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Beyond Curriculum 2000: Some National and International Perspectives on A Level English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses and compares post-16 English Literature curricula in Australia and the UK, and the International Baccalaureate diploma, in the context of issues about breadth and depth in post-16 education, reflecting on the different structures and philosophies which have influenced approaches to teaching and learning at this level. It argues that, if A Level English students are to manage the transition to higher education effectively, and/or develop a broad, contemporary understanding of literature and literary studies, the post-16 literature curriculum in the United Kingdom needs to develop further in progressive directions informed by contemporary developments in higher education English, and by notions of critical literacy and cultural pluralism, as in the other systems described. It suggests that the effect of central government reforms in the United Kingdom, and the consequent weakening of professional networks at national and regional levels, as well as conflicts within the profession about the nature of literature teaching, are responsible for lack of progress in this regard.

THE SAGA OF A-LEVEL

Here in the United Kingdom, a long-running saga concerning the content, nature and status of the A level examination – the

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national Post-16 school-leaving qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland¹ – is moving into (yet another) new phase. Since even before it was introduced, over fifty years ago, A level has been the subject of numerous attempts, mainly by government-appointed review bodies (and mainly rejected by the various governments responsible), to get rid of it and replace it with a broader system.² The latest attempt – the Tomlinson Report on 14-19 education (2004) – having been rejected by the government (DFES, 2005), new A Level syllabuses have just been published for first teaching in September 2008.

The main perceived problems with the A level system have been its narrowness (three subjects as standard) and its exclusiveness (sharply separated from vocational qualifications), enshrining a degree of academic specialisation deemed suitable for United Kingdom university entrance,³ a characteristic which has earned it the epithet ‘the Gold Standard’. ‘The Gold Standard’ is a conveniently rousing phrase for media and politicians to lead reactionary campaigns on, implying nostalgia for a time before ‘dumbing-down’ and ‘the decline of standards,’ and a rigorous separation between the academic and the vocational in education. There is also, perhaps, often an implied suggestion that Britain has maintained this standard whilst other nations all over the world (not to mention parts of the United Kingdom), with their baccalaureates and so on, have succumbed to the chimera of breadth in post-16 education at the expense of depth.

The strain on A level – designed over fifty years ago in a very different social, cultural and educational context – has been showing recently. Current government policy – enshrined in Curriculum 2000, its major curriculum reform three years after being elected in 1997 – has been to retain the idea of ‘the Gold Standard’ at the same time as attempting to broaden the A level experience and widen participation in it. This is widely acknowledged to have failed (Hodgson and Spours, 2003). Ongoing protests against the A level system suggest that, in fact, A level not only continues to fail to fulfil a role it has always failed to fulfil (as a broad and inclusive general further education), but is also now often perceived to fail to fulfil the role it was originally *meant* to fulfil – as a sufficient discriminator for university entrance, and as a rigorously academic specialist course of study to prepare a small elite for the academic demands of the old and redbrick universities. With widening participation in post-16 education, constant arguments about why more students score higher grades each year, and continuing complaints by lecturers and employers about the perceived decline in students’ knowledge



and skills, the Gold Standard seems to have slipped in the eyes of many. Despite all this, and despite Tomlinson's argument for radical reform comprising the introduction of a broad and flexible baccalaureate-style system catering for both the academic and the vocational, the government has decided to give A level what many now see as one last chance, instructing qualifications bodies to ensure that its new manifestation incorporates greater academic challenge, finer discrimination between students, and a sharper focus on skills.

