

# A Curriculum for the Future

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**ABSTRACT** *The paper argues that the changes in the social and economic circumstances which characterise the present period, make it essential to rethink the relation of curriculum, its purposes and shapes, to the social and economic environment of the near future. It offers some evidence of such change and its causes, even at the moment, and asks questions about essential characteristics of educational agendas in the near future. In particular, it argues that where the previous era had required an education for stability, the coming era requires an education for instability. The question then arises as to what the characteristics of curricula and pedagogies for instability are, and what dispositions for those who experience education are imagined and aimed for. It concludes with some comments on a curriculum of communication, in which facility with design has superseded competence in use, and where the broad social and cultural environment is one where identity is defined through a relation to consumption, where all commodities have taken on semiotic function so that the question of aesthetics (as the politics of style in all domains) is again in the forefront of concerns in the curriculum of communication.*

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will briefly outline some thoughts on a curriculum for the future. I address the question of the present curriculum, largely inherited from the 19th century, the disintegration of the frames which had given it its shape and purposes and then move on to ask about the broad outline characteristics of curricula relevant for the near future. In particular, I suggest that the presently existing curriculum still assumes that it is educating young people into older dispositions, whereas the coming era demands an education for instability. I conclude with a brief sketch of how this might look in relation to a specific curriculum subject area, English.

In periods of relative social and economic stability it is possible to see the curriculum as a means for cultural reproduction: as a process whereby values, skills and knowledges are made available to enable the young to make themselves in the image of their culture. The period from the middle of the last century to the middle of this can be seen as one such period, despite the cataclysmic events that have characterised it. In important ways, the social mores, cultural values, forms of the economy and the social organisations of 1955 had more affinity with those of 1855 than they have with those of 1995. It is possible to see, with hindsight, that from about the mid 1950s on, the inevitable, constant, gradual changes which marked the preceding 100 years began to act together, producing change at an increasing pace, so that by the end of our millenium many of the significant, taken for granted features of that

previous period are now (nearly) swept away, are under challenge or coming to be changed out of recognition.

'Reproduction' is no longer a plausible metaphor for institutional education and its curricula. When tomorrow is unlikely to be like today and when the day after tomorrow is definitely going to be unlike yesterday, curricular aims and guiding metaphors have to be reset. The metaphor that I have chosen for myself, for some time now (Kress, 1995), is that of 'design': curriculum as a design for the future. That then leaves the task of attempting to establish as securely as one might what the outlines of that future are likely to be like, in order to begin to think about the shapes of a curriculum for that future. What remains constant is the fundamental aim of all serious education: to provide those skills, knowledges, aptitudes and dispositions which would allow the young who are experiencing that curriculum to lead productive lives in the societies of their adult periods.

#### THE AGENDAS OF EDUCATION IN THE CURRENT PERIOD AND IN THE NEAR FUTURE

It is clear to any dispassionate bystander that institutional education is in deep crisis, and not only because politicians, media pundits and gurus of various sorts tell us that it is so. By and large, the curricula of the school in 'Western' societies—not all, not everywhere, but most—remain the curricula of the 19th century school. That curriculum had developed to serve the needs of the 19th century nation state—with its desire for a homogeneously conceived citizen for that state, a citizen who was 'French' or 'German' or 'British', and the need for a labour force and the professions—of the economy of that state. The school's task was to produce both and, by and large, it managed to perform that task well enough. This environment had provided strong framings of values and of knowledges, framings which had become relatively invisible. Now, in the present period of radical instability, the former framings are becoming visible, particularly in the absence of new framings, for the moment at any rate.

What is clear is that the new circumstances demand a response: new goals and new curricula which are appropriate to these new goals. It is becoming possible now both to see the dissolution, the break-up, of the former framings and tentatively, hazily, the emergence of new configurations of frames. The latter are unlikely to be stable for a considerable period to come, but what there is may be useful as indicators of directions in which 'things' are moving. To show, concretely, the processes of the dissolution of former frames and the emergence of new framings, I will briefly consider an innocuous but real text, reproduced below. It fluttered through the letterbox of our house in North London early in June 1998.

