Curriculum integration: the challenges for primary and secondary schools in developing a new curriculum in the expressive arts

Judith Kneen[a*], Thomas Breeze[a], Sian Davies-Barnes[a], Vivienne John[a], Emma Thayer[a]

[a] Cardiff Metropolitan University

[*] Judith Kneen, j.kneen@cardiffmet.ac.uk

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Abstract

Curriculum integration is a feature of many new curricula that have emerged in different countries since around the turn of the millennium. It focuses on removing the boundaries between traditional subject specialisms, to enable more holistic and 'joined-up' learning opportunities. This study draws on the experiences of a group of primary and secondary teachers in Wales, engaged in creating a framework for an integrated curriculum for expressive arts. Whilst the teachers are united in their ambition for establishing a curriculum that gives greater status to the arts, curriculum integration presents significant challenges, notably in how subject knowledge is understood and presented within an integrated curriculum. The teachers take different approaches to curriculum integration, with primary teachers favouring a *transdisciplinary* approach, with child-led learning and themes taking precedence, and secondary teachers opting for *multidisciplinary* approaches, where the themes are organising devices but where subjects take priority. Differing practices suggest differing conceptions of subject knowledge and mastery within an integrated curriculum. Drawing, in particular, on Bernstein's concepts relating to knowledge discourses, this paper suggests that the danger of an integrated curriculum is weakened disciplinary knowledge. Whilst this paper relates to the arts, the messages about curriculum integration might be applied more widely.

Key words: curriculum integration; expressive arts; primary teachers; secondary teachers

Introduction

Curriculum integration (CI) has been promoted as one of a number of approaches for transforming education (Scott, 2015), changes that have been indicative of the sort of 'curricular turn' noted by Priestley and Sinnema (2014, p.50) and coinciding with the turn of the millennium. Countries such as New Zealand, (NZ Ministry of Education, 2015), Scotland (Education Scotland, 2019) and Australia (ACARA, 2010) have experienced this type of curricular change. Together with aspects such as problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity, working across traditional curriculum boundaries has been cited as helpful for preparing learners for the demands of twenty-first century life. This article focuses on CI within expressive arts, where there are well established connections between subjects (e.g. Abbs, 1987/2012; Cultural Learning Alliance, 2018; Eisner, 2003) and so one might expect integration in the expressive arts to be less problematic than for other areas of the curriculum. However, devising a framework around five subject areas that have traditionally been regarded as separate, particularly at secondary level, has proved to be a considerable challenge, and indicates the complexity and difficulty of CI more generally.

This article draws from a study exploring the experiences of teachers engaged by government to drive curricular change in Wales. Like new curricula elsewhere, the emerging curriculum in Wales promotes working across traditional discipline borders. Graham Donaldson, the architect of the new Welsh curriculum, has noted an 'unhelpful polarisation' (Donaldson, 2015, p.6) between the traditional perspective of the curriculum as one of 'a framework of subjects' (p.5) with carefully defined subject content and an alternative view, held more internationally, of the curriculum as being 'framed in terms of the key skills capacities or

competencies' (p.5) to be developed in learners. He proposed a curriculum which is structured:

> to ensure that the vital contribution of disciplinary learning is preserved but is supplemented by other aspects that relate directly to the needs of today and provide sound preparation for the challenges of tomorrow (Donaldson, 2015, p.36).

This new curriculum is organised around six areas of learning and experience (AoLE): expressive arts; health and well-being; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; mathematics and numeracy; and science and technology.

A distinctive feature of curriculum development in Wales is its 'bottom up' approach. This has entailed the appointment of Pioneer Practitioners (hereafter Pioneers) - teachers from primary, secondary and special schools selected by Welsh Government (WG) to support the creation of the new curriculum (WG, 2015a). Different groups of Pioneers have been formed. This study focuses on those creating the new curriculum framework for the expressive arts (EA), i.e. dance, drama, film and digital media, music and visual arts (WG, 2019a). The draft curriculum asserts the government's ambition for EA: 'learners are entitled to access all five disciplines'(WG, 2019b) with clear progression and continuity from age 3 to 16. This endorsement of the arts by WG builds on recommendations from an earlier report on the arts in schools which called for 'a commitment to the provision of high quality arts education and access to the arts' (Smith, 2013 p.4). The report responds to the marginalisation of the arts within the school curriculum, calling for the arts to become 'core' as opposed to 'peripheral' within the curriculum (p.47). However, it is not clear whether an integrated curriculum will allow the integrity of individual subjects be maintained and the mastery of subject required for those who wish to study at a higher level. Before exploring the nature of CI, therefore, it would be helpful to consider the nature of the curriculum and subject specialism.

