



Fig. 1. Local history and material culture educational activities for 2nd grader primary school students in Agrinio, Greece. Image by DIADRASIS.

THE WORLD CURRICULUM PROJECT

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This paper introduces a new project which aims to investigate the school curricula for every country in the world to reveal whether school children are being made aware of the archaeological evidence which underpins the ‘facts’ they are being taught. The curricula for history will be the main focus but subjects such as geography and citizenship will be included in the research. The use of textbooks and learning outdoors will also be part of the remit of the volunteer researchers. The research will be published online and we hope that further analyses will appear in academic papers and books.

Keywords:

curriculum – schools – archaeology – history – textbooks – evidence – learning outdoors

1. BACKGROUND

Politicians and government bodies, rather than teachers, tend to dominate the thinking and the processes of creating national curricula. Some countries are content to define their views about the role of education in their societies, leaving the schools or their teachers to decide what they should teach their pupils. Others take a more authoritarian point of view and impose a detailed curriculum, sometimes specifying the number of hours to be given to the various aspects of each subject. This type of curriculum tends to overload both teachers and pupils, leaving little or no time for new subjects or initiatives. There have been few in-depth surveys; however, relatively recent research has been carried out by Euroclio – The European Standing Conference of History Teachers’ Associations across forty-four countries, in and around Europe (Leeuw Roord 2004 and see also Roberts 2004). Even fewer surveys have been carried out by archaeologists (for example, Stone & MacKenzie 1990¹; Stone & Molyneaux 1994²)³. Regular changes are often made to national curricula, especially when there is a change in government (Corbishley 2011, 111). The author was involved in creating background research papers and policy documents for the first

National Curriculum in England while working at the Council for British Archaeology (Corbishley 1999) and then at English Heritage. He began to research the place of archaeology in school curricula while creating a degree module in ‘Archaeology and Education’ at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London in 2003 for post-graduate students from countries across the world. This module has been taught since then and a similar course has more recently been developed by the author in Greece⁴.

2. DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROJECT

It soon became clear that studying and analysing published national curricula involved seeking answers to a number of difficult questions, in particular within the subject of history; for example, how far are state curricula free from political manipulation? Does the state control education through the textbooks it allows to be published?

Partial research produces only partial results and so the project had to be carried out on a world-wide basis. This research looks at five areas of the curriculum. First is the general basis on which a state specifies

¹ See for example Sanoja & Vargas 1990.

² See for example Dahiya 1994.

³ See the author’s research into curricula generally in Corbishley 2011, 110-124 and in the use and abuse of textbooks 125-148.

⁴ The course is part of an MA degree in Heritage Management offered by the University of Kent and the Athens University of Economics and Business at Eleusina, near Athens. See <http://www.inherity.org/training/ma-program/management/>



Fig. 2. Interactive exhibits from the Science, Art and Technology of the Ancient Greeks' exhibition, Herakleidon Museum, Athens, Greece. Image by DIADRASIS.



Fig. 3. Falstad Centre Foundation's Museum in Norway. Falstad Center Foundation is a «national centre for the education and documentation of the history of imprisonment in the Second World War, humanitarian international law and human rights». Image by DIADRASIS.

what ought to be taught and at which levels in primary and secondary schools; second is the study of the past, using evidence, in history and where it exists in the teaching of archaeology; third is the place of archaeological evidence in other curriculum subjects; fourth are the issues surrounding the study of the past and societies' views of heritage, particularly in the subjects of citizenship or civics; fifth are the opportunities national curricula provide for learning outside the classroom.

The main research questions for our volunteer researchers are:

GENERAL

- What is the general purpose of school education? (General introduction to school education giving ages of attendance, grade/age boundaries).
- Does the country have a national curriculum,