In its less than 200 words it encapsulates most of the criterial features of the current environment for education and it exhibits the dissolution of the frames which had held institutional education, its values, knowledge, authority and purposes, in a relatively stable state for most of the preceding 100 years. To

## Islington Summer University

In partnership with Islington Play & Youth Service

1st June 98

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This summer Islington's Play & Youth Service in partnership with the University of North London are organising and running a Summer University. The programme will run from 17th to 21st and 24th to 28th August 98 inclusive.

The University is targeting two groups of young people:-

1. Those young people who are moving from Primary to Secondary school in September, (which is why you are in receipt of this letter.)
2. Those young people who are taking their GCSEs in spring 99.

The Venues:- University of North London, Holloway Road.  
Islington Boat Club, Graham Street.  
J.V.C. Centre, Arsenal Stadium, Avenell Road.  
E.C.1. Music Project, White Cross Street.

All onsite courses are FREE, however at this point the programme has not been finalised but the following activities will definitely be included:-

Rap & Scratch courses	Making music through computers
Dance	Drama
Maths GCSE revision	Art
Womens football	Vocals/singing classes
Fabric painting	Sailing
Canoeing	Discussion groups
African dance & drumming	Music technology & recording skills

Computer courses, beginners through to introduction to the internet AND MANY MORE EXCITING COURSES

Please discuss with your child if she/he would like to attend. If they do please complete and return the attached form to ensure a programme and enrolment form are forwarded to you once the details have been finalised.

Yours sincerely

*Steve Clarke*

Steve Clarke

FIG. 1. Islington Summer University.

draw out just some of these frames, briefly and without detailed debate, there are: (a) the frame around the institution of education itself; (b) the frame around the site of education; (c) the frame around the time of education; (d) the frame around the educational audience; (e) the frame around educational knowledge; (f) the framing between education-as-work and education-as-

pleasure; (g) the frame between state and market; (h) the frame around locations of authority. There may be others, but these will serve to make the points which I wish to make.

- (a) The frame which is dissolved here is that between one specific type of educational institution, the university, and local government in the shape of its amenities department, 'the Play and Youth Service' of a local authority. The causes of this dissolution, as of all the others, are complex (and usually interconnected with the others). This university is, I assume, responding to a number of factors: for instance a felt or expressed need to integrate itself more with the 'local community'. This itself has two market-driven origins, one being a kind of 'accountability' to the community in its guise as 'taxpayers'; the other being more directly linked to the market, namely a felt need to build its local clientele, to entrench itself in and to capture its local 'market'. This itself is a consequence of a decline in direct government support, which means that the university has to operate as an institution in and of the market.
- (b) Until quite recently institutionalised education was tied to and identified with its 'own' geographical site, a campus, a building or sets of buildings. These buildings were dedicated educational buildings: for instance, they would (and still do to a large extent) stand empty in vacation time. Here the university has decided not only to locate its courses off site, but to choose sites (with one exception) associated with everyday and decidedly non-educational activities. In fact this shift is metaphorically/ideologically highly potent: it is a move from (sites of) education to (sites of) leisure; a change in relation between institution and community, from making the community 'come to you', to going out to the community.
- (c) These courses are offered outside the school year and the university term. It is thus a weakening of the temporal frame of education. As such the weakening of this frame can be seen as the extension both of the university and of the school year and as the extension of learning time as such (i.e. of organised/institutionally controlled time dedicated to education for young people). This is in line with current slogans about 'life-long' learning.
- (d) The offer made here by the Summer University abolishes the temporal/developmental framings between the hitherto firmly bounded/framed sectors of education: between primary, secondary and tertiary education. The leaflet appeals to young people in their transitional period between primary and secondary school and equally to those in the latter years of secondary schooling. Inviting them to attend courses at a 'university' abolishes all these frames. Of course, this has its very real causes: again, notions of life-long learning, the need to develop an 'audience' and a market. Its effect is nevertheless to make a formerly

stable system radically unstable and to make formerly fixed boundaries fluid.