Curriculum and subject knowledge

A curriculum framework is an organising structure for what we consider worth passing on to the next generation. The origins of the term 'curriculum' lie in the Latin *currere,* which relates to running, racing and courses. It traditionally refers to a course or programme of study, which can also be 'an expression of societal expectations… that captures the "why"' of education (Marope, 2017, p.14). This view of the curriculum is regarded as a limiting one by Marope who expects that a twenty-first century curriculum should be

> a dynamic and transformative articulation of collective expectations of the purpose, quality, and relevance of education and learning to holistic, inclusive, just, peaceful, and sustainable development, and to the well-being and fulfillment of current and future generations (2017, p.10)

a view that chimes with the 'curricular turn' noted earlier.

Bernstein describes a curriculum as being made up of units of time which are filled with content (1975/2003, p71). How much time is allocated to a subject, and whether it is compulsory or optional, accords a level of status (*ibid*.). Consequently, some subjects may be viewed as more important than others, as indicated by their designation as *core* subjects, which in turn leads to the marginalisation of other subjects such as arts subjects (Hennessy, Rolfe and Chedzoy, 2001; Oelkers and Klee, 2007).

Bernstein further defines the curriculum as being one of two kinds. In the first, the elements of curriculum content have clear boundaries and are 'isolated from each other' (Bernstein, 1975/2003, p.71). This is a *collection* type of curriculum, where the content and direction of such a curriculum is ultimately 'in the hands of those who teach it' (*ibid.* p.72). Bernstein contrasts this with an *integrated* curriculum where the elements of content 'stand in open relation to each other' (*ibid.*) and where the content is subsidiary to the overall idea behind

the curriculum. The curriculum in the UK has traditionally been of the *collection* type, particularly within the secondary phase. Subjects have been the organising model, and specialism/mastery within subject has occurred as the learner grows older and studies for post-16 examinations. Knowledge at this level becomes more than just a body of content; it is a 'sacred' discipline, imbuing power to the holder (p.74). An *integrated* curriculum, on the other hand, is a more open and flexible system where teachers can be more 'united' (p.75) and co-operative, but because it is not the predominant model (within the secondary phase, at least) it will require teachers to engage with new approaches. A perspective from Scotland helps to characterise the two sides of the debate on CI: those favouring integration consider that curricular reform has not gone far enough in challenging the 'subject fiefdoms of the secondary school' (Humes, 2013, p.83) that have been an impediment to change, whilst those on the other side of the debate think it would be unwise to lose traditional bodies and structures of knowledge. Considering the nature of subject knowledge is not as straightforward as it might appear, and we have chosen to examine something of the nature of one subject – music – to provide a perspective on the potential complexity of integrating subject study.

Swanwick identifies 'three central pillars of music education: a concern for musical traditions; sensitivity to students; awareness of social context and community' (1988, p.10), pillars which marry the needs of the individual to the wider musical context. The national curriculum is more perfunctory in seeing the core business of music as 'composing, performing and appraising' (Beauchamp, 2010, p.306). These processes require particular knowledge which, in the case of Wales, includes the musical elements of 'pitch, duration, pace, timbre, texture, dynamics, structure and silence' (*ibid.*). This is the 'sacred' discipline-level knowledge noted by Bernstein (1973/2003, p. 74) and forms the knowledge base 'on which confidence and successful pedagogy can be built' (Beauchamp, 2010, p. 306).

Music, however, like the other arts subjects, has been marginalised within the curriculum of Wales and elsewhere. GCSE entries in Wales in 2018 declined by 25% from 2014 (StatsWales, 2018). It is not a recent problem. Exploring the nature of music teaching, Wright (2008) noted the complexity of amalgamating pupils' musical interests – what Swanwick calls the music 'out there' (1988, p.143) - with the demands of the curriculum. Her study alludes to the tension between securing engagement in a subject and developing mastery. Using Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (i.e. the norms, values, skills, etc. that come from our individual experiences) (Bourdieu, 1984), Wright noted the difference between the curriculum/teacher and the pupil in their conceptions of music. Whilst adolescents have a musical habitus that 'tends to signify their affiliation to a particular social sub-culture, of which there are a multitude, including pop, rap, R'n'B, dance, heavy metal, and so on', the National Curriculum, 'despite the best efforts of very able music teachers' (Wright, 2008, p.398) is biased towards those who are best positioned to successfully acquire this 'sacred' knowledge noted by Bernstein (1975/2003, p.74). Furthermore, applying 'formal music pedagogy' to popular music alienates learners (Wright 2008, p. 399).

