

# THE COMPLETE CURRICULUM AND THE COMPLETE PERSON

By FRANK MORGAN



LD WOODY GAVE this advice to six year old Anna in *Mister God, This is Anna*:

'They', he said, and his arms swept out to embrace the world, 'will tell you and encourage you to develop your brain and your five senses. But that's only the half of it, that's only being half a human. The other half is to develop the heart and the wits'. He ticked them off on one old gnarled hand with the end of his pipe. 'There's common wit, there's imagination, there's fantasy, there's estimation, and there's memory. . . . Never let anyone rob you of your right to be complete'.<sup>1</sup>

Only 'Mister God' could do justice to a title as awe-inspiring as this, and I cannot promise a prescription of a curriculum for the complete person. I don't think that what I have to say answers any questions at all. It will be a highly personal selection of topics from an inexhaustible field, and if it provides some material for discussion it will have achieved its purpose.

Curriculum theorists distinguish four separate learning elements in the school experience of a child. There is, firstly, the *formal* curriculum which goes on the timetable. This is the most controllable element, in theory, and also the one we like to think, as teachers, contributes most to the learning process. But learning goes on, too, in the *personal* curriculum of each pupil — his homework, his browsing in the library, the newspaper or magazine he reads during his private study. Religious educators might attach importance to the *informal* curriculum — all that takes place in school time but outside the daily pattern of lessons. The meeting of the school Action Group, assembly, a choir practice . . . these are typical parts of the informal curriculum. A good deal of socialization is experienced at school: the only-child learns to live with a class of thirty others. This, and more unpredictable aspects of school life, constitute a kind of *hidden* curriculum. When we say that we think John Smith is a 'bad influence' in the school, we are saying he will enter into the hidden curriculum of many others, and that what we expect him to contribute will not be very wholesome.

<sup>1</sup> Fynn: *Mister God, this is Anna* (London, 1974), pp 164-5.

Some people think that drawing attention to the learning situations other than those we present in the classroom makes our task of educating for the complete person more difficult. It undoubtedly does. But the informal, personal and hidden curricula can contribute very strongly to the education we provide; it is surely these sides of school life that parents and other observers are referring to when they talk of a school as being 'good' or 'bad'. We should, therefore, pause to examine what we can do within them on behalf of the embryonic complete person. Take, first of all, the *personal* curriculum.

The first thing to say is that the personal curriculum is an opportunity for a boy or girl to grow in learning-independence. He or she will not be at school for ever, and the sooner learning becomes self-motivated and internally driven the better. Of course as teachers we can do a lot inside the classroom to stimulate enquiry outside it: we can draw attention to resources available not only in the school but in museums, and perhaps on evening television. The paperback bookstall is becoming a common feature in schools, and can be looked upon as an excellent way of flooding the market with good literature. We can pursue a more deliberate policy in library purchasing (if, in these times of inadequate capitation grants, there is any money for library books), looking more for books that are attractive to the children than for books which we might need to supplement our courses. And we can make the school a richer place with art displays and changing exhibitions.

I don't need to say very much about homework and private study time, aspects closely related to the formal curriculum. We have a long way to go in the use of individual learning programmes. I don't think we have even begun to see the possibilities. To me the great thing about personal curricula is the possibility of breaking free from classroom limitations of all kinds. John Holt, in *How Children Fail*, gives this account of one of his pupils:

One of my brightest and boldest fifth formers was deeply interested in snakes. He knew more about snakes than anyone I've ever known. The school didn't offer herpetology; snakes were not in the curriculum; but as far as I was concerned any time he spent learning about snakes was better spent than in ways I could think of to spend it; not least of all because, in the process of learning about snakes, he learned a good deal more about many other things than I was ever able to 'teach' those unfortunates in my class who were not interested in anything at all.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Holt, John: *How Children Fail* (London, 1969), p 174 (originally published by Pitman in the U.S.A., 1964).

Much of what goes on in the hidden curriculum does so without any influence from us. From time to time items of it come to the surface, and prompt action has to be taken; the only attempt I know of to influence it more comprehensively was the silent retreat of old, which was perhaps designed to suspend it altogether for a limited period! On the other hand, the possibilities that lie within the informal curriculum are enormous. I want to highlight just three aspects that seem to me to be important in the context of this conference.