- (e) Equally, the framings around what counts as educational knowledge are here unmade: for the university and its curricula as much as for the secondary (and even the primary) school. This blurs or abolishes quite decisively the boundary between knowledge sanctioned in educational institutions and the knowledge of the everyday. In effect, it undoes a boundary between sacred (or at least the 'revered') and profane (or at least everyday) forms of knowledge
- (f) The dissolution of the frame around educational time proceeds under the banner of education-as-leisure, and in that it has a long tradition, a long antecedent, certainly of 20 or so years in the shape of hobby courses, etc. But the fact that this University is offering these courses will have a reciprocal effect on what the university does and will do: it is making a promise (of course already frequently repeated in the more recent marketing of universities—one university situated in London advertised itself, some while ago, as being only '40 minutes from London's exciting West End') that learning is fun, that the knowledge which it offers, is fun, that 'doing a course' at university is like leisure time activity more than like work time activity.
- (g) As mentioned, all or most of these are in some way related to changing relations between the state and the market. This is latently there in this university's appeal to a 'client base'; in the changed relation of work, leisure and pleasure. In this text it appears overtly in the statement that 'All onsite courses are FREE', an appeal which both invokes a prior period when education was free and a statement evoked by the present situation where it no longer is and where, as with other commodities, some educational commodities are offered for free as a marketing ploy.
- (h) Lastly, the framing (location) of authority. The activities offered by the Islington Summer University are not just free, they are not obligatory: you attend them if 'you would like to attend'. You, as an adult, are asked to 'please discuss with your child' ... ; and 'if they do', you are asked to complete the form. This is not the authority relation nor the authority location of the traditional school (or university, which until very recently stood *in loco parentis*. This is not the authority which had supported the regulative discourse of Bernstein's schema). Power has decidedly shifted to the learner, who is now conceived of as a consumer/client and not, as before, as a 'pupil' or 'student'. The move to relations of consumption is of course of one piece with the relations which properly obtain in the market. Authority relations in the school as an institution of the market are deeply different to those of the traditional school, which stood in place of the state and its relation to its subjects (or citizens). If there is regulation here, its source of authority is not as before.

Several frames which are not mentioned, invoked or more or less directly implied here are nevertheless causally involved: they are the frames of the globalisation of finance capital; the changing frames of transport, whether of physical entities (commodities and people) or of information (though the latter is directly mentioned); and the changing frames of a society being transformed willy-nilly from a conception of a homogeneously monocultural society to a decisively pluricultural one.

All of these are having the profoundest effects on what education can plausibly be (as on what it can no longer plausibly be) and what new conceptions can, need and should be developed. The demands of the nation state and of its economy had provided an overarching frame of coherence through its authority and its needs. This frame is becoming less available as a stable point of reference and is being replaced by far less stable, less predictable contingencies and requirements. The relative stabilities of the class societies of industrialised states, with their economies founded on industrial mass production, are being replaced, or at the very least overlaid, by the highly fluid arrangements of lifestyle groupings. The demands generated in this new arrangement are diverse and the new curricula consequently have no immediately available, secure basis for broadly integrative principles of coherence.

If before the present period the education systems of industrial nations had the task of educating a population for stability, the new arrangements seem to demand an education for a period of fluidity, for instability. What are the features of an education for instability? This of course touches decisively on the question of identity and its relations to pedagogy and knowledge.

In all this I have not mentioned the issue which for me is central, namely that of the changing landscapes of representation and communication. It is this which both has the most radically transformative effects on knowledge and ties in most directly to the new forms of the economy. Associated with this are the new media of communication and, in particular, a shift (paralleling all those already discussed) from the era of mass communication to the era of individuated communication, a shift from unidirectional communication, from a powerful source at the centre to the mass, to multidirectional communication from many directions/locations, a shift from the 'passive audience' (however ideological that notion had always been) to the interactive audience. All these have direct and profound consequences on the plausible and the necessary forms of education for now and for the near future.