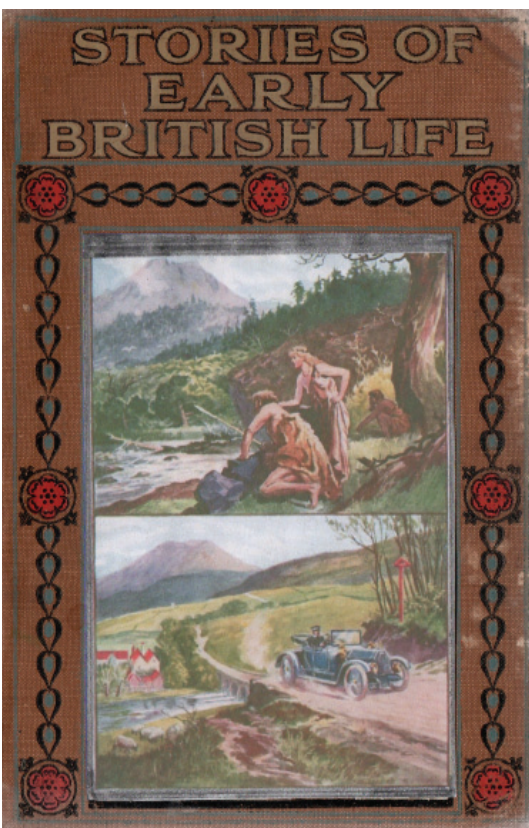


Fig. 4. Stories of Early British Life by Scott Elliot (1923). Textbooks were commonly used in primary and secondary schools in the UK. Some, as here, were reference books for the school library and the teacher. This book covers the first residents of Britain until Roman times. It is unusual because it encourages its reader to observe the differences between then and now. Image by the author.



Fig. 5. Young visitors in the Bahrain National Museum. Image by DIADRASIS.



Fig. 6. One of the the Bahrain National Museum's exhibition hall. Image by DIADRASIS.

standardised across the country or by individual states within it? (Date of the introduction of current curriculum, frequency of updated curriculum documents).

HISTORY

- What does the history curriculum cover? (Where the country has put subjects together –for example, history with geography - it looks particularly at the history elements).

- Does the history curriculum actually make references to archaeology?

- Does the history curriculum follow the chronological approach? (When does the history curriculum begin and end and how much time is devoted to the prehistoric/pre-writing periods?).

- Does the curriculum encourage the use of the physical evidence for the past in history teaching? (This may not be evident in the curriculum itself but may be clear from sources such as textbooks and government or state resources for teachers).

LEARNING OUTDOORS

- Do schools organise visits to historic sites and museums? (Please differentiate between the two. How many times a year?).

- Do any schools make use of their local environment? (For example, in studying the history of their school and its surroundings or the town/village in which the school is located).

⁵ For countries which have federated systems, such as China and the United States, there will be reports on each state or province and one report on the national picture of the curricula.

- Are these visits considered to be part of curriculum work or just an 'outing'?

- Do teachers rely only on visiting sites which have on-site education staff?

CITIZENSHIP/SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Are there elements in the curriculum which specify or may allow for the inclusion of the study of the historic environment? (For example, there may be specific references to students being encouraged to investigate and discuss the threats to the past included in a general concern for threats from global warming or redevelopment).

TEXTBOOKS/RESOURCES

- Are the textbooks published by the state? Does the education authority only allow the use of books which are on its recommended list?

- Does the state or the local education authority publish advice for teachers to help them in their history teaching? (Please note statutory and non-statutory documents).

3. STAGED RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

The curriculum research will be carried out in two stages:

Stage 1 will be the collection of information and data about each country or state⁵;



Fig. 7. Interactive exhibits in Fort St. Elmo, Valetta, Malta. Image by DIADRASIS.

Stage 2 will be the analysis of that research with publication on the website and/or in academic journals and will cover topics such as regional analyses (e.g. North America) and topics (such as the use of state-authorised textbooks in school history teaching).

An editorial board is being established to advise on the contents of the website, publication journal articles and future projects.

4. FINDING THE RESEARCHERS

As this is a globally-based project and the author works for two universities which draw their students from across the world, it seemed obvious that some researchers should be recruited from these two institutions. This created research opportunities for current and former students, giving them the opportunity to publish papers under their own names. All these volunteer researchers have some experience in archaeology or heritage/museums and some knowledge of education in primary or secondary schools in their own countries. All will be writing about their own countries or ones in which they have lived/ worked. Guidelines for researching and writing are discussed with each researcher.

5. PUBLICATION OF THE PROJECT

Publication will be through the University College London website and there are plans for analyses of world curricula in both digital and paper forms. Publication will be for individual countries with separate papers for each state or province where necessary⁶.

6. WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Commissioning is generally carried out in the Autumn and Spring terms and, so far, papers have been completed for eight countries or states with 12 due this summer. These include papers from Europe, USA, Australia, Central Asia, China and Africa. A template for the project is in preparation and it is hoped that this will be uploaded to the UCL website later this year (2018).

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⁶ The research report on England has been written by the author as a guide for volunteer researchers and will be emailed on request.

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