These moves are in part a response to problems arising from Curriculum 2000. This reform had three major thrusts in relation to A level. First, largely in order to facilitate widening participation, increase flexibility, and sharpen teaching and learning, A level subjects were modularised; formerly generally-applied assessment objectives were apportioned to specific modules; and a distinct emphasis on 'key skills' was devised. Second, an attempt was made to inject breadth both through revising the content of individual subject syllabuses and through the requirement that students study a fourth subject at least, and possibly a fifth, in the first year of the two-year course. Third, a new exam, the Advanced Extension Award, to be taken in addition to the A Level, was introduced in the main subjects to provide broader and more challenging material for the most able, and greater differentiation at the top end of the ability range. Whilst the second set of initiatives (greater breadth) arguably achieved some limited success in its aims, the first (modularisation) – in conjunction with an increased emphasis on school results in national league tables – has been widely perceived by both schools and universities to have led to a highly assessment-driven and assessment-dominated A level which has increased instrumental approaches to teaching and learning (*ibid.*, 2003). Furthermore, the third (the Advanced Extension Award) was hardly taken up and thus failed to boost academic challenge or solve universities' problems with differentiating between the most able. As a result, in 2008, the number of modules will be reduced, assessment objectives will once again be un-coupled from specific modules, Advanced Extension Award-style questions will be incorporated into A level papers, and it is possible that a new high grade will be created (DfES, 2005).

Even if these moves stem some of the complaints about A level, many now believe that, in addition to concerns about the extent to which the system *actually* provides depth of learning, the question of its lack of breadth is now urgent, especially at a time of significant cultural change in a media-saturated, knowledge-



rich society. (The institution of the Advanced Extension Award, indeed, seemed to suggest some acknowledgement that breadth and depth are not exclusive.) Now, perhaps more than ever, the extreme subject specialisation of the A level system, with its heavy-handed modular emphasis on assessment objectives, is seen by many to be as narrowing as it could be deepening – a perception perhaps reflected in the great recent popularity of the International Baccalaureate, now offered in well over 100 British schools as an alternative to A level.⁴

At the heart of these debates is a series of questions not only about the role of individual subjects in the curriculum, the function of post-compulsory, pre-university education, and the relationship of universities with schools, but also about effective curriculum and pedagogy. Should education at this level continue to be primarily an in-depth preparation for a specialist subject area at university? Or should it provide a more general and rounded educational overview? Does a close focus on a specialist area necessarily lead to depth of learning when it is not supported by the multi-disciplinary and extra-disciplinary perspectives, and cross-disciplinary potential, of a broader system? How can breadth and specialism effectively be combined to produce depth? Further, what should be the role of universities in determining the school curriculum, of university disciplines in determining the nature of school subjects? Can the disciplinary needs of universities be reconciled with the diverse social, cultural and educational needs of students and other constituencies in a complex twenty-first century world? Finally, is ‘dumbing-down’ merely a spectre formed by the shades of outdated discourses and structures, or is it a reality to be feared?

SUBJECT MATTER

Tensions between curricular depth and breadth, and inclusion and exclusion, are not only played out in the broad rhetoric of post-16 systems, of course; they also manifest themselves within the subject specialisms which are at the centre of the tug-of-war, and frequently parallel and intertwine with the larger debates. Currently, for instance, in the United Kingdom, there is a crisis regarding Science in schools and universities; discussion at present is focused on the perceived ‘dumbing down’ of the subject (i.e., broadening it to incorporate contemporary ethical perspectives in addition to the traditional subject core), in the light of rapidly



decreasing student uptake of the subject, and closing university departments.

There is no public crisis of this sort with English, no closing departments, but English has certainly been dealing for a long time with similar issues. It is perhaps no coincidence that the growth of a set of discourses about the democratisation of education and about curricular breadth and depth has run parallel for half a century with the growth of a set of discourses about the relationships between literature, language and culture in English studies, and the relationships between texts and contexts in literary study – issues which are themselves concerned not only with breadth and depth but also with cultural, literary and linguistic values. These have, broadly speaking, served to widen the gap between English literature as studied in schools and as studied in universities, as new practices based in literary theory, emphasising and problematising matters of context and interpretation, have become dominant in higher education (Eaglestone, 2000).