This difference in the type of knowledge is also noted by McPhail who draws on Bernstein's typology describing knowledge forms as *horizontal* or *vertical* (2016, p.1149). *Horizontal* knowledge is 'everyday knowledge… acquired in informal social settings' (*ibid.*). Such knowledge is likely to be dependent on context, impromptu and lacking formalisation. *Vertical* knowledge, on the other hand, 'is underpinned by recontextualising principles and exhibits varying degrees of integration and a cumulative, context-interdependent development of concepts' (*ibid.*). In other words, this is discipline knowledge. Applying this typology to the subject of music, McPhail conducted a study exploring how music teachers developed their approaches to teaching both classical and popular music. His study showed that teachers experienced a tension related to the types of knowledge associated with both

styles of music - 'socially acquired informal music knowledge (popular music) and disciplinary knowledge (classical music)' (*ibid.*) - the former being *horizontal* knowledge and the latter *vertical*. Of particular interest to this study is McPhail's adoption of Bernstein's concept of *regionalisation* which sees traditionally discrete disciplines being reconceptualised into interdisciplinary groups, positioning music, for example, with an arts grouping (p.1155).

The complexity of subject knowledge means that subject teachers have a crucial role as 'recontextualising agents' (p.1163) in using their knowledge, experience and expertise to recognise and identify the knowledge discourses within their subject. This can be used to establish appropriate content and pedagogies to both engage students and develop mastery within the subject, including within an integrated curriculum.

Curriculum integration: an overview

There are numerous terms used to describe integration within the curriculum. The nuances of meaning between the definitions provide insight into a school's considerations and priorities. Drake and Burns (2004) identify three categories of integrated curriculum:

- *multidisciplinary* (the focus is on the disciplines, but using themes as a connection between them);

- *interdisciplinary* (organising the curriculum around learning aspects in common within the disciplines, thereby emphasising interdisciplinary skills between the subjects)

- *transdisciplinary* (teachers build the curriculum around pupils' questions, e.g. exploring a topic through a project, so the disciplines are subsidiary to the topic)

CI, then, can refer to a range of approaches and there can be differing degrees of integration. Within the categories noted by Drake and Burns, the prominence of the traditional disciplines

varies: *multidisciplinary* approaches give most prominence to disciplines whilst *transdisciplinary* approaches give more prominence to the topic/project.

Another term in use is *cross-curricular* teaching and learning. Barnes believes that a cross-curricular approach makes sense in schools as 'Our experience of the world is cross-curricular' (2015, p.1): we see and understand the world from different perspectives. Savage (2011, p.8) characterises the *cross-curricular* as 'sensitivity towards, and a synthesis of, knowledge, skills and understandings from various subject areas', suggesting that emphasis be placed on enhancing teachers' consideration and understanding of the curriculum to allow for 'an enriched pedagogy' (pp.8-9).

The Draft Curriculum in Wales (WG, 2019b) defines an interdisciplinary approach as one in which:

> ...the learning is focused on one discipline at a time with all areas connected by the creative process, theme or context

a definition which has more in common with Drake and Burns' *multidisciplinary* category.

The notion of an integrated curriculum, then, is multifaceted and subject to interpretation, but the overall commonality of ideas here is that integration 'is about making connections' across subject boundaries (Drake and Burns, 2004, p.7).

In her literature review on *interdisciplinarity,* Chettiparamb (2007) identifies broad arguments in favour of linking traditional disciplines, including the notion that interdisciplinarity is either 'filling the gaps' (p.13) left by the traditional disciplines or it enables 'transcendence surpassing what disciplinarity can ever hope to achieve' (p.13). She notes, too, the argument that observation shows that interdisciplinarity is already established 'with interdisciplinarity (most often) quietly flourishing within disciplines' (p.13). Chettiparamb also identifies arguments against interdisciplinarity, including the idea that

interdisciplinarity is 'parasitical' (p.16) as it needs the disciplines to work from and it 'uses' them (p.16). She notes the argument that it is 'very difficult to achieve in practice' (p.16), and that the creative ideas that arise from it are 'idiosyncratic' (p.16) and do not occur from an 'organisation of knowledge' (p.16) and, therefore, knowledge cannot be guaranteed from such a curriculum.

McPhail (2018) considers the relationship between disciplines and integration. He does not believe that CI is a sufficient approach in itself, but he does consider that schools might regard integration as using

complementary or juxtaposed disciplinary concepts and methodologies that will deepen knowledge of a particular topic or problem (McPhail, 2018, p.70).

Learning may be enhanced by interdisciplinary approaches, but disciplinary knowledge needs to be established first, as 'connections are unlikely to be made unless disciplinary concepts are understood first' (p.71). McPhail does not see CI as an alternative route to learning but as a supplementary one.

Methodology

Because this study wished to capture the experiences and perspectives of the Pioneer teachers, a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative data was elicited from two sources: 1) interviews with Pioneers and 2) observations of Pioneers meeting in their AoLE group. The study therefore draws on data from semi-structured interviews and observation/field notes to provide insight into the Pioneer experience.

