CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING 3-14

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THIRD EDITION

*'… just help them find where they can be creative
and fulfilment will follow.'*

To Gerry Tewfik who said these words and inspired many of the principles which underpin this book and to Kay and Bill Barnes, my parents, to my wife, Cherry, my dear sister, Jane, and Jacob, Esther, Naomi and Ben who have patiently encouraged me towards clarity of values and personal creativity.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LOOK LIKE?

Chapter aims

This chapter will discuss global, technological, social, economic and personal change and reflect upon some implications for schools and schooling. It suggests that children's development, priorities and rights should be taken seriously in any decisions about the curriculum. The chapter also shows how the issues relevant to children are cross-curricular in nature. By the end of this chapter you will have been introduced to the values that underpin this book under the following headings:

- education about and for the future
- learning that maximizes children's interest in technologies
- a curriculum that recognizes global inter-relationships
- a curriculum that recognizes the importance of personal relationships
- a curriculum to support the development of character and positive identity.

What you think a school should be like depends on the values you hold. What a school *is* like results from the values of those who dominate it. Values – the fundamental beliefs that guide all levels of action – are particularly reflected in the curriculum a school offers. *Curriculum*, as used throughout this book, is defined broadly to include not just the subjects taught, but also the choices made within those subjects, the styles and means chosen to teach them, the activities, attitudes, environments, relationships and beliefs that pervade a school. Successful school communities work hard to clarify their fundamental beliefs before considering

their curriculum. This book explores cross-curricular and creative developments in primary and secondary curricula because of my experience that connection-making and creativity are essential to a morally and intellectually good education.

We are constantly reminded of the unprecedented rates of change we experience as we travel through the twenty-first century (for example, Greenfield, 2010; Robinson and Aronica, 2010; Hicks, 2014). Illustrations of the exponential growth of knowledge, the development of technology, nanotechnology, micro-biology, robotics, artificial intelligence and the rest, pepper most writing and thinking about the future. This is not the place to comment on predictions, but it is safe to say that the world the children of today will inherit will be very, very different from our present one. Our children will have to face the results of climate change, rising sea levels, pandemics, human cloning, increased population pressures, global terrorism, economic instability and rapidly changing job markets. Forecasters predict water, oil and food shortages, mass migrations and ensuing warfare. Taking a more optimistic view, whilst climate change is inevitable our children may witness more concerted international cooperation to address it. They may also experience just government, longer, healthier lives, a more equitable sharing of the earth's resources and the global development of sciences and technologies to address new and old challenges. Either way, today's children live in times of rapid and global

Illustration 1.1   Teachers can have a major influence on children's futures. School children from a village in south India

transformation that will quite literally change human minds and societies. The well-being of a significant minority in the UK and US seems to be in decline. Since 2009, measures of well-being measured by the Children's Society have fallen steadily so that in its latest report some 20% of children aged 8–15 describe their well-being as below the mid-point of two stand-ardized scales and 10% place themselves as 'low' (Children's Society, 2014, website). What curriculum can do to address the uncertainties and unhap-pinesses of children is the subject of this book. How we can empower children with values, hope, meaning and confidence in addition to knowledge, are the underlying themes.

Preparing for an uncertain future

The future has always been uncertain. Rapid advances in technology and global communications have made us hyper-sensitive to the speed and unpredictability of change. The education we currently offer our children may not be good enough to help them thrive in, and live fulfilling lives through the twenty-first century (see Beetham and Sharpe, 2013). Aside from Computing, Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), Citizenship and PSHE, the 2014 National Curriculum for England (DfE, 2013a) contains the same subject requirements as an early twentieth-century primary school. By contrast, the curricula of Scotland and Northern Ireland, the aban-doned Rose recommendations (2009) and the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) all claim that cross-curricular themes or groupings more properly address our changing times and uncertain future. Whilst legislat-ing for increased emphasis on separate subjects and a stronger focus on English, Mathematics and Science for English local authority schools, the coalition government of 2010 stressed that a percentage of curriculum time (up to 30%) could be seen as the 'school curriculum'. Academies, free schools and independent schools are given more freedom to decide on their curricula though inspection and the continued use of 'league tables' will ensure that subjects are not treated equally.

Schools are guided towards making more partnerships with the commu-nity. As schools and their communities become more involved with each other, the issues and concerns that dominate lived experience should be reflected in the curricula and pedagogies they develop. To be understood fully each question or problem inevitably requires insights and skills of several subject disciplines. As education becomes less centralized and teacher education more centred on schools via Schools Direct, Teaching Schools and Teach First, teachers at the chalkface will need more guid-ance on how to link subject learning authentically to the real world.