Thus, just as resistance to the A level system has been going on since its very inception, so there has been a long tradition in the United Kingdom of resistance to the conception of literary study enshrined in A level English Literature. From early in its life, A level English Literature was criticised by both school and university teachers for its narrow focus on the close reading of a small number of traditional canonical set texts informed by an essentially Leavisite paradigm, and for its failure to incorporate a broader attention to language and culture in the light both of contemporary developments in English Studies, and of students' contemporary needs and interests. The narrowness of its assessment regime – still dominated by short essays written in terminal examinations – has often been remarked. Further, there has been frequent observation of reductive, transmissive approaches to teaching set texts at A level (for instance, Barnes and Barnes (1984)), despite a partial focus on students' personal responses. But the paradigm of the close reading and encyclopaedic study of the canonical set text as the primary focus of literary study at A level, focusing very much on 'the words on the page', and assessed through essays of a very particular type, has proved difficult to dislodge, and is still strongly associated with notions of depth in the subject.⁵ Moves away from this paradigm are often perceived as 'dumbing-down', especially if there appears to be any threat to traditional conceptions of 'great authors' and 'classic texts'.

A relatively liberal period of syllabus experimentation in



the 1980s brought about certain changes to A level English, influenced both by developments in modern literary and linguistic studies and by developments in school English. A level English Literature came to embrace a wider canon including many contemporary works, a slightly more flexible approach to assessment, and more student-centred pedagogy, whilst, in the early 80s, Linguistics broke away from English Literature with the creation of a new A level in English Language (Greenwell, 1988; 1994). Ultimately, however, despite some promising shifts, and as a result of a government clampdown on such things as coursework in 1993, the fundamental shape of A level English Literature, and its underlying philosophy, changed little at this time, and certainly moved little towards new conceptions of the subject in higher education, or towards a reconciliation between traditional notions of depth through detailed close reading and the breadth implied by new approaches.

No significant further change took place during the 90s: indeed, change in any direction perceived as liberal was strongly discouraged by government, (not to say legislated against), during the late- and post-Thatcherite Tory years (1987-1997). It was not until the new Labour government began to work towards a revision of the curriculum (Curriculum 2000) that further change to A level English Literature was mooted once more.

As we have seen, one of the major factors underpinning this revision was Labour's vision of A levels as a part of substantially widening participation in a modernised post-16 education.⁶ To a certain extent, the modernisation of subject content was to be part of this project. Certainly, there is substantial evidence that, in English, changes in the university discipline had some influence on the shape of the new English Literature syllabuses; in the new subject criteria (QCA, 1999), for instance, QCA (the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for schools) gave considerable emphasis to the need for students to learn about context and interpretation in literary study. Although context and interpretation had previously been part of A level assessment objectives, here they were for the first time 'pinned down' to specific parts of the syllabus, in the light not only of universities' comments, no doubt, but also those of A level examiners and inspectors, about the lack of consistency with which these aspects of literary study had been treated at A level.⁷ The new emphasis that was expected was even signalled by the publication of a book of literary criticism, aimed at A level teachers and designed to demonstrate ways of 'doing' contextual study (Rylance and Simons, 2001), as a result of an unprecedented collaboration between CCUE, the higher education subject



association for English, and QCA.

Just as Curriculum 2000's attempt to broaden the entire A level system largely failed to materialise, however, so did its attempt to broaden substantially the nature of literary study at A level. Despite the altered emphasis on context and interpretation, the essential paradigm of the course remained the same – still focused almost entirely on the close reading of a small number of set texts in a fairly traditional mode. Focus on context and interpretation no doubt improved to an extent, and the introduction of a compulsory synoptic paper was valuable, but those who imagined that this might represent a widespread and substantial broadening of students' experience in terms of exposure to notions of literary criticism, textuality, history or value, or simply a wider range of literary texts of various kinds, were on the whole disappointed, as exam boards retreated pragmatically from confronting these issues.⁸

One beneficial result of the focus on issues of literary context and interpretation in Curriculum 2000, as well as moves in recent years by the higher education English Subject Centre to improve teaching and learning in university English,⁹ has been an increased research focus and widening debate on the problematic gap between A level English and university English, and the experience of teachers, lecturers and students in managing the transition between them. All these accounts (for instance, Smith (2002; 2004); NATE (2005); Green (2005); Atherton (2006)) indicate that there are substantial issues to be confronted – by both universities and schools, and in terms both of pedagogy and curriculum – if this transition is to be eased. A recurring proposition is that A level English Literature needs to embrace a broader, more modern conception of literary study, anchored in a clearer understanding of the subject's disciplinary frameworks, and enabling students to read more effectively and learn more independently.