In a catholic community we lay great stress on persons. We believe 'the direction of man's life must be directed towards persons, admitting their value, knowing them and making the heart follow the mind so that they are loved'.<sup>3</sup> One quality of the person is his freedom: the wise religious educator acknowledges it and recognizes his own limitations in the process of bringing people to Christ. But in matters of school order, of rules and regulations, we too often expect blind conformity; we become irritated by those who break the code frequently. We are forgetting the child's need to grow in responsibility and develop true freedom.

I am not suggesting that we should allow school rules to be broken, but that we should examine them to see if they stand the test of rational justification. If they do, they can be a medium for moral education, for moral judgments are based on reason. We should examine them, too, in a different light: are they concerned with the welfare of persons in the community? In the ultimate analysis, can each rule be traced to the responsibility of someone to care for others? If there is this caring element in them, they can be a medium for moral education, for morals are concerned with knowledge of, and care of, others. We should not lose the opportunity provided by community living to help children reach the highest stages of moral development, where moral principles are accepted not through the wish to conform, but because of their individual consciences. We have to try to make them aware of the consequences to the community of what they do as individuals; and we have to try to develop in them the courage that is necessary before they are able to *do* what they think they *ought* to do. Some kind of school council may be the place for discussion of the regulations, and if the children can be involved in their framing, that is going to help to make them justifiable.

My second aspect is to do with staff-pupil relationships and the interplay of their sets of values. At a Downside Symposium some eight

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<sup>3</sup> Lawson, William: *Person to Person* (London, 1957).

years ago, Royston Lambert discussed the findings of his sociological study of religion in boarding schools.<sup>4</sup> They seem to me to be so important that they are worth saying again. He studied the effectiveness of the religious education in terms of the degree to which pupils responded to, recognized and accepted the religious aims of the school. He discovered in some schools an expected distance between pupils and staff which led to the formation of an anti-culture in the pupils: an antagonism to the publicly expressed christian values of the establishment. A variety of sub-groups and sub-cultures is needed if pupils are to be free to accede to some of the school's expressive aims. What I think he is saying is that family-type relationships between staff and pupils have to be sought; that many of the different interests of the children have to be catered for, with staff involvement; that there should be prayer groups and class Masses as well as school liturgies; that any informal activity bringing pupils and staff together in small numbers will help to spread a common set of values.

Thirdly — and Dr Lambert talked about this, too — I believe we can do ourselves harm if the school's religious life is subservient to its general organizational needs. There are all kinds of ways of showing where our real priorities lie, however much we try to disguise them! Assembly or morning prayers should not be an amalgam of notices, congratulations, brickbats and prayers; it should be a worship *or* administration, but not both. Nor do I think we further our religious aims by dignifying registration with a prayer. Is compulsory attendance in the chapel seen to be a matter of mere numerical accountability? Do house-masters, by virtue of their office, have religious duties to fulfil? If they do, it's a mistake. Of course if orders, rather than office, dictate the duties, that's different.

That I intend to leave the informal curriculum at this point is not to suggest nothing further can be done in it besides moral and religious education. Far from it. There is endless scope for enrichment of the whole person. But to pursue it further would involve value judgments about the attributes of the whole person that we cannot take for granted. What a complete person is should, indeed, have been my opening question; but as I suspect nobody here would doubt the inclusion of moral and religious elements in his formation, I may, perhaps, be excused for having begged it. We cannot design the formal part of our curriculum — where the most deliberate teaching and, we hope,

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<sup>4</sup> Lambert, R.: 'Religious Education in Boarding Schools', in *Religious Education* (ed. Jebb, P., London, 1968), pp 115-36.