## EDUCATION FOR INSTABILITY

The changes in the environments in education are making new demands on education, demands to which institutional education, in its form as school or university, has barely begun to respond. The new demands are at bottom demands for a different kind of social subject. The social subject educated, in my somewhat pessimistic phrase, for an era of social and economic instability is deeply different to the social subject of the preceding era: a citizen/worker/

professional who was educated toward the stabilities of well-defined citizenship or equally stable subjectivities as a participant in stable economies. There is of course a positive way of expressing ‘instability’ and a positive response to such demands, and that is to invoke notions such as creativity, innovativeness, adaptability, ease with difference and comfortableness with change. These will form the bedrock values in my own educational vision (in my idea of education for utopia).

In the meantime, however, the stable environmental arrangements of the former period have come asunder: the homologies between the purposes of the nation state and the values of the school, the needs of the economy and the forms of knowledge and pedagogic practices of the school and the values of the school and the values of the media, all these have come adrift. One means of assessing this is to look at ‘lifeworlds’: the manner in which socio-cultural groups arrange (or have arranged for them!) vastly webbed systems of practices, values, objects and meanings. To speak too generally, it is possible to say, nevertheless, that the sets of arrangements around specific forms of work provided by and characteristic of the economies of the Fordist era—tight boundaries of hierarchy, tightly classified, highly segmented and closely enforced work practices (whether of trade or profession)—were expressed in cultural terms as high valuations of well-understood traditions, high valuations of loyalty, dependability, expertise in a specific or even narrow range, and so on.

Work and its lifeworld, itself an effect of forms of the economy, produced ‘leisure’—that time which was left over from work (for those whose work was defined by the formal economy; for those who were outside that, ‘leisure’ usually did not exist). The structuring of leisure was largely homologous with that of work, even if at times by a negation or inversion. But work also produced, in a not too highly mediated form, the structures of the school, as has been pointed out before, for instance in E.P. Thompson’s definitive *The Making of the English Working Class*. Whether as the organisation of time in accordance with the rhythms of the working day, the structurings of authority relations (as relations to knowledge), the shape and content of the curriculum itself or in the inculcations of clear value systems, the school stood in a closely homologous relation to work and to the economy more broadly.

So what are the essential features of this world and how can a new curriculum hope to respond to them? Stability has been, or will be, replaced by instability. Locality will become ‘virtual’: knowledge, with the new ICTs, is or will be accessible anywhere. It no longer needs either the site of the school or of the library. The world of communication is multimodal, no longer reliant on language-as-speech or on language-as-writing alone. The social world is no longer monocultural; the economic world has moved from the era of mass production to the era of niche production, with its different requirements (innovative, changing, individuated), and to the world of an economy of services and information.

The curriculum which was serviceable for that former world and the social and material organisations and structures built around it will no longer suffice.

What is required is a thoroughgoing review of what the features of this new world are likely to be and what curricular and pedagogic responses are likely to be possible and most useful. The curriculum of the most recent past, and still present in schools, had a particular orientation to knowledge and was marked by particular selections of knowledge. Knowledge was 'there', produced elsewhere, authoritative and to be acquired. Its presence in the curriculum was justified by its relevance in and for 'the world'. Science made available a specific take on the natural world, namely that that which was invisible in the world could be made visible in 'laws'; English provided access to that which was regarded as the aesthetically outstanding in the domain of literature, and much else besides; Mathematics and its allies showed that the world of disorder could be brought to order by high level abstraction and regularity. Art provided means of recording that which was judged salient via conventionalised representational practices. And so on.

Underpinning this curriculum were, of course, notions of social order which themselves appeared as givens in curriculum and in pedagogy: attitudes to authority and notions of individual agency (or the limitations on or of agency). And these notions appeared in theories and approaches to teaching and learning: teaching as transmission, learning as acquisition. In that structure learning was not a domain of individual creative agency; individual agency as work of acquisition, yes, individual agency as reshaping, no. 'To learn' was not supposed to mean 'to change': authority relations attempted to guarantee the unchanged replication of knowledge in learning. The link between the school subjects, on the one hand, and work and professions, on the other, was also clear: theoretical elaboration for those who went beyond the years of compulsory schooling, practical training for those whose trajectories would take them into the world of manual, physical labour.