In the new syllabuses just published, the minimum number of set texts students will study is to be increased from 8 to 12 (QCA, 2006), in a further attempt to prompt breadth and to force greater attention to context by making it more difficult to study texts atomistically. As ever, much will depend on the way syllabuses are framed, and in particular what course assessment requires – but it is questionable whether simply increasing the number of set texts will have much effect when the underlying paradigm remains much as it has for so many years.¹⁰ It appears likely that new paradigms will eventually need to be found.



ALTERNATIVE PARADIGMS

Despite the impetus for change in the system as a whole, and often in individual subjects, the United Kingdom has held on to the A level system in the face of widespread difference and change both in Europe and in other parts of the English-speaking world, where many countries maintain a broader system of general education in the post-compulsory phase. Recently, as we have seen, there has been considerable interest in the United Kingdom in the European idea of the baccalaureate – a broad-based course with a combination of compulsory and optional subjects, offered at different levels of specialisation, often framed by a set of extra-curricular and cross-curricular experiences, and aiming to offer an ideal combination of breadth and depth; there have, in recent A level reforms, been some moves towards this model. In other parts of the English-speaking world, such as the United States, post-16 education remains broad until well into the university degree. On the other hand, Australia, for instance, retains a relatively specialised system akin to that in Britain.

As well as providing reference points for a consideration of the effectiveness of the A level system as a whole, these other national and international systems offer a valuable source of alternative paradigms for the study of English Literature, in the light of the debate about A level English Literature. Two particularly interesting examples are the International Baccalaureate and the Australian system; a close examination of both of these yields useful comparative material. What, for instance, is the effect for literary study of the breadth of the International Baccalaureate diploma? And does a system similar to Britain's, such as that of Australia, maintain a similar approach to English Literature? What can we learn about depth and breadth from these examples? And what are the further implications for English in higher education?

THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

The International Baccalaureate originated in the work of educationalist Alec Peterson in the early 1960s, as a response to his dissatisfaction with the narrowness of the A level system, and the failure of the Crowther Report in 1959 to deal with this issue. Peterson envisaged a system in which breadth was achieved through a range of curricular, cross-curricular and extra-curricular approaches. Depth, meanwhile, was achieved through



an integration of these elements founded on the one hand to a commitment to education for international understanding, critical thinking skills and meta-cognitive awareness, and on the other to the development of the whole person, and a rejection of narrow specialisms (as in the United Kingdom) and encyclopaedic approaches to learning.¹¹

Although the International Baccalaureate has been in existence since 1968, it was only available, in Britain, in a handful of international schools until about fifteen years ago. During the last fifteen years or so it has been introduced in a number of state and independent schools, and is now taught in over one hundred institutions in Britain - half of them international, private or public schools; the other half state school sixth forms, sixth form colleges or further education colleges.¹² Although this is still a small minority of schools, it has built a strong reputation as an alternative to A level, partly as a result of growing concerns about the lack of breadth in A level, but partly also because of the diploma's international vision – embedded in the curriculum – and its integrated nature, with its emphasis on the cross-curricular and extra-curricular.¹³ It was features such as these, as well as its breadth, which made it of interest to the Tomlinson 14-19 Reform Working Group – and, indeed, Tomlinson's proposals included elements of the International Baccalaureate: the compulsory extended essay or project, the accreditation of extra-curricular activities, and the variety and flexibility of assessment methods, for instance.¹⁴