Interviews

At the time of the data collection, there were 19 Pioneers in the group and these were supplemented by a small number of additional members (e.g. from WG and Qualifications

Wales[1]) to lead and support the group. Interviews were carried out with 11 Pioneers. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants which, as Bryman points out, is neither a random nor a convenience sample but is devised with 'research goals in mind' (2016, p. 408). In this case, the sample was chosen to provide some reflection of the range and types of context of schools engaged in the Pioneer group. Interviewees were chosen from six primary schools, four secondary schools and one special school, from locations across Wales. Interviews took place in bilingual, English-medium and Welsh-medium schools.

In order to capture the Pioneers' 'individual *voices* and *stories*' (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.110), a framework of questions was constructed around the main foci of the study. First, the teachers were asked about their Pioneer role including what the role involved, how they worked within the AoLE group and the nature of their work within their own school and beyond. Next, a set of questions focused on the curriculum, for example, whether arts subjects were taught through a *collection* or an *integrated* type of curriculum (Bernstein, 1975/2003, p.72), and what changes had taken place as a result of their pioneer work. Further questions related to the nature of school engagement with the EA AoLE and the impact on learners. A semi-structured interview schedule allowed interviewees 'a great deal of leeway in how to reply' (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). The interviews, conducted in May to July 2018, were 45 – 60 minutes in length and were audio-recorded. Interviewees were given the option of the interview being conducted in Welsh or English.

Observation

The Pioneers were also observed working as a group, helping the researchers to analyse them 'in their temporal and local particularity' (Flick, 2014, p22). They met as an AoLE group for two days every month at different venues throughout Wales. The meetings focused on designing the curriculum framework and trialling strategies in their schools. In order to gain

insight into the role of the Pioneers, the lead researcher attended two of these meetings in order to explain the research, gain Pioneers' consent for participation and to observe the Pioneers' work. It provided the opportunity 'to observe things as they normally happen' (Denscombe, 2017, p. 225).

Analysis

Data was from the observations was collected in the form of fieldwork notes and supported triangulation of the data gathered through interview. The interview transcripts were analysed mainly through inductive coding (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.210) identifying themes the data collected, although the overall structure for coding was influenced by the study's conceptual framework. An initial analysis raised a wide range of codes, and subsequent analyses refined these to a more limited range of themes covering the Pioneer experience, Pioneer effectiveness, the impact on the curriculum and the differences observed in the secondary and primary phases.

The opportunities and challenges of curriculum integration

The data collected provides insight into an emerging curriculum, with Pioneers as the transitional link between the old and the new curricula. Their experiences shed light on the conceptual, practical and affective aspects of being a curriculum Pioneer. Significantly, they also provide us with greater awareness relating to the consistency and coherence of the new curriculum across primary and secondary phases.

The following teachers (all given pseudonyms) were interviewed for this study:

Primary & Special	Bronwen, Charles, Delia, Francis, Harriet, Jenna, Kim

Secondary	Ashley, Elaine, Gina, Iona,

As the participants come from a small population, with perhaps only one or two teachers representing each subject, the subjects of the secondary teachers are not indicated and no name is used where the subject might be guessed, to ensure anonymity.

The views of both primary and secondary teachers are reported and analysed here under the following headings:

1. The opportunities offered by an integrated EA curriculum
2. The key challenges of an integrated curriculum for primary schools
3. The key challenges of an integrated curriculum for secondary schools

1 The opportunities offered by an integrated EA curriculum

All the Pioneers interviewed were united in their commitment to the arts in education:

> …for me, just because they [Welsh Government] are saying the arts are important, I think that is massive… (Elaine)

At a time when the arts have lost status in education (Snook and Buck, 2014; Hennessy, Rolfe and Chedzoy, 2001) their mutual commitment to the arts acted like an aspirational 'glue'.

Commitment to the arts was clear. However, the purpose of them coming together as a Pioneer group was not to consider whether the arts subjects should be taught together, but to create a framework for how the arts should be taught within the curriculum. The Pioneers first had to 'buy into' the idea of an integrated curriculum.

> [Initially] we spent a lot of time discussing the advantages and disadvantages to the interdisciplinary approach. But I'm of the opinion now, certainly, around the interdisciplinary approach is the way forward, as there are so many links and connections between the art forms, the art disciplines. (Ashley)

Ashley, a secondary teacher, reflects the change of outlook that took place particularly with secondary teachers. The Pioneers used dialogue to explore the possible links between the traditionally discrete subjects but for an integrated curriculum, they needed to find common ground:

> You might be a musician, you might be a dancer, you might be an arts specialist, but what really matters across our disciplines is what we offer in common. (Bronwen)

The teachers needed to conceptualise an integrated curriculum. Using the metaphor of 'three central pillars' used by Swanwick (1988, p.10), they adopted concepts reminiscent of the existing national curriculum for music - 'composing, performing and appraising' (Beauchamp, 2010, p.306) – in creating three pedagogic pillars to underpin their approach:

- *explore and experience*
- *create and express*
- *respond and reflect.*

These pillars served as a reference point for the group in devising the curriculum framework. They facilitated the *integrated* curriculum, described by Bernstein, where the different elements can 'stand in open relation to each other' (1975/2003, p.72). The approaches within the classrooms, however, might be very different, as these examples about music lessons in primary and secondary demonstrate.