learning take place — without an enquiry into the meaning of education. But the scope of such a search would be vast; and when we tired of it we would probably be little further forward. It's easy enough to compose a phrase to satisfy most people, such as 'the development of excellence in the individual', but what constitutes excellence and what means of achieving it are considered acceptable would be contentious. The excellence of Homer's heroes, for example, amounted to supremacy; and Professor Castle has pointed out that in achieving it Achilles deserted his friends and Odysseus was a cheat.<sup>5</sup> Spartan excellence was to do with physical strength and the ability to withstand pain; and it was achieved by methods we would now call conditioning.<sup>6</sup>

Since the Greeks, education has always had much to do with knowledge and the development of the mind. In the nineteenth century, men like Arnold, Newman and Huxley called for the full cultivation of the mind in the range of man's understanding. In the formation of christian persons, Vatican II spoke of 'the harmonious development of physical, moral and intellectual endowments';<sup>7</sup> and Gabriel Moran, speaking to catechists, suggests they should use 'every activity that is truly humanizing . . . (for) it is unthinkable that the forms of contemporary art, the developments in scientific technology and the productions of modern literature do not bear traces of God's revelatory activity'.<sup>8</sup> If we bear these insights in mind, we can, perhaps, throw some light on existing curricula, even if a universally acceptable 'complete curriculum' is bound to remain out of reach.

There are a number of ways of classifying 'everything that is truly humanizing', and that of Hirst is the most famous — but perhaps, also, the most restricting for my purpose. Hirst argues<sup>9</sup> that to have a mind is to see the world structured and organized in specific ways; and he differentiates knowledge into seven 'forms'. These are mathematics, physical science, history, morals, religion, literature and the fine arts, and philosophy. Each has certain distinguishing features. Firstly, it has its own characteristic concepts — such as 'ought' and 'wrong' in morals, and 'energy' and 'acid' in physical science. Associated with these concepts are networks into which new learning can be fitted. But what really distinguishes one form from another is its characteristic way of

<sup>5</sup> Castle, E. B.: *Ancient Education and Today* (London, 1961), p 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Moran, G.: *God Still Speaks* (London, 1968), p 141.

<sup>9</sup> Hirst, P. H.: 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge', in *Philosophical Analysis and Education* (ed. Archambault, London, 1965), pp 122-38.

exploring experience. Some of these seem more clear-cut than others: the mathematician works from a set of axioms with a form of deductive logic, and scientists experiment. But in literature and the fine arts there are probably no explicit questions to ask, and the methods adopted are somewhat intuitive or, at least, cannot wholly be explained in words.

A second way of looking at knowledge is not very dissimilar. In *Realms of Meaning*, Phenix defines a complete person as:

One skilled in the use of speech, symbol and gesture; well informed and capable of creating and appreciating objects of aesthetic interest; endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others, able to make decisions, to judge between right and wrong and possessed of an integral outlook.<sup>10</sup>

Phenix certainly believed rationality to be a distinguishing feature of man, but he recognized that there are human behaviours not purely cognitive, such as emotions, creativity and conscience. Phenix identified six realms of meaning and argued that a curriculum should initiate the person into all of them by appropriate choice of subject disciplines: thus languages and mathematics would throw light upon the realm of symbolics, in which the concern is for communication skills; and by immersion in literature, music and the visual arts, education in the realm of aesthetics might be sought. The other four realms are to do with experimentally verifiable truths, interpersonal relationships, morality and synoptics (or religion and philosophy).

A difficulty posed by both of these systems is that there appears to be little room for subjects like physical education, home economics or woodwork. Indeed if we were to attempt to make a new curriculum from Hirst-like forms or Phenix-type realms, we would find ourselves with severe problems of staff recruitment. With specialization of the degree we practice in sixth forms and universities, our teachers are and will be subject-specialists. Any attempt to put the curriculum on a more rational basis must accept this. Richard Whitfield has attempted, with the help of subject-teachers, to identify subjects with various different realms of meaning on a quantitative basis, and to explore the implications of this for the school curriculum.<sup>11</sup> Such an exercise is very subjective; it relies not only on the aims and objectives particular teachers bring to their work in the classroom, but also upon an arbitrary weighting amongst the realms of meaning.

<sup>10</sup> Phenix, P. H.: *Realms of Meaning* (New York, 1964), p 8.