Meaningful and effective schooling outlives temporary curriculum change. Successful teachers have always been able to make restrictive curricula relevant to children. Schools have, for example, taken the opportunity offered by Citizenship and PSHE to propose curricula that address the personal, local (and now global) futures that young people have always cared about (Alexander, 2010; Alexander and Potter, 2005; Hicks, 2014; Layard and Dunn, 2009; Ofsted, 2010b). Those interested in 'futures education' (the study of views about probable, possible and preferable futures) have championed curricula aimed at helping children think more critically and creatively about the future (for example, Catling and Willey, 2009; Hicks, 2006; Scoffham, 2010). Motivated by the desire to involve and empower children, schools have championed ecologically, socially or culturally sensitive issues relevant to their communities. Other schools have revitalized the experience of children through working with local arts and creativity organizations or national bodies like: Creative and Cultural Education (CCE), CapeUK, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the Curriculum Foundation (website).

Today's young people differ in some ways from those of the past. Youngsters contemplating the future in this century seem to expect a less utopian prospect than the 'baby boomers' of the 1950s. Research amongst children in the USA, UK, Sweden and Canada shows children to be both serious and worried about the future (Catling, 2010). They are pessimistic about societal health, equality, wealth, security, poverty and relationships but, paradoxically, remain generally hopeful about their *own* futures. Children appear to be gloomy about the world's future and especially worried about issues currently headlined in the news. This shift away from perceptions of general optimism of the 1990s (see Bentley, 2006) is evidenced as public policy is increasingly targeted on well-being, health, sustainability, conservation, safety and security.

Contrary to youthful optimism for their personal future, Hicks (2006) showed that boys' views about the *world's* future tend towards the gender-stereotypically violent and destructive, dominated by wars, terrorism, natural disasters and disease. It seems that girls more often imagine a generalized peaceful and idealistic future, but continue to be worried about disease and pollution. These contrasts may be driven by popular culture as much as genetics.

Economy and culture encourage us to live life in the present. Children and adults alike are aware that today's consumerist public policy will deeply and negatively impact upon our futures but such knowledge scarcely affects our behaviour. Fewer and fewer people vote or play an active role in local or national democracy, yet more know about its importance. Bentley confronts these paradoxes in expressing radical aims for education. He argues:

> we are searching for means through which individuals can transform themselves through a process of internal discovery and self-actualization, by participating in the reshaping of the shared context in which they live out their individual lives. (Bentley, 2006)

Confidence and fulfilment are important aims of education. Opportunities for self-actualization (Maslow, 1943) or the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) seem rare for many children and often peripheral to school decisions. Neither liberation of the unique attributes of every child nor the notion of social intelligence (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 2006) have been systematically addressed across UK schools. Few schools are as values-driven as Makiguchi's *Soka* schools in Japan, which attempt to live out values like justice, fairness and peacemaking in their curriculum and relationships with the local and world community (Sharma, 2008). Values and purposes evident in education philosophies and aims for millennia, have in many cases been squeezed out of the curriculum. Reference to the twin aims of nurturing individuality and fostering better social and global relationships are therefore important among the themes running through this book.

In addition to their keen interest in aspects of the future, a number of topics have become pressingly relevant to the twenty-first-century child. National and international studies (for example Office for National Statistics, 2012, website; WHO, 2012, website) suggest the following preoccupations of young people:

- information and communications technology
- global politics/issues
- relationships
- individualism and the sense of self.

These powerfully motivating interests form the starting point of the suggestions about curricula that are the subject of this book.

