Areas of Learning;Cross-Curricular Skills; and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. Assessment for learning as described above in all areas including attitudes and dispositions .	National standard assessments see above	Teachers have to record whether specific *notions* (attainment targets at cycle level) have been met, are in the process of being met, or have not been met.	National mapping tests are introduced in 2006-2007 aiming to determine whether the schools are succeeding in developing pupils' basic skills in reading 2nd grade and 5th grade. Mapping tests in English as a foreign language and maths at 5th grade.	See above. A document, 'Courses of Study, functions as National curriculum guidelines that serve as a national standard. It provides schools with the content and the objectives of each course. All though the elementary school students are not required to pass national tests in order to move on to the next level of schooling. Competition is strong because of the system of entrance exams for prestigious private high schools or colleges.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Grades/ marks/ descriptions/ judgements	The level descriptions provide the basis for making teacher judgements (Teacher Assessment) about pupils' performance at the end of KS1&2. In deciding on a pupil's level of attainment at the end of a key stage, teachers should judge which description best fits the pupil's performance. When doing so, each description should be considered alongside descriptions for adjacent levels in an 8-level scale. Marks in the KS2 assessments are aggregated and pupils obtain a composite mark in each of English, maths, and science.	Teachers have to reach a rounded judgement. A level is allocated in reading, writing and oracy in English (and Welsh) maths and science; and an overall subject level in each of these subjects.	Teachers are expected to use a varied range of assessment techniques as an integral part of the learning and teaching process (including tests). These assessments are used to make judgements at the end of each year about the level at which children are working.	National tests are marked to criteria. Children can be awarded level Flexible approach in that level can be awarded without meeting every criterion for that level; emphasis on judgement.	Children are promoted from class to class within a cycle based on teacher assessments and in consultation with parents.	The use of marks/grades at primary education level is prohibited (6-12/13).	Content of instruction and objectives in 'Courses of study' provide the basis for informal teacher assessment without grades or marks. There is no grade retention and no skipping of grades.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Ages/ Stages / Time of year	End of KS1at age 7, From Jan-June End of KS2 at age 11, usually May.	End of KS2 (11yrs) May/June	Ongoing assessment throughout the year as described above	National tests when the teacher deems that the children are ready to take them.	On entry to the consolidation cycle (age 8)	Mapping test for basic skills in reading in the middle of 2nd grade and 5th grade. Mapping test in English as a foreign language and maths at 5th grade.	Curriculum-based tests administered by teachers to inform teaching and learning decisions. At age 12 standardised tests Japanese and maths
Reporting assessments/ progress	Teachers are required to report annually to parents on pupils' progress. Results from summative end of KS tests and assessment tasks and TA are reported in relation to both national standards (i.e. NC criteria) and national performance (i.e. spread of results).		An Annual Pupil Profile Report (PP) which summarises all the assessment information available including any diagnostic assessment. Diagnostic assessments as part of the PP consists of Interactive Computerised Assessment System (InCAS) being phased in starting with Y5 in 07/08	Schools are expected to report to parents on their children's strengths and weaknesses, including next steps in learning and on their child's level of attainment in the NC as well as information about personal and social development. Results of any tests are published annually for current parents in the schools and sent to the local authority. The LA uses the aggregated results to monitor progress in relation to national priorities.	The School Report Book is a link between home and school is used to show children's progress.	Schools are required to report the results of the tests to the local and central educational authorities. Parents get information about the results of their own child.	Internal curriculum-based tests for internal use. National test results communicated to schools and parents
League Tables	Published by school every year for end of KS2 aimed at enabling	No league tables	No league tables	No league tables	No league tables	Yes, league tables are published every year. The tables list a	No league tables