Economies founded on services and information do not (necessarily) need the knowledge of the subjects of the older curriculum. Instead of attitudes and dispositions to fixed knowledge, both the economy of services and the economy of information demand the ability to design: to design objects (whether as texts or as commodity of any kind) and to design processes (whether in entertainment, in business or in education). The ability to design, an aptitude in using the resources available for making (whether the making of representations for communication or the making of objects for consumption) differs fundamentally from the aptitudes and dispositions previously needed, prized and rewarded.

'Design' rests on agency; it takes agency for granted, still as work, but no longer as acquisition but now definitely as 'shaping work'. In this, design proceeds on the basis of a full knowledge of the resources available to the designer and the capacity of the designer to assemble these materials into designs expressing her/his intentions and interests in relation to particular demands.

This suggests a very different curriculum, a very different pedagogy and a fundamentally different notion of learning. It sees the learner as fully agentive,

as becoming fully aware of the potentials, capacities and affordances of the materials to be used in the designs. It sees design as the making of signs (whatever the materiality in which they appear: material/three-dimensional, spoken/temporal, written/two-dimensional) whether in the science classroom, in English or in art. Of course, this is a fundamental realignment of the curriculum: a realignment from a curriculum focused on knowledge as a stable, even if complex, 'entity', to a curriculum focused on uses of knowledge-as-information in relation to specific domains of application.

'Design' as a central category of the school curriculum and as a goal of its purposes places the student-as-learner very differently to the place he or she occupied in the traditional curriculum. There competence in relation to the 'making' of knowledge was central, and 'learning' was seen in the light of that. Design makes the learner agentive in relation to her/his interests in a specific environment and in relation to the resources available for the production of that design. He or she is transformative, creative and innovative. Design asks for production of the new rather than replication of the old. Thus putting 'design' at the centre of the curriculum and of its purposes is to redefine the goal of education as the making of individual dispositions oriented towards innovation, creativity, transformation and change. In my view these are the dispositions which will be essential to meet the demands of the new forms of the economy and of the now culturally plural societies and the conditions of globalising capital. They are also, somewhat paradoxically, dispositions which would in any case recognise the real potentials of humans as always creative, always innovative, always transformative.

Let me make one last point here before I discuss, briefly and very generally, what this might look like in relation to a curriculum subject such as English. That point concerns the effects of globalisation of capital on the curriculum. The curriculum has always had a more or less direct relation to the economy. The globalisation of finance capital means that the conditions of labour are becoming globally uniform, and any curriculum has to be designed with that in view. If someone seeks work in a sector of the economy which has become globalised (say in working for a transnational company) then it is the conditions of the global economy which will make their demands on the curriculum. At the 'lower end' of the employment scale, the exporting and importing of jobs means that the conditions of and demands made of labour in any one locality on the globe in effect become the conditions and demands of labour everywhere. The curriculum in any locality will have to be attuned to these global demands; what is taught and how it is taught will need to take the globe not just as the relevant but as the necessary domain of thinking and practice. Of course, there are always local inflections: the 'global' appears in Corsica and in Bangladesh and it is transformed by Corsicans and Bangladeshis in the environment of local histories, values, dispositions and contingencies. And of course, as a reciprocal effect of globalisation there will be (the possibility of) a newly intense concern with the local. Within the European Union this is manifesting itself in the form of the (re)emergence of regions and nations, whether the Toscana or Burgundy

or Scotland. That too will have to be accommodated in the curriculum of the future.