Harnessing children's interest in information and communications technology

Nowhere are the rapid changes in the developed and developing world more evident than in the area of ICT. Growing numbers of people in all societies have access to powerful and sophisticated technologies that two decades ago were the stuff of science fiction. In 2013, 75% of 5–16-year-old children reported having at least one computer at home
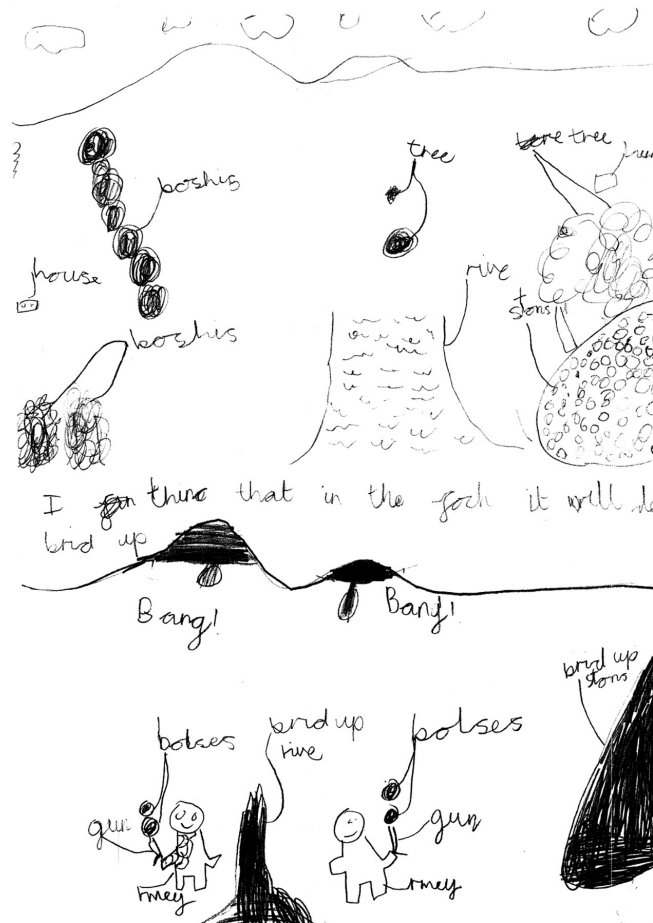
Illustration 1.2   A Year 2 boy's view of the future: guns, army, bang bang, bullets, dried up river, dried up stones

In the USA the figures are higher. Of those children who do not have a home computer, the overwhelming majority are poor, adding further disadvantage in homework and access to knowledge.

Home computers and the internet are heavily used by children aged 9–16. Twice as many boys as girls used the internet to get information in all 35 countries studied by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2012, website). Yet one survey showed that 40% of 15-year-old girls considered the social networking site *Facebook* more important to them than family (Techeye, 2010, website); it was used by 73% of 12–17-year-olds in 2014 (Pew website). The internet has rapidly become a preferred source of
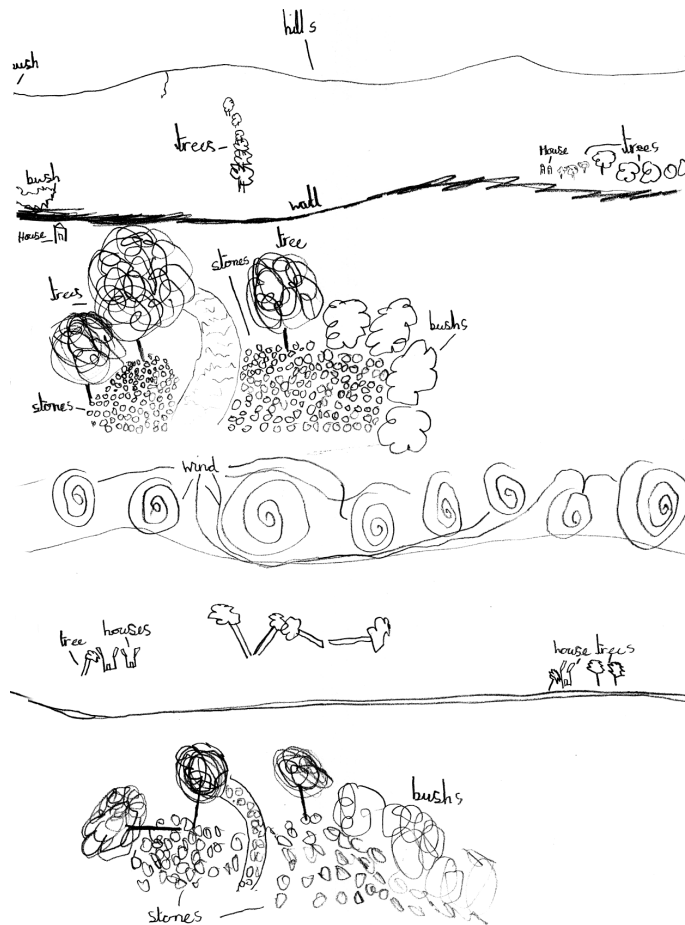
Illustration 1.3   A Year 2 girl's view of the future: wind, fallen trees and bushes, shattered houses

information for the young and e-reading devices owned by about 50% of adults are becoming more frequently used by young people. As parents become increasingly technology-literate themselves they talk to their children more about the dangers of the internet and place privacy controls on their computers. Large numbers of children regularly play internet-based games and use social networking sites to contact and make friends. Increasingly *Pintrest*, *Instagram*, *YouTube* and other special interest facilities are used too. Young people see such technologies as very influential on their lives (BBC News, 2010, website). Some of the worst implications of these easy, anonymous and sometimes unpoliced contacts are well known.