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
(League Tables – CONT'D)	parents judge the most appropriate school for their child. The tables list a school's results indicating the % of pupils achieving at the expected level (L4) for that stage in each of English, maths, and science in the tests and in TA.					school's results indicating the percentage of pupils achieving at three different achievement levels.	
Assessment reforms and most recent changes	Changes at KS1	Discontinuation of end-of-KS testing at KS2 from 2005 onwards *Currently being piloted: a programme linking thinking skills and assessment for learning, the aim of which is improve pupil performance; increase engagement with learning; increase the frequency of creative lessons.*	Order 2006 revokes previous legislation. From 06/07, end of KS1 and 2 TA are no longer statutory; The annual end-of-year school report to be replaced in 07/08 with a cumulative Pupil Profile for Year 5 pupils.	The Scottish curriculum is currently going through a national review called 'Curriculum for Excellence' with the aim of developing a streamlined curriculum for 3-18 year olds and implementing new approaches to assessment. Specifically, there will be greater emphasis on professional judgements made by teachers.	Reading, writing and maths achievement of 8 year olds were tested at the beginning of CE1 for the first time in October 2006	Introducing national mapping tests for 2nd graders in reading and for 5th graders in reading in Norwegian and in English as a foreign language and in maths. The content of the mapping tests will be based on the subject syllabus goals for basic skills and competency aims as these are formulated in NC.	
National Target Setting	The Government has established national targets for the proportion of 11-year-olds			National standards in maths, science, reading and writing are surveyed on a 4-year cycle to		The new NC sets clear competency criteria. The new subject curricula contain clear	Concrete and clearly formulated objectives and content for instruction in

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
(National Target Setting – CONT'D)	achieving level 4 (the expected level for this stage) in English and maths NC tests at the end of KS2. Schools are required to set their own targets for the proportions of their pupils who will reach these national targets and their results have to be reported in school prospectuses and annual reports to school governors against their projected targets. Optional tests in English and maths are available to assist schools in monitoring pupils' progress towards these targets. To support target setting for pupils who achieve significantly below age-related expectations, performance criteria have been developed in English and maths.			monitor performance standards over time.		competency aims for what pupils should know in each subject by the end of 2nd and 4th grade. The national mapping tests must be in accordance with these competency aims.	national curriculum 'Courses of Study'.

	England	Wales	NI	Scotland	France	Norway	Japan
Participation in International Studies of Achievement	UK-designed 'world class tests' (problem solving oriented) for the most able 9 year olds are designed to 'recognise, record and benchmark individual achievement and ability of the top 10%' of 9 year olds.	PISA (15 year olds in maths, literacy and science; PIRLS (reading for 9 and 10 year olds) TIMSS (maths and science).	PISA (15 year olds in maths, literacy and science; PIRLS (reading for 9 and 10 year olds) TIMSS (maths and science).	PISA (15 year olds in maths, literacy and science; PIRLS (reading for 9 and 10 year olds) TIMSS (maths and science).	PISA TIMSS	PISA PIRLS TIMSS	PISA TIMSS

APPENDIX 2

THE PRIMARY REVIEW PERSPECTIVES, THEMES AND SUB THEMES

The Primary Review's enquiries are framed by three broad perspectives, the third of which, primary education, breaks down into ten themes and 23 sub-themes. Each of the latter then generates a number of questions. The full framework of review perspectives, themes and questions is at www.primaryreview.org.uk

The Review Perspectives

P1 Children and childhood
P2 Culture, society and the global context
P3 Primary education

The Review Themes and Sub-themes

T1 Purposes and values
- T1a Values, beliefs and principles
- T1b Aims

T2 Learning and teaching
- T2a Children's development and learning
- T2b Teaching

T3 Curriculum and assessment
- T3a Curriculum
- T3b Assessment

T4 Quality and standards
- T4a Standards
- T4b Quality assurance and inspection

T5 Diversity and inclusion
- T5a Culture, gender, race, faith
- T5b Special educational needs

T6 Settings and professionals
- T6a Buildings and resources
- T6b Teacher supply, training, deployment & development
- T6c Other professionals
- T6d School organisation, management & leadership
- T6e School culture and ethos