> We don't necessarily do a discrete music lesson… If we were doing, say it was World War II, if we were looking at that, that would be composing some music to go with an animation we may have made to depict a certain aspect of World War II. We then track that using those three pillars. (Primary)

> When I'm teaching the periods of music, for example, to a key stage four class and we're looking at the Renaissance, Baroque, classical periods, romantic periods, at no point would I not show and share the art of the period because they're interlinked. (Secondary)

The Pioneers were looking for the 'connections' (Drake and Burns, 2004, p.7) within their provision. However, there are evident differences between both approaches. The example from primary shows the discipline being subsidiary to the topic and therefore following a *transdisciplinary* approach. The example from secondary demonstrates a *multidisciplinary* approach where music is the main subject, supported by art in a subsidiary role. This difference is characteristic of the different approaches between primary and secondary Pioneers.

The Pioneers also noted benefits more explicitly related to the learners themselves:

> I want the arts for the arts' sake, but I also want the pedagogy of the arts to grasp, to be the hook, to get these kids in through the door and to learn. (Kim)

> But now the children have become a lot more confident, and maybe it's because they've been given a chance to share ideas more and their work is being valued more. (Delia)

> I think children do enjoy them [the arts]. I think we all do, in a sense. We all enjoy it because it gives us that time to be reflective and be on our own and that peaceful time. (Francis)

These areas of engagement, enjoyment and confidence in the arts were seen by many of the Pioneers as beneficial products of an integrated curriculum and important for the development of the individual.

In summary, the Pioneers saw that providing status and curriculum time for the arts was a fundamental and crucial benefit of their work; this provided a common aim. Establishing a common pedagogic framework (their 'three pillars') was an important aspect of supporting integration. Both primary and secondary colleagues raised the benefits to learners from an arts curriculum, particularly in terms of building confidence, engagement and enjoyment in learning. The Pioneers were all committed to a form of integration although not necessary the same form. Next, we will consider the challenges faced by the Pioneers.

2 The key challenges of an integrated curriculum for primary schools

The responses from all the primary Pioneers were characterised by general affirmation and acceptance of an integrated curriculum approach to teaching the arts. The primary Pioneers reported that their colleagues in schools welcomed the development:

> All the staff were very, very positive (Harriet).

Any initial scepticism dissipated once they started on Pioneer process as

> …they realised the potential we have got as a school (Delia).

One primary colleague predicted a positive response more widely from primary schools:

> Primary colleagues will just grab it with two hands (Bronwen).

However, there are also a number of challenges facing colleagues in the primary phase. They are addressed here under two headings:

a) subject development

b) teacher development

a) Subject development

One reason for the positivity noted above is that an integrated model is already familiar to primary colleagues. They have already worked on a previous curriculum development: the introduction of the Foundation Phase Framework (WG, 2015b). The Foundation Phase Framework sets out the curriculum for 3-7 year-olds in Wales. Organised into areas of learning, it puts emphasis on cross-curricular approaches and child-led learning. Consequently, an integrated approach is 'bread and butter' (Bronwen) for primary schools and 'good schools are quite close to... the new curriculum' already and all that is required is some 'semi-tweaking' of their approach (Charles).

Francis describes what the approach looks like in practice:

> The children create the beginning of the topic. They generate their own questions, so it's like, "I wonder how tall dinosaurs were," for example... then, we create lessons based on these questions. The children come up with the lessons, and we create the lessons from there so it's empowering them.

This describes a *transdisciplinary* approach (Drake and Burns, 2004) where the curriculum is built around the questions asked by the learners. It regards the subject knowledge as subsidiary to the learners' questions and to the topic being studied.

For primary colleagues, the changes in the curriculum align with their current experiences and approaches. Where challenge does lie in this *transdisciplinary* approach relates to the breadth and depth of subject knowledge being taught. Drawing on Bernstein's typology of horizontal and vertical knowledge, McPhail (2016, p.1149) points out that horizontal learning tends towards 'everyday knowledge' which is 'context dependent' and '*ad hoc*' in nature,

whereas vertical knowledge which is 'underpinned by recontextualising principles' and shows 'context independent development of concepts'. McPhail contends that weakening or conflating horizontal and vertical discourses can lead to learners having an understanding of the application of knowledge (e.g. the playing of guitar chords) but not having understanding of the underlying 'complex systems' (e.g. understanding tonal harmony) (2016, p.1150). Questions arise, therefore, on how the *ad hoc* and context-dependent nature of thematic projects, such as that noted above, can ensure that the necessary disciplinary knowledge is taught and learned and so prevent putting a limit on learners' knowledge. The examples of practice supplied by the Pioneer indicated a largely *horizontal* knowledge discourse (McPhail, 2016) and there was little evidence in the Pioneers' responses that there had been sufficient consideration of subject knowledge development within the arts.