<sup>11</sup> Whitfield, R. C.: *Disciplines of the Curriculum* (New York, 1971), pp 220-4.

Nevertheless, it is the kind of exercise which the Schools Council's Sixth Form Second Working Party recommended in discussion of the curricular foundations for a new approach to sixth-form examinations. No sixth-former, the Working Party considers,<sup>12</sup> should miss out on any one of the following eight elements:

Communication Skills	}	1. Literacy
		2. Numeracy
Knowledge and Understanding	}	3. Knowledge and understanding of man's natural environment.
		4. Knowledge of and understanding of man's social environment.
Affective	}	5. A developing moral sensibility.
		6. A developing aesthetic sensibility.
Expressive	}	7. Fashioning the environment (creative arts, creative aspects of technology).
		8. Physical education in its widest sense.

You will see most of the items are already familiar, and again the identification with particular subjects is left to the observer. A division has been made between art as a form of appreciation and art as creativity; and in the sense that practical subjects and physical education can be said to offer opportunities for self-expression, they are included in the list.

Is there a sense in which some of the elements in this classification can be said to have priority? Certainly literacy and numeracy are basic: theoretically the complete mastery of them should enable someone to pursue the rest of his education unaided. In most parts of Europe it would be agreed, I think, that everyone up to the age of seventeen should continue with mathematics, a foreign language and his own language;<sup>13</sup> but it does not happen in England and Wales. When the Dainton Report<sup>14</sup> recommended mathematics for all in the sixth form, it was not saying something popular.

You may be interested in some statistics from a Department of Education and Science survey of school curricula in 1965-66.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>12</sup> Schools Council, 16-19: *Growth and Response: Curricular Basis* (London, 1972), pp 58-59.

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, A. D. C.: *The Future of the Sixth Form* (London, 1973), p 42.

<sup>14</sup> Council for Scientific Policy: *Enquiring into the flow of candidates in Science and Technology into Higher Education* (Dainton Report, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> Department of Education and Science: *Statistics of Education: Special Series: The Curriculum 1965-66*, vol 1 (HMSO, 1967), Table 12.

figures I will quote represent the curriculum of no particular year-group and no particular school. They give the percentage of time spent on particular subjects in various *types* of school. All types of secondary school devote about one-eighth of their total teaching time to mathematics — there is remarkable consistency. And in English, too, there is general agreement and about the same amount of time is spent on this. There is, however, a large discrepancy between types of school in the teaching of foreign languages; in the modern school it is as low as 2.5% of teaching time, in comprehensives 9% and in grammar, direct grant and independent schools about 20%.

*Schools Council Working Paper 45*, suggests that there should be priority, too, for subjects which lead to the inculcation of values. 'The most desirable element in a balanced curriculum is . . . the development of a moral sensibility'.<sup>16</sup> And we would want, surely, to add the religious element to this view. Presumably the most direct classroom contribution to this is the religious education lesson, though many other subjects — such as history and literature — would consider it among their objectives. It cannot therefore be said that schools agree with the Working Party's view, for they give only between 3.6% and 4.8% of their time to religious education.

And what of other subject areas? It is worth recording here some significant differences and similarities in emphasis between the different types of school. I say significant because they point to the very complexity of the problem of curriculum planning and, at the same time, to the naïvety of any attempt such as this to approach it divorced from the many constraints experienced by head teachers. 20% of the time in modern schools is used for teaching woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, cookery and needlework; in direct grant schools the figure is only 3.1%. Science uses about 8% of modern school time, about 11% of comprehensive school time and about 18% of grammar, direct grant and independent school time. In all types of school the time spent on purely aesthetic and expressive subjects — art, light crafts, dance, drama and music put together — is no more than one-tenth of the time available. And history and geography each take a very consistent 5-6% of time in all schools: about two periods a week on average.