Illustration 1.4   Children gather enthusiastically around a computer in a village school in south India

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📁   **Case study 1   A cyberworld fairy story**

Year 11 pupils at a Dover school were given a free choice of fairy story to update and perform within a single session. They chose to rewrite *Little Red Riding Hood*. After starting their play at the end, but in the traditional manner with Red Riding Hood quizzing a wolf disguised as grandma about her big teeth and hairy arms, the students did a 'time warp' sequence and the audience was catapulted to the beginning of the story. The scene was the chilling context of a twenty-first-century Red Riding Hood sitting alone at her bedroom computer. She was in an internet chat room talking to a paedophile 'wolf' pretending to be her grandmother. (McCrea, 2005)

Currently around 90% of British children between 11 and 16 (CBBC Newsround, website) have a mobile phone (cell phone). To children, the advantages of mobile phones over other ICT are privacy and control. Children report that for their mobiles, they need no permission, have little supervision and they appreciate the possibilities of constant communication (Childnet International, website). Some estimates suggest teenagers average up to four hours a week text-messaging their friends.

Children today say they like the internet and mobiles because these give them the greatest independence over what they see and find out.

Children like the ways ICT helps them discover and connect to friends, and they appreciate the way it can help them create and communicate visually and in sound; about 90% of those above the age of 12 in the USA have posted their picture on *Facebook* or other social network. Around 40% of 11-year-old and 60% of 13-year-old boys in Britain use the internet or mobiles to communicate with friends *every day* (WHO, 2012, website). Through the internet and mobile technology, children have access to music, sports and world news, advertising and powerful new games; can communicate with television and film stars; vote out an unpopular *Big Brother* resident or catapult an unknown to *X Factor* stardom. Children are also increasingly aware of the dangers of new technologies. Most have dealt with text bullies, unwanted pornography, salespeople and crackpots well before their parents find out about it. Sadly, some do not have the personal resources to cope with such onslaughts and the ghastly results of the abuses of ICT are all too evident from news reports and investigative journalism. There are, however, interesting and positive uses of mobile phone technology which suggest it is a grossly underused feature in our current school curricula.

The monitor screen also continues its major influence on children's lives. About 62% of English children at age 11 watch TV more than 2 hours a day, many of them alone in their bedrooms (Public Health England, 2013, website). In the USA 71% of 8–18-year-olds have a TV in their bedroom (University of Michigan, website). As direct watching decreases, the selection of particular programmes through *iPlayer* and other customer-controlled internet technologies increases. Most estimates place the average US or British child as watching up to 4 hours of television per day – significantly less time than most spend with family. Evidence of large numbers of children alone in their room using televisions, games consoles, computer monitors and videos for more than 28 hours a week conjures up a rather lonely image. Susan Greenfield has suggested we may already have reached the point where, for some families, many of the traditional parental roles – imparting culture, providing a model, resolving conflict, telling stories, sharing knowledge, passing on morals, sayings, advice and wisdom – have been unintentionally delegated to the monitor screen (Greenfield, 2010). Attachment and social health may be affected by this trend.

A Romanian study once attempted to capture the influence of TV. By far, the chief role models of school-aged children were film stars and television personalities (Popenici, 2006). A stirring judgement on our profession was that teachers were amongst the least likely adults to be considered as role models, scoring lower than 'terrorists'. There are reasons

Illustration 1.5   Teacher introducing the video camera to 8-year-olds in a class project on the future of the local school environment

for national variations in such figures but teachers and parents are often less important, in the short term, to children than they think.

Even the subject of children's toys is not without its implications for education. Aside from the plethora of toys linked to video, television and computer game characters, the new generation of interactive cyber toys respond 'intelligently' to particular types of treatment or 'grow' or change with time or display 'real' facial expressions. The toy *RoboSapien* is sold as 'truly a fusion of technology and personality'. Such toys may be argued to create new kinds of moral and ethical dilemmas. Do they and their descendants teach particular values and attitudes to children? Do they come with 'hidden agendas'? If so, what are they and who decides?

Any web search will deliver large numbers of statistics and studies about ICT use amongst children and young people. Some findings should be interpreted with care because of the social/political agendas of their sponsors. But a thorough reading of research in these areas tells a consistent story of large numbers of children spending significantly more hours with ICT than they do at school. The fact that much of this activity may well be solitary or unsupervised is an issue largely for parents, but there are serious implications for schools too.

Schools use ICT too little. Currently, and perhaps understandably, mobile phones are rarely welcome in the classroom. Internet use – particularly the use of interactive and user-centred sites – is less developed in schools than at home despite the ubiquity of interactive whiteboards. The class digital camera, recorder or video may remain little used for lack

of time. Television and film is less used now in school than 25 years ago, but *Wii* technology and other Web 2.0 possibilities have not yet become common features of classroom experience. Such technologies are very much part of the child's world and perhaps schools should systematically consider their use as motivators and means in formal educational settings (Riddle, 2009).