A related challenge concerns whether primary schools are *teaching* the knowledge and skills of subject areas or are merely *employing* subject areas. In EA, learners must be offered a curriculum in five areas: art, dance, digital/film media, drama and music. Whilst these may be areas that are familiar in the primary classroom, some of the Pioneers in primary admitted that they are areas which may be employed in the teaching of other subjects, as opposed to being taught. Harriet points out that teachers should not assume that if children have

> …coloured in a poster, then they've done art today because they've used felt pens.

As she explains:

> …that wasn't an art lesson; that was a literacy lesson because we were thinking about structures of writing and how to appropriately present persuasive writing on a poster, but they think it's art because they're using art materials.

A more fundamental challenge is whether the five different areas of the arts will actually gain curriculum time. Delia notes the current marginalisation of the arts with the curriculum:

> In primary settings, especially with the expressive arts, sadly, if I'm being honest, I think the expressive arts subjects are the ones that get pushed to the side because we've got to get through literacy and numeracy.

A curriculum of competing priorities, and a 'preoccupation with core subjects' - i.e. English, mathematics, science - (Hennessy, Rolfe and Chedzoy, 2001, p.53) leaves the arts vulnerable to being 'side-lined'. The Pioneers were hopeful that this would not be the case but recognised the danger.

A further challenge for primary schools is ensuring sufficient resourcing of the different areas of the arts. Harriet points out that

> We're working with very little money… For example, music… we've got a couple of African drums and the percussion and a couple of xylophones and glockenspiels. We don't really have anything.

Providing sufficient resources for each area is likely to be a significant issue for primary schools.

c) Teacher development

The majority of the primary Pioneers interviewed did not have any formal qualifications in the arts:

> I'm not trained in any of the art forms (Francis)

> I didn't even do expressive arts at GCSE (Harriet).

Nevertheless, they remained generally positive about their ability to teach across the subjects, mainly due to having an interest in the arts:

> I'm not an artist. I'm not an expert… but I like art. (Charles)

The primary Pioneers did not consider the lack of subject specialism as an impediment to either teaching or leading a curriculum area in primary.

> ... we're not experts at the art, music, we're not experts in that, but we have to have a knowledge of it to teach it (Francis)

Music was the one subject identified by most of the primary Pioneers as a subject where they felt less confident about their subject knowledge:

> I think music's always going to be an issue for us. We can all do a bit but we're not experts (Charles)

There was some recognition that teachers' knowledge and skills may require development:

> We've undertaken already film and digital media training as a school. And music, we've got lined up now for the first day back in September as well. We've identified that dance—from doing pupil-voice questionnaires as well, we think that dance is another area. (Delia)

Acknowledging the need for teacher development is important. Entrants to primary teaching no longer have to have a subject specialism in Wales. However, if teachers are to have the requisite knowledge to work with both the *horizontal* and the *vertical* knowledge discourses, they need to be confident in their own subject knowledge. Teachers' expertise with content and pedagogy is an essential element of provision if they are to be 'recontextualising agents' with 'the potential to be curriculum constructors in partnership with their students' (McPhail, 2016, p.1163). Auditing of knowledge, skills and confidence, followed by appropriate professional development, would appear to be required for primary teachers.

3 The key challenges of an integrated curriculum for secondary schools

The challenges facing secondary schools appear to be more fundamental than those facing primary colleagues. We address some key issues here under these headings:

a) Teacher engagement

b) Developing subject knowledge and subject mastery

a) Teacher engagement

At the point of the interviews, the Pioneer secondary teachers appeared positive about adopting an integrated approach, having initiated and trialled curriculum changes in their schools. However, their attitudes were very different at the start of the process:

As an AoLE, we were just horrendous. (Gina)

There were two camps. People were saying, 'We've got degrees. We've got specialisms. What value would [there be in] me trying to teach that area where I'm not confident myself in?' (Iona)