T7 Parenting, caring and educating
- T7a Parents and carers
- T7b Home and school

T8 Beyond the school
- T8a Children's lives beyond the school
- T8b Schools and other agencies

T9 Structures and phases
- T9a Within-school structures, stages, classes & groups
- T9b System-level structures, phases & transitions

T10 Funding and governance
- T10a Funding
- T10b Governance

APPENDIX 3

THE EVIDENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRIMARY REVIEW

The Review has four evidential strands. These seek to balance opinion seeking with empirical data; non-interactive expressions of opinion with face-to-face discussion; official data with independent research; and material from England with that from other parts of the UK and from international sources. This enquiry, unlike some of its predecessors, looks outwards from primary schools to the wider society, and makes full though judicious use of international data and ideas from other countries.

Submissions

Following the convention in enquiries of this kind, submissions have been invited from all who wish to contribute. By June 2007, nearly 550 submissions had been received and more were arriving daily. The submissions range from brief single-issue expressions of opinion to substantial documents covering several or all of the themes and comprising both detailed evidence and recommendations for the future. A report on the submissions will be published in late 2007.

Soundings

This strand has two parts. The *Community Soundings* are a series of nine regionally based one to two day events, each comprising a sequence of meetings with representatives from schools and the communities they serve. The Community Soundings took place between January and March 2007, and entailed 87 witness sessions with groups of pupils, parents, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and heads, and with educational and community representatives from the areas in which the soundings took place. In all, there were over 700 witnesses. The *National Soundings* are a programme of more formal meetings with national organisations both inside and outside education. National Soundings A are for representatives of non-statutory national organisations, and they focus on educational policy. National Soundings B are for outstanding school practitioners; they focus on school and classroom practice. National Soundings C are variably-structured meetings with statutory and other bodies. National Soundings A and B will take place between January and March 2008. National Soundings C are outlined at 'other meetings' below.

Surveys

30 surveys of published research relating to the Review's ten themes have been commissioned from 70 academic consultants in universities in Britain and other countries. The surveys relate closely to the ten Review themes, and the complete list appears in Appendix 4. Taken together, they will provide the most comprehensive review of research relating to primary education yet undertaken. They are being published in thematic groups from October 2007 onwards.

Searches

With the co-operation of DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA and OECD, the Review is re-assessing a range of official data bearing on the primary phase. This will provide the necessary demographic, financial and statistical background to the Review and an important resource for its later consideration of policy options.

Other meetings (now designated National Soundings C)

In addition to the formal evidence-gathering procedures, the Review team meets members of various national bodies for the exchange of information and ideas: government and opposition representatives; officials at DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA, GTC, NCSL and IRU; representatives of the teaching unions; and umbrella groups representing organisations involved in early years, primary education and teacher education. The first of three sessions with the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee took place in March 2007. Following the replacment of DfES by two separate departments, DCSF and DIUS, it is anticipated that there will be further meetings with this committee's successor.

APPENDIX 4

THE PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

The interim reports, which are being released in stages from October 2007, include the 30 research surveys commissioned from external consultants together with reports on the Review's two main consultation exercises: the community soundings (87 witness sessions with teachers, heads, parents, children and a wide range of community representatives, held in different parts of the country during 2007) and the submissions received from large numbers of organisations and individuals in response to the invitation issued when the Review was launched in October 2006.

The list below starts with the community soundings and submissions reports written by the Review team. Then follow the 30 research surveys commissioned from the Review's consultants. They are arranged by Review theme, not by the order of their publication. Report titles may be subject to minor amendment.

Once published, each interim report, together with a briefing summarising its findings, may be downloaded from the Review website, www.primaryreview.org.uk .