## A NEW CURRICULUM OF COMMUNICATION

The new requirements made by globalisation of education and its curricula are the basis of the work of the New London Group and its work on 'Multiliteracies' (New London Group, 1996). Here I will briefly sketch just some of the features of the curriculum that would take the place of the English curriculum in England. For me it is clear that, whatever it might be called, and for the time being the name and label English is perhaps the one that needs to stay, this has to be a full, rich curriculum of communication. To discuss that I will use the notions of 'multiliteracy' and of 'communicational webs'. As responsibility for education shifts from the state to the market, a whole new set of questions arises around values and ethics, and I will make a comment on that, in relation to the categories of style and aesthetics as essential underpinnings of the purposes of a curriculum of communication.

The term 'multiliteracies' was coined by members of the New London Group (1996) (New London after the town in New Hampshire where the group held its first meeting). It is a term which attempts to capture and recognize the multiple forms, the multiple sites and the multiple purposes of communication, to show them in their social/cultural environments, link them to the demands of the society and its economy and to show them as the effects of the agentive, creative, transformative, designing action of individuals communicating in their social lives. A focus on multiliteracies at once moves away from concern with language alone, whether as speech or as writing, and focuses instead on the ensembles of communicational modes which are in use in a particular situation, on a particular occasion of communication, and on the shaping/designing action of those producing their communicational ensemble, and on their purposes. This approach does not privilege any one of the modes of representation which are in use, but rather focuses on what goes on and on the purposes of what is going on. This rhetorical approach of course has to be attuned to the effects of power in communication. It is also the necessary approach in culturally plural settings: by focusing on what actually goes on and why, by not privileging image over language or gesture over sound or action over a three-dimensional model, it is an approach which is, potentially at least, culturally 'open': it is open to the varying communicational practices of any group.

'Design' is central to this approach, i.e. the recognition that in all communication we work with culturally already shaped material (as 'semiotic modes' with grammars: writing, image, gesture, speech, music) but in working with these materials constantly reshape them, remake them, in line with the characteristics of our designs. In this way the approach puts forward a quite new, radically different theory of meaning, of semiosis, in which the individual is always shaping (the etymology of the word points to both 'creating' and to 'work', both present in the German word 'schaffen') and never simply 'using',

as in 'language users'. This provides the necessary theory of meaning and of learning for the new curriculum of communication, and indeed for other curricula as well.

Multimodality is a given in the Multiliteracies approach; the task then is to uncover, describe and theorise what the different modes are which appear in communication and what meaning potentials they make available to those who integrate them and draw on them in their designs. (Some work is now available on this; see for instance Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen, 1999; Kress, 1999). Designs speak of choices: choices which reflect the interests of their designer, choices of mode: 'I will represent and communicate this element or these elements in image, these elements in writing, to produce this ensemble'. Choice is action which represents the interests of the chooser (or the constraints under which the chooser chooses). In a society in which the state has begun to lose (or cede) power to the market, choice in any case becomes the criterial principle of action. In the 19th century nation state, with its clear (even if often not clearly, overtly, articulated) value systems, choice was not the issue, and often hardly possible. The taken-for-grantedness of social forms had made them seem natural and, hence not amenable to choice and to change through choice. Adaptation to, fitting into, the structures of the society supported by the state was the required disposition, mirrored, of course, in so many ways by the curriculum of that era (and present still, as I said earlier, in so many ways, in the backward looking and backward moving curriculum of today).

Now communication happens in new communicational webs. The 12 year old boy who spends much of his leisure time either by himself or with friends in front of a playstation, lives in a communicational web structured by a variety of media of communication and of modes of communication. In that, the 'screen' may be becoming dominant, whether that of the TV or of the PC, and may be coming to restructure the 'page'. The visual mode may be coming to have priority over the written, while language-as-speech has new functions in relation to all of these. The media in this web would be TV, PC, playstation, magazine, book, talk and Internet web sites. The modes of communication would be, probably dominantly, image, then writing, then talk. In contrast, the 12 year old's 10 year old sister is likely to live in a quite differently structured communicational web; yes TV and PC figure, but quite differently. Instead of the books on science fiction (derived from playstation games) or books on games themselves, there might be much more conventional narratives, and the magazines might be absent. Talk would figure more prominently, as would play of a self-initiated kind.