The *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984) of the primary and secondary teachers differed markedly. Whilst primary colleagues who were used to working thematically and flexibly with classes welcomed the changes, secondary Pioneers were thoroughly challenged by them and the words of both of these teachers above indicate a strong emotional response. Secondary teachers' *habitus* is rooted in their subject; they identify themselves through their subject. All of the secondary interviewees gave their subject specialism as their job title at the start of the interview. One teacher said later in the interview that they now identified themselves as an expressive arts teacher but at the start they had actually used their subject. Subject expertise, as Iona suggests above, also provides confidence in the classroom. Removing their subject base seemingly removes the source of their status, value and consequently their confidence in

the classroom. This proved very threatening to some and, indeed, two of the Pioneer teachers described incidents of colleagues being tearful due to their fear of having to teach in other areas of the curriculum.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the need for a change in *mindset* on the part of the teachers. This focus on mindset, emphasised that Pioneer work was about much more than working out how to manage and implement change; initially it was very much about influence and persuasion.   Elaine notes that convincing colleagues of the rationale and impetus for change was a challenge:

> That was the first stumbling block: coming back into school and meeting with a new
> team of staff … and actually persuading them this was going to be a good thing.

As Elaine indicates, this element of the role was more difficult for secondary Pioneers because of the range of people and interests. The responses from secondary Pioneers' colleagues to the proposed changes were mixed, ranging from a general sense of positivity to 'absolute negativity' (Gina). Initially, 'people were quite overwhelmed' (Iona) at the scope of the work and colleagues continued to be at different points of engagement:

> Even within the department, we're at different stages of development, but we've come
> a long way (Elaine).

The 'massive turning point' (Gina) for the secondary teachers was gaining insight into how primary colleagues teach. Working together in the AoLE group allowed the secondary teachers to better appreciate the thematic/topic-based approaches used in primary schools, demonstrating a curriculum where

> …things make a lot more sense because everything is more linked and connected
> (Gina).

Ashley also describes colleagues moving away from 'working in silos' referring to both the segregation of subjects within the curriculum and also to the physical divisions that exist in schools, where the arts are taught in different parts of the school. The implication is that if areas of the curriculum are to work together effectively, then their physical proximity needs to be considered carefully.

Despite the amount of work being done by the Pioneers, in some cases over the period of nearly two years, some colleagues in their schools remained unwilling to engage in the school's Pioneer work. In one case, when Pioneer left the school for another job, no one else in the school was willing to take on the Pioneer role. This was despite the school having been engaged in many months of Pioneer work prior to the Pioneer teacher leaving. Teacher engagement in the process of CI will likely prove a very big hurdle in some cases.

b) Developing subject knowledge and subject mastery

The secondary Pioneers were far more challenged in how to manage the introduction of an integrated curriculum. Primary Pioneers enjoyed greater flexibility in designing their curricula, as generally primary teachers teach one class throughout the day, and so can manage timings and resources more flexibly. They tended to favour a *transdisciplinary* model (Drake and Burns, 2004), with a topic being explored through pupil-led questions. The secondary Pioneers had less flexibility due to the nature of the secondary curriculum timetabling separate subjects and teachers having to teach across a range of year groups. Secondary Pioneers therefore adopted a range of approaches including timetabling special EA days for years groups, where the usual timetable was abandoned to allow arts-focused activities. Alternatively they set time set aside for special events or visits, e.g. a theatre visit. The most commonly adopted model, however, was to timetable 'Expressive Arts' for Year 7,

for example, and for the arts teachers to teach it in a *multidisciplinary* way (Drake and Burns, 2004), i.e. starting with one subject area and looking for the links with other subjects.

This required logistical changes (e.g. with timetabling) but more significantly, however, it required greater flexibility on the part of individual teachers. They needed to look beyond their 'own' subject area and to include links with other subject areas. Ashley gives a sense of the emergent curriculum:

> We teach expressive arts to year seven—it's on the timetable as expressive arts—and we do have - we try to have an interdisciplinary approach. They still move between classrooms, so they know they're very much in an art room or they're in a music space or they're in a drama space. However, we do try to bring the connections between all the disciplines in that and use inspiration from those in our teaching.

Establishing productive links between the subjects was a key ambition of the secondary teachers:

> They came to me and did music lessons, but it's just that I started with an art starter. When I said to them, "Let's change the tone of that or the pitch of that," I said, "Do you use tone or pitch in art? How could we…?" things like that, just making connections.

In pointing up the connections between areas, we see the attempted *regionalisation* of knowledge noted by McPhail (2016) in drawing together the subject knowledge from related areas. However, the examples of such *regionalisation* of knowledge provided by the Pioneers were of an *ad hoc* nature.   One subject took precedence, and provided the *vertical* or disciplinary knowledge, whilst the knowledge from the other areas was of a *horizontal* or everyday nature. It would seem that careful curriculum mapping will be needed to ensure that all five expressive arts gain sufficient depth of study.