Signs of change are already apparent. ICT is argued to deepen understanding and promote new learning more effectively than traditional methods. The use of newer technologies like *Raspberry Pi*, small drones tablets and micro computers give children more control over what and how they learn. As a result, many schools and academies make the provision of laptops or 'tablets' a priority. Teachers plan from packaged lessons on the internet, 'Virtual' curricula and internet links are available for almost any theme or age group. The ethical and practical implications of easy and cheap 3-D printing are already with some schools (Beetham and Sharpe, 2013). Even the power of the mobile phone can be well utilized for educational purposes – texting a précis description, utilizing the camera or recording applications, contacting another school following a similar theme, permission to 'phone a friend' in the playground for help in a class quiz or voting for a school council member by text message might all be used to enliven school learning.
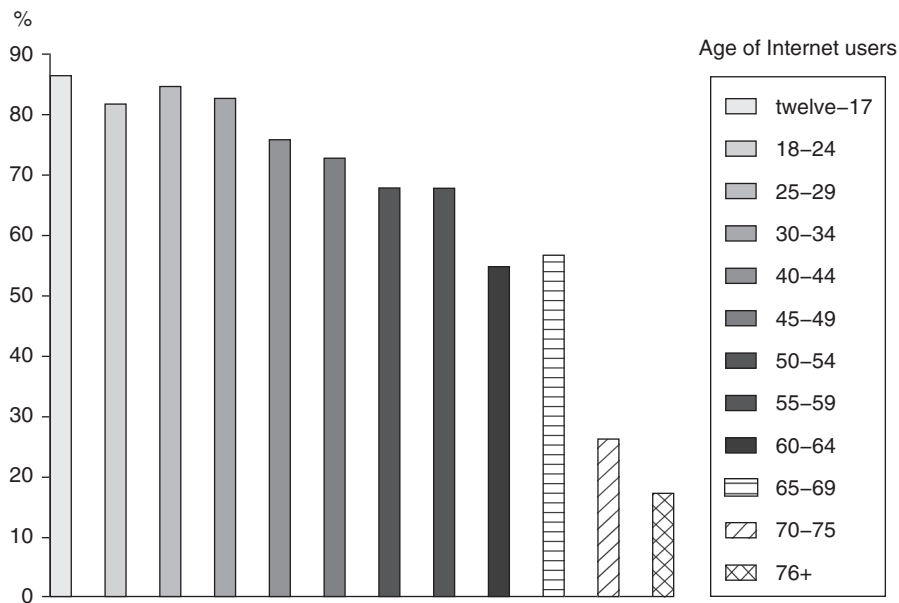

Figure 1.1   Graph to show the age and percentage of internet use in the USA

> ### 📁 Case study 2   Using the mobile phone in school
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> A rural primary school in Suffolk asked groups of six children on field-work near the school to cooperate in using a mobile phone to text succinct (they could send only a 150 character message) descriptions concerning a range of contrasting environments near their school to a central group back in the classroom 'headquarters'. The 'HQ team' plotted the incoming summaries against appropriate locations on a base map so that the descriptive journey was already recorded as the 'environmental' teams returned to class.

In considering the power of ICT to influence the lives and thinking of children, we are confronted with questions of value:

- How can we use these technologies in accordance with our agreed values?
- How do we develop good and wholesome attitudes through ICT?
- How do we decide what good and wholesome is?
- *Should* schools be extending the time children spend with ICT?

Supporting children's interest in global themes

Schools have never been immune from political debate. Easily available and global communications should have made the possibilities for engagement with big issues even stronger. We have almost instant awareness of major events anywhere in the world. Dramatic, violent or tense international situations, threats, images and moral issues can appear daily in our homes and communities. In the past, such trauma would confront an unlucky individual only a few times in a lifetime. Despite the disturbing and challenging nature of many images open to children, there are surprisingly few guidelines or exemplars on how to address current events within the curriculum. Timetables in many schools have become inflexible. Tightly packed daily schedules rarely allow time for discussion or questions on real issues from the local, national or international news. Few British schools found the time or courage to follow the example of an international school in Dar es Salaam which organized a series of civilized and informed debates between children of all faiths and none, within a few days of the

attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA. Yet most schools found plenty of curriculum time to focus on the Football World Cup in Brazil 2014. If our curricula have become too crowded to debate more serious world events, international issues and global or local politics, perhaps we are causing the very apathy many teachers complain about in their children.