The communicational webs of school and beyond school would also differ, more so for the 12 year old than for his sister. The notion of the 'communicational web' would allow us to look at sites of work and sites of leisure and at the fit or lack of it between the school and the world beyond the school. That would allow the new curriculum to (re)connect with the world of its domain.

The state's purpose for the education system was to produce citizens and the requisite labour force for its economy. The demands of the market are to

produce consumers, first and foremost, and perhaps a labour force for its economies, though that aim is a much more diffuse one for the market. The structures of the nation state and of its economy had provided the means of constructing identities for individuals, via their place in its structures: 'I am working class', 'I am an academic', 'I am a welder', 'I am ...', etc. The market provides for those who have the means to participate, the possibility of identity making via choice-in-consumption: 'we prefer French brie', 'I like wearing Gap clothes', 'we always buy a French car'. The still active realities of 'class' give way in this environment to the metaphor of 'lifestyle', and lifestyle is constructed out of the work of choice in the market of commodities (those who cannot participate in consumption in the market cease to matter, for the market at any rate). Choice-in-consumption is the expression of the individual's interest (shaped, of course, in the environment of the society and its market) and becomes the expression of an individual aesthetic (shaped, of course, and met by the aesthetic of the market). Style-as-aesthetics is now the condition of all of those in consumer capitalism who are not excluded from consumption. That has moved the domain of aesthetics from its reference to the objects of the elite to all practices of the everyday. Communication is no exception: the look of the newspaper which I read relates to the look of the supermarket that I shop in and that relates to the clothes that I wear to go to work in or for leisure, etc. Texts, whether linguistic or linguistic and visual or musical, texts of every kind and certainly not just the texts of the canon of the elite, are entirely related to consumption of commodities of all kinds. Contemporary school textbooks, in England as around the globe, are also subject to the same aesthetic demands.

Which school subject is likely to deal with this as an issue, both as an issue of preparing the young appropriately for their societies and as an issue of making overt the principles of design which suffuse every aspect of the aesthetics of the market? For me the answer is quite clear: if the subject English in the English school curriculum does not do so, then there is nowhere else at the moment where this will happen. But it is an issue which is both essential for the design of a new form of communication and for the understanding of life in a consumer (i.e. market dominated) society.

As I said, whether this newly (re)conceived subject remains English or becomes, much more appropriately 'communication' (or something else entirely, as in the new curriculum 2005 in South Africa, where it has become language, communication and literature), the *tasks* for that subject remain. Preparing young people for their lives in a society dominated by consumption structured by the market demands that aesthetics, as the politics of style (itself the result of work by individuals), whether of the banal text or the valued texts of the elite, be at the core and as the foundation of that curriculum. Aesthetics as the politics of taste, whether of the everyday or the exceptional, or the bringing together of the two, allows and entails the development of notions of the potentials of individuals, of representational resources, of agency, of the transformative action of design, of innovation, of a taken-for-granted creativity of all communicational action/work. Implicit in it is the notion of critique, i.e.

full awareness of the representational and communicational potentials of forms of communication will always allow the recipients of 'texts' to hypothesize in informed fashion as to what the interests and intentions of the makers of the text might have been.

In the world of market-dominated consumption, as much as in the world of an economy of information and services, meaning resides in commodities of all kinds, both because commodities have been constructed as signs and because commodities are taken as signs by those who construct their identity through choice-in-consumption. Meaning is therefore no longer confined or confinable to 'texts' in a traditional sense, nor is communication. A curriculum of communication which is to be adequate to the needs of the young cannot afford to remain with older notions of text as valued literary object, as the present English curriculum still does, by and large.

## CONCLUSION

I have not discussed one of the most burning issues—will there be a school at all in 30 years time or will ICTs become such that framings of site, time and authority have become superfluous or irrelevant? I have assumed the continued existence of the school, even if in greatly changed form, but the school will only retain its place if it, or those who are responsible for it, face the question of the fit between curriculum and the new shapes of work and leisure around the school and if the question of wider purposes for each subject in the curriculum can be satisfactorily answered.

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