A further pressing issue for secondary colleagues is ensuring students are properly prepared for external examinations. In Wales, GCSEs are the main qualifications studied for from age 14 to 16. Students can then specialise further at age 16-18, studying A levels, for example. These examinations are known and 'trusted' by the public (Qualifications Wales, n.d). Teachers are very sensitive to the implications of curricular change on assessment, particularly in light of the 'high-stakes teacher accountability' (Holloway, Sørensen and Verger, 2017, p.2) culture that has arisen in education.

The model of timetabling EA for Year 7 or Year 8 potentially allows learners broader experiences and earlier preparation in some areas:

> My colleague… says the kids, when they come to her in year 10, she's actually done loads of GCSE media stuff with them already. They're doing representation and different images, making music videos, and all this sort of thing lower down school. (Elaine)

However, the Pioneers also expressed concerns about preparation for GCSE and they clearly felt the tension between achieving broader coverage of the arts for everyone, and the need for in-depth study for those learners who wish to pursue a specialism:

> Of course, the fears of my team, initially, which was, "What's going to happen when they take GCSE art or music? They're not going to have the skills because they've, in effect, watered them down a bit because they've had to cover all the other areas in their lessons." (Elaine)

The Pioneers did not have any conception of what future qualifications might look like, although they did speculate:

> Hopefully when Year 7 get there, they'll have a GCSE in expressive arts (Elaine)

Say, within expressive arts, you'd study the disciplines, but you'd major in one of them. (Bronwen)

Despite their lack of insight into future qualifications, they were engaged in devising possible approaches which addressed both broad coverage and subject mastery:

Next year… timetabling allowing, we'll have three lessons mixed expressive arts and two mastery lessons, where the children can opt for an area they want to master. (Elaine)

Elaine expressed some frustration that qualifications had not kept up with her developments:

We were told originally two years ago, "Oh, don't worry about GCSEs; they might not even be here then." Well, they are here still. We haven't changed yet.

Her experience reveals that it is very difficult for secondary schools to plan a curriculum until they see the whole picture, including assessment demands.

Gina acknowledges the need for curriculum to precede assessment considerations:

… the qualifications will change as long as we're brave and bold and innovative and change the curriculum. We can't let the tail wag the dog.

Her call for bravery and boldness from teachers, however, recognises that this will not be easy in light of how assessment has taken such a prominent role in schools.

Conclusion

This paper draws attention to the opportunities offered by an integrated arts curriculum, including greater coverage of the arts in schools – a set of subjects that has suffered greatly in recent years in terms of status and curriculum time. An integrated curriculum in the arts has proved to be something of unifying force for the Pioneers – a 'glue' of aspiration and commitment for teachers of the arts.

We have also revealed significant areas of challenge for schools. In primary schools, the challenges relate to ensuring that all of the arts appear on the curriculum and that they are taught, rather than just utilised in the teaching of other subjects or topics. For secondary Pioneers, the challenges relate to gaining teacher engagement and creating a connected curriculum that maintains depth of study in individual subjects and allows for specialisation.

The research indicates that teachers in both phases are approaching integration in different ways. Following the lead of the Foundation Phase, primary schools appear to favour a *transdisciplinary* approach (Drake and Burns, 2004), where the focus is on child-led learning rather than on the subjects. The secondary Pioneers have a more mixed approach to integration, but generally favour a *multidisciplinary* approach, where the focus is on subjects but organised around a theme/topic. This difference may seem subtle, but it demonstrates essential differences between how the phases conceive of CI. The approach taken is particularly important when considering examinations. A *multidisciplinary* approach will still have a discipline-based approach to assessment, whereas a *transdisciplinary* approach to assessment will focus on interdisciplinary skills and concepts, i.e. the skills and concepts in common between subjects (Drake and Burns, 2004, p.17).

The greatest concern with an integrated curriculum is how 'the vital contribution of disciplinary learning is preserved' (Donaldson 2015, p.36) and therefore how we conceptualise such disciplinary knowledge. McPhail (2017, p.72) warns against losing 'the disciplined part of (inter) disciplinarity'. In other words, we should avoid allowing *horizontal* or everyday knowledge flourishing at the expense of the *vertical* or disciplinary knowledge. Both are required to support engagement and progression. This study focuses on the arts, and it points up the possibility of *horizontal* knowledge taking precedence at the expense of disciplinary knowledge. It is not unreasonable to assume the same dangers may be posed to other areas of the curriculum. If teachers are to be 'recontextualising agents' (McPhail, 2016, p.1163) within an integrated curriculum, they will need to the time, resources and opportunity to understand the nature of curriculum integration and its impact on subject knowledge.

A strength of the AoLE Pioneer model has been in bringing primary and secondary teachers together to plan the curriculum. It has clearly extended mutual understanding of their different contexts. Extending opportunities for such joint professional development and dialogue between both phases throughout the country would be a valuable legacy from the Pioneer process.

Notes

1. Qualifications Wales are the statutory body responsible for regulating qualifications (other than degrees) in Wales. https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/

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