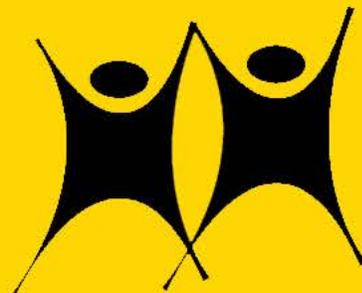


NAPE



Towards a balanced and broadly-based curriculum

Virtual Conference
Monday 8 March 2021, 4.15pm – 6.45pm



National Association for Primary Education in collaboration with
Humanities 20:20 Project and **Primary Umbrella Group**

The Schiller Keynote Lecture by Dr Tony Eaude

**Why a balanced and broadly-based curriculum matters:
particularly for young children and those from disadvantaged
backgrounds**

The Christian Schiller Lecture 2021

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Overview

- ▶ A few words on Christian Schiller
- ▶ Some thoughts on the last year
- ▶ Trying to argue why a balanced and broadly-based curriculum matters especially for young children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- ▶ Four main arguments

The law/inspection

How young children learn best

Democratic citizenship

Social justice/inclusion

A balanced and broadly-based curriculum

- ▶ Broadly-based - secure foundations - but a trade-off between depth and breadth?
- ▶ Balanced in various respects
 - between different fields of study and disciplines;
 - within all disciplines between tradition and innovation; and
 - in the teaching of different values and traditions, reflecting and responding to cultural diversity
 - different approaches to learning and teaching

How young children learn

- ▶ Actively, through exploration, creation, discussion
- ▶ By example and practice- watching, listening, being listened to, imitating and adapting - more than by instruction
- ▶ The central role of context and relationships
- ▶ Exciting, enjoyable and memorable experiences and moments
- ▶ The horizon of possibilities
- ▶ The well of memory
- ▶ Mirrors and windows
- ▶ Play, drama, (children's) talk

How children benefit from the humanities

The Humanities 20:20 manifesto (www.humanities2020.org.uk) summarizes why the humanities matter, since they enable children to:

- ▶ consider questions about the meaning and purpose of their lives
- ▶ explore their own identities, values and beliefs and concepts such as time, space and faith
- ▶ develop skills and habits associated with critical and creative thinking
- ▶ extend their cultural and imaginative horizons
- ▶ learn to empathise with people who are different, as well as those who are similar, thereby celebrating diversity and challenging stereotypes
- ▶ learn about democracy, global citizenship and sustainability
- ▶ strengthen a sense of care for themselves, each other and the planet in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

How children benefit from the arts

Elliot Eisner argues that the arts enable children to:

- ▶ learn to make good judgements about qualitative relationships, with judgement rather than (rigid) rules prevailing;
- ▶ learn that problems can have more than one solution and questions more than one answer;
- ▶ celebrate multiple perspectives, since there are many ways to see and interpret the world;
- ▶ learn that in complex forms of problem-solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity, requiring people to be able and willing to surrender to unanticipated possibilities as the work unfolds;
- ▶ come to know that small differences can have large effects;
- ▶ recognize that neither words nor numbers exhaust what we can know;
- ▶ learn to express what cannot easily be said in words, so that when they are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words to do so; and
- ▶ have experiences that they can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what they are capable of feeling.

Social justice and inclusion

- ▶ Social justice and inclusion demands that children from all backgrounds have a wide range of experiences, but privileged children have a headstart
- ▶ So schools have a key role
- ▶ But this argument is the hardest to make, as it may run counter to common sense
- ▶ Be wary of the cultural capital argument
- ▶ Draw on children's existing funds of knowledge
- ▶ Who is expected to adapt?

Four main arguments

Four main arguments in favour of a balanced and broadly-based primary curriculum:

- ▶ that the law states that schools must offer this and that inspectors expect this (at least from 7 years old);
- ▶ one based on how children create robust and flexible identities, enhancing their well-being and founded on a sense of agency;
- ▶ one based on a conception of democratic citizenship in which children are increasingly enabled to deal with complex ideas right from the start; and
- ▶ a social justice/inclusion one on the grounds that such a curriculum will open up opportunities from which many children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will otherwise be excluded.

Some final thoughts

A curriculum is much more than a syllabus.

We need to unlock undiscovered potential, opening up new possibilities, drawing on existing funds of knowledge.

Environments and pedagogy - the how of teaching - matter more than the written curriculum.

Learning is reciprocal and requires relationships of warmth and trust.

In an inclusive community, each child must be loved and cared for and challenged in different ways, whatever their ability or background - and care for others.

Learning is a serious matter but should not be a solemn one.

A narrow, dull, curriculum impoverishes every child, but especially those whose horizons are limited.

The potential and creativity of both children and their teachers must be unlocked from the current constraints.

The changes required are difficult and do not happen overnight but they are possible.