English Literature as a subject in the International Baccalaureate ('English A1') reflects the ethos of the diploma as a whole. (The International Baccalaureate, in fact, stipulates that its subjects should incorporate internationalist approaches and breadth of coverage; thus, breadth arises not only out of the diploma as a whole, but out of each of its subjects.) In English A1, for instance, literature in translation, and literature from a range of places and cultures within the English-speaking world, are required study. The syllabus demands that, through 15 set texts, students cover a wide range of periods, genres (including non-fiction) and places, which are built into the programme in a more methodical and coherent way than such requirements at A level – so that, for instance, a programme might comprise a study of post-colonial literature based on three set texts, a study of drama based on four set texts, a study of regional British literature based on four set texts, and the study of four 'classic' texts of English Literature, as well as preparation for an unseen commentary exam. Most of the sections of the syllabus can – or must – be adapted to form a genre, period, cultural or thematic study,



meaning that comparative and contextual study are emphasised throughout. There is a variety of assessment methods, including 50% coursework, of which half is conducted orally (which leads to a greater variety of types of textual study and response); and the examinations allow more adequate time for response than at A level – 2 hours where A level generally offers 45 minutes.¹⁵

In addition, all students must take a ‘theory of knowledge’ course which provides a cross-curricular complement to subject learning, attending explicitly to the general and specific conceptual frameworks which students will encounter in their subjects. Theory of Knowledge, for instance, provides opportunities for students and teachers to consider issues such as aesthetics, linguistics and cognition.

The relation between breadth and depth here is illuminating. There are more set texts than at A level, and a far wider range of forms of assessment, for which not all texts need be studied in the minute detail necessitated by A level. Crucially, not every text is formally assessed. The relatively short period of time to study each text in comparison with A level encourages a faster pace and a more flexible relationship between close reading, on the one hand, and holistic textual and contextual understanding on the other. The emphasis on breadth reinforces the importance of generic and contextual understanding, rather than a comprehensive but atomistic knowledge of each text studied. The standard assessment tasks reflect this, often taking the form of generic questions which ask students to bring together their knowledge of two, three or more texts in order to support a broad argument about a genre or a culture; or students may write commentaries on (sometimes previously unprepared) single passages from texts they have studied to show their knowledge of the whole. In International Baccalaureate English, close reading is put to work more effectively than at A level, with students consistently expected to show that they have extrapolated from one text to another of the same (or a different) genre or culture, and from one passage of a text to another of the same text.

Depth is achieved here, it seems to me, *through* breadth – through attention to the processes by which students assimilate what they learn from reading individual texts and apply it to wider contexts – textual, thematic, historical, cultural, literary, epistemological. In this way, students learn to learn independently through the development of transferable skills, and to understand the frameworks and parameters of the discipline, and its potential for cross-disciplinary exploration. In this, they are supported by a varied and imaginative assessment regime which supports formative development effectively.



The International Baccalaureate English syllabus is in some ways still quite traditional, and is certainly not an explicitly theoretically 'grounded' course. However, in encouraging breadth of textual experience, an international outlook, a dynamic learning experience, and a structured, comparative and generic approach to literary study, it does provide the groundwork for a broad understanding of literature as a social, cultural and linguistic phenomenon. As such, it shows how a broad post-16 course in Literature can provide an appropriate preparation for the modern discipline at university, as well as a wide range of valuable skills and knowledge for contemporary life.¹⁶

AUSTRALIA

It is difficult to generalise about the Australian experience, as every state has its own education system. However, whilst I will take the state of Victoria as my example, it is possible to observe certain national trends. For instance, although the university system in Australia remains similar to that of the United Kingdom in terms of its level of specialisation, there have been widespread moves to broaden and modernise post-16 education in schools, often in baccalaureate-style models. (In Victoria, for instance, there is the VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education, introduced in the early 90s). Students must take English and a selection of specialised subjects from Arts/Humanities and Maths/Science groups.¹⁷)

Also, during the 1990s, in the context of these reforms, significant and progressive change to the advanced literature curriculum took place throughout Australia. This reform took place also in the context of a strong tradition of radical approaches to the teaching of literature (and texts in general) in Australia, inspired by the strong critical literacy movement there.¹⁸ Faculties of Education, English, and Cultural Studies have been highly influential in shaping progressive curricula in schools based on conceptions of critical literacy and literary theory, and in training teachers to teach using new methods and concepts such as intertextuality and multi-modality.