The present curricula in schools represent a set of compromises between the need for a balance in the curriculum of each person, his or her intellectual capacities and motivations, and the demands of the

<sup>16</sup> Schools Council, 16-19, p 126.

world outside. At different levels in the school the three factors are weighted differently. That in some respects the curriculum is similar in different types of school would be remarkable in a country that prides itself on the absence of any statutory control in the matter, were it not for the fact that the headmaster's autonomy is severely limited by the demands of the universities — both through their own entrance requirements and through the examination boards they control.<sup>17</sup>

In the early secondary school years, the outside influence is at its least effective and so, also, is the need to discriminate in the curriculum between children on account of their intellectual make-up. Thus in 80% of the comprehensive schools investigated by Benn and Simon in 1968 there was a common course for all first-year pupils, and nearly 40% continued it for three years.<sup>18</sup> If an analysis of curriculum content leads us to the view that change is called for, it is presumably easiest at this level. I would certainly like to see much more time given to expressive subjects and to art, for they are rich in potential. It may be, for example, that children learn much more about their faith if it is taught through dance or drama than in any number of formal lessons.

Some of the curriculum changes made in schools are not determined by criteria related to the formation of a complete person. If the headmaster cannot replace the metalwork teacher, metalwork is dropped from the curriculum. If Mrs X, who teaches history, has six children and can only come in on three mornings a week, it may be that 4c will have to do less history and more geography. We can't fit six first-year classes into the labs for four periods each, and therefore they must have three. Sometimes changes are brought about by the needs of other children: if, for example, the demand for biology among the fourth-year options dictates three separate groups, the ramifications will spread throughout the school. But even given a number of better reasons for changing the curriculum, the opportunities are small.

There are two reasons why headmasters can only nibble at existing curricula rather than constantly re-assess and recreate. First is the sense of progression built into some, if not all, school courses so that we have to plan for a number of years ahead. Second is the security of the teacher's job and the specialized nature of the service he offers: while Mr Y likes it here, there is at least the present amount of geography in the curriculum (unless we can get him involved in teaching integrated

<sup>17</sup> Young, M. F. D.: 'Curricula as Socially Organised Knowledge', in *Knowledge and Control* (ed. Young, M. F. D., London, 1971), p 22.

<sup>18</sup> Benn, C. and Simon, B.: *Half Way There* (London, 1972), p 215.

studies). If we are to bring about, in our own schools, curricula which we believe to be better, we must follow the advice of Paul Hirst at a recent conference, and 'proceed from the given situation, planning piecemeal developments' and building up a knowledge of what happens when we make these changes.<sup>19</sup>

Any curriculum planning for today's children must reflect their needs as tomorrow's adults. They will be expecting to live for a long time, and more and more of that time will be leisure time. The knowledge and skill required to be an expert in anything is increasing very rapidly; at the same time there is a decline in demand for unskilled labour. How we give the reluctant fourth and fifth formers the cognitive and motor skills they may need is the central problem. There is one suggestion that we should re-phase man's life cycle, so that education and work can be interchangeable elements. Musgrove<sup>20</sup> considers it is ludicrous for girls who menstruate at eleven to be expected to study until their early twenties, and perhaps he is right.

To educate for the complete person is to help to produce someone who is unique; and to do justice to the task requires a more individual approach than we can ever hope to achieve when we are struggling to keep class sizes down to thirty. That is why the personal and the informal curricula are so important. If we had one-to-one relationships with each child we would, I'm sure, make fewer generalizations about them. We would see each one in his complexity. As it is we tend to label them by their most outstanding characteristic: 'bright' or 'dull'; 'nice', 'noisy' or 'downright disruptive'. There is one generally accepted result of educational research that frightens me: the tendency of children to perform to their teacher's expectations.<sup>21</sup> If we cannot avoid making simplistic judgments in the heat of the moment, we should, perhaps, recognize them for what they are and keep them to ourselves.

<sup>19</sup> Hirst, P. H.: 'Towards a Logic of Curriculum Development', in *The Curriculum: Research, Innovation and Change* (ed. Taylor, P. H. and Walton, J., London, 1973), p 23.

<sup>20</sup> Musgrove, F. W.: 'The Contribution of Sociology', in *Changing the Curriculum* (ed. Kerr, J. F., London, 1968), pp 106-07.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Pidgeon, D. A.: *Expectation and Pupil Performance* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 1970).