Bruner (1968) reminds us that no issues are too complex for children. Emotive subjects like terrorism, war, poverty, HIV/AIDS, pollution, social inequality, disasters or peace treaties, are important to children as well as adults. Despite falling numbers of live TV viewers, current events programmes like the Children's British Broadcasting Corporation's (CBBC) daily *Newsround* and its associated website continue to attract audiences of 200,000 children and still around 34% of 6–12-year-olds watch it. Whilst research (Pew website) shows a decline in young people's news reading, the rapid rise in *Facebook* and *Twitter* means that world news can come to them even faster. Increasing viewer figures and donations show that TV/internet campaigns like *Make Poverty History*, the ONE campaign, *Comic Relief* and *Sport Relief* have significantly raised young people's consciousness of and participation in addressing world poverty.

Illustration 1.6   Children interviewing a local Member of the European Parliament and the Scottish Children's Commissioner on matters of global importance (Courtesy of Scottish Children's Parliament)

Such initiatives catch the imagination of schools and children perhaps because they demonstrate that ordinary voices can influence seemingly impersonal trends in the global economy.

Young people are at ease with digital media. Many have automatic functions on their mobile phones informing them instantly of key cricket or football scores or 'breaking news'. Video, internet and television channel facilities on mobiles, Mp3s and *iPod*s are accessible to many children in the rapidly developing countries of Asia and South America too. Each new technology brings the world closer to the child's life, but perhaps in ways that make the events they portray seem less real.

Children frequently express an interest in 'green issues'. Topics such as poverty, pollution, deforestation and climate change are regularly highlighted in films, children's TV and curriculum initiatives (e.g. Eco-Schools, see website). TV and internet campaigns supporting water, rainforest and developing world anti-pollution projects regularly reach ambitious targets from school and individual donations. The David Puttnam documentary *'We are the people we've been waiting for'* (Puttnam, 2009, website) was used in many secondary schools to direct young people's existing commitment towards global issues and their place in their education now. Individual schools and clusters have been instrumental in raising awareness of environmental issues nearer home too.

The apparent interest in global issues is not straightforward however. Children's connection with the wider world seems dependent upon what has been highlighted by the television and tabloid news editors. Very few American children knew where Ukraine, Iraq or Afghanistan were before the wars there, and the word 'tsunami' meant little to most children before December 2004. For British children, Haiti and the Mississippi Delta were unknown before the 2010 tragedies of earthquake and oil spill and Rio de Janeiro was unheard of before the World Cup of 2014. Whilst global communications have successfully raised consciousness, place and general geographical knowledge is often poor. A study of world 'place knowledge' amongst 18–20-year-old prospective teachers on a UK teacher education course showed a serious ignorance about the location of many foreign countries outside Western Europe (Catling, 2004). The same lack of knowledge can apply to environmental or development issues. Unless a child attends a school that has followed up leads such as the United Nations' (UN's) millennium development goals (UN, website) or the Eco-Schools programme, or an individual teacher has shared an interest in a particular concern, then children's exposure to crucial aspects of their changing world remains a lottery.

Illustration 1.7   Shared endeavour often promotes improved relationships

It is not difficult to fire children's interest in the environment. They experience signs of environmental ill-health all around them in dying trees, polluted rivers, fly-tipping, disappearing countryside and asthma. Concerns about the future of environments also arise from children's apparently generic interest in nature, life forms and the outdoors. Students of teaching frequently remark on the good behaviour of children engaged in well-planned fieldwork. Schools with a clear environmental focus to their curriculum capitalize on this interest and use it to generate the feeling that individuals can do something to change the probable future of damaged or threatened environments. The Eco-Schools programme is a good example of a well-supported initiative providing guidance and resources to feed these interests. Suggested and potentially engaging topics, such as litter, waste, energy, water, transport, healthy living and school grounds, however, require a range of very specific subject skills and knowledge to bring them alive for children. Sustainability is a values theme that runs through many of the case studies and recommendations of this book.

Recognizing the importance of relationships

The popularity of *Facebook*, *Twitter* and other social networking sites among young people arises naturally from their interest in relationships.

Websites and magazines devoted to personal, beauty and relationship problems of young people have also grown in recent years. Relationships are important to all, but for the developing psyche of the child they may dominate everything. The Children's Society shows that family relationships are fundamentally important to children and that these relationships are best when children perceive they are granted a degree of autonomy (Children's Society, 2014, website). The numbers of children who contact the charity *ChildLine* either by phone or online continues to grow. This UK charity gives support to children who are abused, fearful or worried. In 2013 the charity, now run by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), was contacted 1.5 million times and supported over 290,000 children (NSPCC, website). The vast majority of clients were between 5 and 15 years old and about a third of cases concerned bullying and interpersonal relationship problems. Concerns about family, peers, friendships, who they can trust and who is caring towards them are central to children's lives (see Illustration 1.7). Still the large majority (the Children's Society suggests four-fifths) of children are flourishing in relationships and material terms, but those suffering poor relationships often demand a disproportionate degree of attention.