In contrast with the International Baccalaureate approach, these changes have tended to be not only structural, but also ideologically explicit in relation to modern theoretical approaches to literary study, involving a systematic programme of teacher re-education. Beavis (1995; 1997; 2001) gives an account of the substantial difficulties encountered (and surmounted) by teachers



in the state of Victoria engaging with the process of moving from a system very similar to that of the existing A level, where teachers are seen as occupying the position of 'preachers of culture,' to one in which a more democratic engagement with texts is central. Despite these difficulties, she argues (1995) that there were pressing reasons for this process. First, the changing nature of the school population in senior forms demands that the curriculum recognises a greater diversity of cultural backgrounds and literacy needs in students, as well as the revolution which has taken place in students' cultural and textual experiences and values. Second, the increasing complexity of textuality and communication in society demands that the curriculum provides a more modern approach in order to equip students with an adequate understanding of the role of language and texts in society. Thirdly, the changed nature of the subject English in higher education, after literary theory, requires the secondary subject to shift from its traditional positions. (Everything here is, of course, as relevant to the United Kingdom as to Australia.)

The English Literature syllabus which resulted from this process (Victorian Board of Studies, 1999)¹⁹ is introduced by a careful statement of definition, of which there is no equivalent at A level:

The study is based on the premise that meaning is derived from the interaction between the text, the context in which it was produced and the experience of life and literature that the reader brings to the text. Thus the study provides an opportunity for students to examine the ways in which literature represents experience and to consider these in the light of their own understanding and experience.

What is considered literature is subject to shifting attitudes, tastes and social conditions. Accordingly, the study encompasses works that vary in cultural origin, genre, medium and world view, and includes classical and popular, traditional and modern literature.

The course guide gives detailed guidance throughout on the kinds of literary knowledge and skills students should develop, the theoretical frameworks in which they should be developed, and the textual and pedagogical strategies which teachers might use. (By contrast, apart from a brief sketch of general aims, Literature syllabuses in the United Kingdom tend to consist of little more than a list of set texts.) Textual study – focusing on sixteen set texts (a similar number to the International Baccalaureate) – is based throughout firmly in the context of notions of language, genre, narrative, representation, culture and interpretation, and specifies a range of types of study – close reading, genre, theme,



etc. Texts must include a range of types from a range of periods, including those 'dealing with a diversity of cultural experiences,' and choices include literary media texts, literary non-fiction and genre novels. As in the International Baccalaureate, there is a varied and imaginative approach to assessment, and a valuable attempt to move away from the essay as the sole vehicle for assessment, with students required additionally to write reviews for specific audiences, creative writing, analyses of literary criticism, and so on, as well as giving oral presentations. Different types of essay response for different purposes are also carefully defined.

The first year of the course is assessed internally, and, crucially, the results do not count towards the students' final grade, which is based entirely on the second year of the course. The first year is a general literature course intended to lay the groundwork for the second year, in which more focused study dominates. Assessment is through 50% coursework and 50% final examination.

As with the International Baccalaureate, this is a course which encourages breadth of textual experience, a culturally diverse outlook, and a dynamic learning experience. It is firmly founded in the modern discipline, and yet, whilst informed by literary theory, it is a carefully structured, accessible course which guides students – and teachers – through disciplinary frameworks. Once again, breadth here informs depth.

MOVING ON

These two examples demonstrate that it is possible to envisage different structures for post-16 literary education in the United Kingdom – structures that enable breadth and depth to combine, that retain challenge and yet are inclusive, that respond both to students' needs and to the needs of the discipline, that develop notions of cultural pluralism and skills of critical literacy, and that help students to develop a broad, contemporary understanding of both literature *and* literary studies.

