

Explore the social  
and political factors



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Explore the social and political factors that led to the formation of the national curriculum. The 1944 Education Act, put in place by the conservative president of the board of education, R. A. Butler stated that there should be education for all, from primary all the way up to secondary education. That the duty of the local education authority should be one as to develop the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community, that of school. However, during this time the only key requirements set out within the national curriculum based on what should be taught was for all schools to teach religious education.

The national curriculum was not a guide for teachers to know what to teach, but rather the curriculum was largely determined by the teachers themselves, based on work topics commercially available within textbooks. Pupils were taught based on what was available rather than what was necessary to have a strong academic understanding. The curriculum for older pupils tended to be based on examination syllabuses chosen by their teachers, again availability outweighing basic needs.

There was limited influence from professional teaching bodies to introduce central direction of the curriculum allowing teachers to continue teaching an array of subjects and topics limited to resources of their textbooks. With such concern over falling standards of the education system within the UK, the early 1960s saw the Conservative minister of Education, David Eccles introduced a curriculum study group within the Department of education and Science. This group was then replaced with the school council by Eccles successor Sir Edward Boyle in 1964 to look and develop the curriculum and education.

The school council was formed with central and local government and teachers in order to oppose the accusation that the study group was self-ruled when governed by Eccles. The school council looked at new ways of teaching and assessing of subjects in order to create a consistency. In the 1970s, concern rose again from the public, that the UK school system was not being well served. Under Shirley Williams as Labour Secretary of state, the Department of Education and Science and Her Majesty's inspectors published papers on the curriculum issues, criticising both primary and econdary schools for their lack of balance in their curriculum and not accounting for changes occurring in society. In 1979 the Conservative Secretaries of State, Mark Carlisle, indicated that there should be a national consensus on a desirable framework for the curriculum following on from the Circular 14/77 report and review. This report led to Carlisle overseeing the abolition of the School Council and replacing it with the Curriculum and Development Committee and the Secondary Examinations council.

Under Sir Keith Joseph as Secretary of State, 1985 saw the Better Schools White Paper recommended a proceeding with a nationally- agreed curriculum. In 1987 the Department of Education and Science, under Kenneth Baker, issued a document that set out the foundation for a national curriculum. The document identified four key points: stability and consistency within the curriculum; a broad and balanced curriculum; support schoolsaccountabilityand pupil attainment and aiding public understanding of the work of the schools.

Following this, the 1988 Education Reform Act, passed by parliament set out the framework for the National Curriculum. Parliament's key point in this

development and centralisation of the curriculum was as follows: to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of pupils which echoed the 1944 Education Act and to prepare pupils for the opportunities of adult life. The development of the National curriculum was overseen by two new advisory bodies, the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council.

They sought expertise from a wide variety of educational backgrounds that drew on evidence and expertise throughout the education system emerging with a detailed framework for subject content which schools should be required to follow. The curriculum would be structured around Key Stages and be subject based, all subjects would be studied from age 5 up to age 16, covering the core subjects of English, Mathematics and science and foundation subjects of art, history, physical education, geography and music. Modern foreign languages would be taught from age 11.

The syllabus would be set out in a Programme of Study which would map out each subject at each Key Stage and include a scale of attainment levels to guide teacher's assessment. Life and skills subjects were to be integrated within school teaching, including religious education and personal, social and health education. Testing within the National Curriculum was also implemented. These were drawn up by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT). The TGAT sought to use a range of assessments that could be delivered and marked by teachers.

Teacher's assessments would be accompanied by national-administered standardised tests, known as Key Stage Tests. These test results would then be published in performance tables to exhibit pupil's levels of attainments. In

1989 the national curriculum was introduced into primary schools and was then rolled out across secondary throughout the 1990s. In 1991 key stage testing had begun and by 1993 the inspection of schools was transferred over to Non-Ministerial Department of State from Her Majesty Inspectors and local authority inspection teams. The new inspection team was a independent body, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).