REPORTS ON PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

1. *Community soundings: the Primary Review regional witness sessions* (Robin Alexander and Linda Hargreaves)

2. *Submissions received by the Primary Review*

PURPOSES AND VALUES

3. *Aims as policy in English primary education*. Research survey 1/1 (John White)

4. *Aims and values in primary education: England and other countries*. Research survey 1/2 (Maha Shuayb and Sharon O'Donnell)

5. *Aims for primary education: the changing national context*. Research survey 1/3 (Stephen Machin and Sandra McNally)

6. *Aims for primary education: changing global contexts.* Research survey 1/4 (Hugh Lauder, John Lowe and Rita Chawla-Duggan)

LEARNING AND TEACHING

7. *Children's cognitive development and learning*. Research survey 2/1a (Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant)

8. *Children's social development, peer interaction and classroom*. Research survey 2/1b (Christine Howe and Neil Mercer)

9. *Teaching in primary schools*. Research survey 2/2 (Robin Alexander and Maurice Galton)

10. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: the curriculum dimension*. Research survey 2/3 (Bob McCormick and Bob Moon)

11. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: evidence from TLRP*. Research survey 2/4 (Mary James and Andrew Pollard)

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

12. *Primary curriculum and assessment: England and other countries*. Research survey 3/1 (Kathy Hall and Kamil Øzerk)

13. *The trajectory and impact of national curriculum and assessment reform*. Research survey 3/2 (Harry Torrance, Dominic Wyse, Elaine McCreery and Russell Jones)

14. *Primary curriculum futures.* Research survey 3/3 (James Conroy, Moira Hulme and Ian Menter)

15. *Assessment alternatives for primary education*. Research survey 3/4 (Wynne Harlen)

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

16. *Standards and quality in English primary schools over time: the national evidence*. Research survey 4/1 (Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell)

17. *Standards in English primary education: the international evidence*. Research survey 4/2 (Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist)

18. *Quality assurance in English primary education*. Research survey 4/3 (Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont)

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

19. *Children in primary education: demography, culture, diversity and inclusion.* Research survey 5/1 (Mel Ainscow, Jean Conteh, Alan Dyson and Frances Gallanaugh)

20. *Learning needs and difficulties among children of primary school age: definition, identification, provision and issues*. Research survey 5/2 (Harry Daniels and Jill Porter)

21. *Children and their primary schools: pupils' voices*. Research survey 5/3 (Carol Robinson and Michael Fielding)

SETTINGS AND PROFESSIONALS

22. *Primary education: the physical environment*. Research survey 6/1 (Karl Wall, Julie Dockrell and Nick Peacey)

23. *Primary education: the professional environment*. Research survey 6/2 (Ian Stronach, Andy Pickard and Elizabeth Jones)

24. *Teachers and other professionals: training, induction and development*. Research survey 6/3 (Olwen McNamara, Rosemary Webb and Mark Brundrett)

25. *Teachers and other professionals: workforce management and reform.* Research survey 6/4 (Hilary Burgess)

PARENTING, CARING AND EDUCATING

26. *Parenting, caring and educating*. Research survey 7/1 (Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley, Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin)

BEYOND THE SCHOOL

27. *Children's lives outside school and their educational impact*. Research survey 8/1 (Berry Mayall)

28. *Primary schools and other agencies*. Research survey 8/2 (Ian Barron, Rachel Holmes, Maggie MacLure and Katherine Runswick-Cole)

STRUCTURES AND PHASES

29. *The structure of primary education: England and other countries*. Research survey 9/1 (Anna Riggall and Caroline Sharp)

30. *Organising learning and teaching in primary schools: structure, grouping and transition*. Research survey 9/2 (Peter Blatchford, Judith Ireson, Susan Hallam, Peter Kutnick and Andrea Creech)

FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

31. *The financing of primary education.* Research survey 10/1 (Philip Noden and Anne West)

32. *The governance, administration and control of primary education*. Research survey 10/2 (Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder).

The Primary Review is a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. It is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, based at the University of Cambridge and directed by Robin Alexander. The Review was launched in October 2006 and aims to publish its final report in autumn 2008.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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