The family into which a child is born provides the first and most powerful model of relationships. Attachments form rapidly in the first hours of life and we recognize that the interrelationships within family go on influencing the trajectory of our lives well beyond childhood. We know too that deprivation and poverty begins negatively to affect the progress of the child along every line of development from very early on in their lives (Marmot, 2010, website). Family emotional and environmental support is key to a child's learning and development within school. Family members are often the most important role models. Despite the obvious importance of families there may be a mutual suspicion between schools and families, and few schools currently place family centrally in their curriculum and practice. The establishment of multi-agency children's centres, Sure Start and various extensions of the school day have, however, had a positive effect on school, family and community links. There are several aspects of twenty-first-century life, however, where mistrust may be growing.

Recent reports show a growing atmosphere of suspicion. One large-scale study involving 160,000 children shows, for example, that only 65% of English children aged 11–15 (53% in the USA) could agree with the statement, 'I find my peers kind and helpful'. By contrast, 84% in Macedonia or 82% in Sweden agreed with the same statement (WHO, 2012, website). UNICEF places the UK bottom of a 21-nation league in 'family and peer relationships' (UNICEF, 2013, website). Distrust may be evidence of social polarization and increasing suspicion between

generations, sub-cultures and communities. The gap between the educational achievement of rich and poor children continues to widen in the UK outside London (*Guardian*, 2014, website).

Polarization is likely to be increased by schools if they do not recognize and address the gulf between their aims and values and those of their children. Popenici found that in Romania most secondary-aged children saw school as simply instrumental to getting a good job, and that a school's interest in altruism, goodness, education and sincerity was somewhat irrelevant to their lives (Popenici, 2006). If a school community is given genuine opportunity to discuss and agree their values, however, they will most often arrive at similar caring and community values (Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

Intercultural and cross-community understanding is clearly crucial to national and international peace and progress in the twenty-first century. Schools can play their part in making the world a better place, through respect for each other and their attitude to ability and disability, gender, those of other religions and none, ethnic minorities, travellers, new or transient families, or those of different sexual orientation or family arrangement. Relationships between cultures and sub-cultures have been subject to a number of UK government-sponsored initiatives, especially since the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry of 1999 (Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, website) and the subsequent Race Relations Act 2000 (Ajegbo, 2007).

Wholesome relationships are, of course, important to personal well-being and inclusion in any community. Children need them to feel secure if they are to learn. We give little formal attention to building, maintaining and understanding the environment of relationships in our curricula and yet – as Daniel Goleman (1996, 1999, 2006) remind us – 'emotional intelligence' can be more important than other kinds of intelligence. By emotional intelligence, Goleman means the ability to understand and handle one's own emotions (the subject of the next section) and relationships, and how to understand and deal with those of others. Emotional literacy programmes have been very successfully introduced in a number of schools seriously approaching the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum. The danger is that these non-compulsory and constantly threatened aspects of the primary curriculum are left to chance and pressure on timetables means that such themes are often dealt with in a cursory and unplanned manner.

Helping develop a positive sense of self

As far as we know, our sense of self is a defining human characteristic. Self-consciousness is argued to have massive survival and evolutionary advantages (Damasio, 2010; Dawkins, 2003; Morris, 2004) and with it

comes awareness of good and bad about our world. The concept of 'self' is, as Damasio puts it: 'the critical biological function that allows us to know sorrow or know joy, to know suffering or know pleasure, to sense embarrassment or pride, to grieve for lost love or lost life' (Damasio, 2000: 4). Deutscher (2006) calls language 'the invention that invented us', in that self-talk or thought shapes both consciousness and identity.

The twenty-first century has seen increasing interest in cultural and personal identities. Philosophy for children in schools (for example Fisher, 2008; P4C website) is part of this development. Damasio has devoted his career to research in the area of self-consciousness and describes two identifiable selves in our minds: a *core self* and an *autobiographical self*. The core self is that sense of consciousness where objects, sounds and senses around us are not only perceived but understood within our mind to be being perceived at that moment by ourselves. Core consciousness is consciousness in the moment, here and now, 'ceaselessly recreated for each and every object with which the brain interacts' (Damasio, 2000: 17). The autobiographical self consists of a set of memories of situations that bear centrally and usually invariably upon an individual's life: 'who you were born to, where and when, your likes and dislikes, the way you usually react to a problem or conflict, your name … your anticipated future' (p. 17). Significant to education, Damasio draws three key conclusions from his work on selfhood. He suggests first that both the core and autobiographical self are interrelated; secondly, that consciousness is inseparable from emotion; and finally, that the sense of self exists to maintain or promote the healthy equilibrium of the body. Deutscher (2010) and Greenfield (2009, 2010) remind us of the crucial impact of culture and language on that self.