And there are other examples. In the United States, for instance, where there are no centralised curricula, many schools have developed approaches informed by critical literacy and literary theory. In *The Rise and Fall of English* (1998), for instance, Robert Scholes, professor of English at Brown University, gives an account (pp. 128-142) of an advanced literature course developed by him in collaboration with teachers, based on the concepts of



voice and culture. The six units are: 'Voices of Modern Cultures', 'Encountering the Other, Being the Other', 'Cultures and Voices in a Single Text', 'Inheriting Earlier Voices', 'Film, Language and Culture', and Mediating Cultures – The Representation of Events and People'.

What is stopping the United Kingdom from going here? It is worth reflecting, perhaps, on the conditions in which the examples described have been possible. None of the examples given were devised by national qualifications authorities and imposed 'top-down' without substantial programmes of teacher training or strong local support networks. All were inspired by a profound motivation to improve students' learning and understanding through a radical rethinking of what literary education should be. All the given examples also stem from systems in which breadth of provision has been recognised as an important factor in achieving depth, and embraced not just in English Literature, but in post-16 education generally.

In Australia and the United States, the examples given came about through school and university teachers (of both English and Education) working together in a context where these agents retain real influence on the curriculum, and are able to use it to effect the changes they know will benefit students. Such local and regional networks of inspired and committed professionals, including those provided by the English subject associations – still thriving and centrally involved in forming policy in Australia (AATE) and the US (NCTE) – have become weakened in the UK (NATE) since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989 and the subsequent centralisation of curriculum, assessment and, increasingly, pedagogy, in national government. As a result, it is the spectre of 'dumbing-down,' hanging perpetually over a government afraid to alienate its voters with headlines about declining standards, which here seems to control the teaching of English.

NOTES

- 1 In Wales, although A Level is still used, it has been incorporated into a broader qualification, the Welsh Baccalaureate. Scotland has never used the A Level, but has an entirely independent system, 'Highers.'
- 2 For accounts of this history see Hodgson and Spours (2003b), pp. 5–26, and Pound (2003)
- 3 Most students in the UK apply to study, and specialise immediately, in one subject at a relatively high level. There is no equivalent, for instance, of the general liberal arts approach common in the U.S.





- 4 Phillips and Pound (2003), and Hodgson and Spours (2003) both provide full discussions of these issues.
- 5 See Hodgson (2006) in this volume. Also, for fuller accounts of this history see, for instance, Dixon (1979), Adams and Hopkins (1981), Scott (1989).
- 6 See note 4 above; for full discussion, see Hodgson and Spours (2003), pp. 27–51.
- 7 See, for instance, Daw (1986; 1996; 1997) amongst many others.
- 8 See Atherton (2003; 2004) and NATE (2005) for fuller accounts.
- 9 See the English Subject Centre website, www.english.heacademy.ac.uk, for details of the scope of their work.
- 10 For a fuller discussion, see Snapper (2006a).
- 11 Pound (2006b) gives an account of Peterson's work. The encyclopaedism to which Peterson refers was not so much a criticism of the relatively student-centred British system but rather of certain European teacher-centred traditions of transmissive teaching.
- 12 A complete list of International Baccalaureate schools, and further information about the IB, may be accessed at www.ibo.org.
- 13 Hill (2003) and Pound (2006a) give full accounts of the International Baccalaureate diploma.
- 14 These were also features of Hodgson and Spours' proposed English Baccalaureate (2003a), which was a strong influence on Tomlinson.
- 15 See Snapper (2004) for a fuller account of the structure and possibilities of the English A1 syllabus, based on personal experience of teaching the course, including an example of a course programme. The current course syllabus (IBO, 1999) is available from www.ibo.org.
- 16 The International Baccalaureate is often singled out by universities as a particularly appropriate preparation for university study (Hill, 2003; IBO, 2003). Snapper (2006b) discusses this issue fully, and provides a case study of UK IB students' experiences of progression to university.
- 17 See the VCE website, <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/index.html>, for details.
- 18 See, for instance Sawyer and Gold (2004) for an overview.
- 19 A fuller description of the course than given here may also be found in NATE (2005) pp.30–31.

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