Four questions of central educational importance emerge from research into identity:

1. If core consciousness is so totally dependent upon the senses and society, what do we do in our curriculum positively to introduce, develop and enhance experience across all the senses and social groups?
2. If the fully developed sense of self includes a clear sense of autobiographical self, what help are we giving children in school to identify their own *individualized* and special sense of identity confidence and belonging? How are we adding to their own *positive* memories, responses, talents and opinions? (Illustration 1.8)
3. If emotion is so closely linked with consciousness, are we spending enough time and effort in our teacher education on understanding emotion? In the education of children, are we planning for the positive engagement and enhancement of their *feelings*?

4. If self-awareness has developed from language and from nature as a way of promoting, assessing and fine-tuning our health, what are we doing in our curricula *holistically* and positively to involve both mind, body and relationships in the learning process?

The word 'positive' appears in each of the four key educational implications of current thinking on self. Many writers attempt to place their scientific conclusions outside any values framework, but teachers and the curriculum can have no such luxury. Almost everything teachers do is interpreted in some way as support or denial of some value or another. Each facet of the child's world described so far has implied questions of value. Moral choices are at the heart of what society has required of its teachers and this fact can be used to generate vital discussion and decisions in schools. If we agree, for example, on a desire to work to make the world 'a better place', common sense might suggest that we agree on

Illustration 1.8   A 12-year-old introducing David Miliband (UK ex-government minister) to a group presentation on identity

what better might mean. We might, for example, start by establishing a culture in which a positive sense of self, behaviour, feelings, relationships and environment are more likely than negative ones. The theme of promoting well-being through the educational choices we make runs through every chapter in this book.

Well-being is as important to our learning as it is to our relationships. A wide body of research (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6) suggests that the inner and underlying sense of what we simply call 'happiness' is the most common foundation for the transferable and lifelong learning we aim for in schools. Happiness is not always easy to come by. After basic needs are catered for, increased wealth does not seem to increase happiness (Layard, 2005, 2006; Young Foundation, 2010). The USA and the UK are amongst the richest countries in the world, but can manage only 26th and 28th rankings in a 35-nation survey of life satisfaction in 11-year-olds. The Marmot Review reminded us that one in four of UK children live in poverty, significantly more than the rest of northern Europe (Marmot, 2010, website). Figures and unfavourable comparisons have concentrated government attention on child well-being (e.g. ONS, 2012, website; UNICEF, 2013, website).

Not everyone sees happiness as an appropriate aim for education. Children's personal happiness may be seen as the sole responsibility of the family. Teachers' happiness is perhaps the job of management and not curriculum. Critics of the happiness debate cite numerous examples of great but unhappy people, like Van Gogh, Schumann or Sylvia Plath. Clearly some well-known and painful paths to success suggest that effective learning does not always come from 'being happy'. These examples do not negate the value of aiming at a default position of well-being. Neither does aiming at well-being throughout the school setting deny the importance of supporting children and teachers as they live through life's inevitable periods of suffering, difficulty and pain.

The famous bipolar creators rarely created anything in their times of deep depression, but rather used periods of more positive emotion to express, process and make sense of their negative experiences. Few would suggest that we deliberately make children depressed in order that they become more creative. Neither is the depressed state typical of the mind at its most creative (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Layard, 2005). Lasting learning often and rightly involves difficulty and stress, but unless these pressures are experienced *against a background* of deeper personal security, learning is likely to be associated with negative feelings. A preponderance of negative life experiences seems more likely to result in a relative lack of resilience and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Fredrickson and Tugade, 2004; Layard and Clark, 2014).

Personal happiness is generally and deeply important to us. There is clearly something universally recognizable in the happy face (Ekman, 2004), positively interpreted even by children with neurological barriers to emotion such as severe autism (Howard-Jones and Pickering, 2005). Even very young babies respond positively to a smiling face from any cultural source. Several strands of current research now suggest that feelings of positive emotion generate high-level, transferable and creative learning at social, physical and intellectual levels. Placing emphasis on positive aspects of the child's self, and supporting all to feel included, may not simply be a more efficient way of teaching – it seems to contribute to general health too. Damasio (2003) suggests that positive emotion, particularly the feeling of joy, signifies a biological state of: 'optimal physiological coordination and smooth running of the operations of life ... [Joy is] not only conducive to survival, but survival with well-being' (p. 137). In other words, when we are happy our minds and bodies are in their best state. Our brains respond to positive states by releasing the neurotransmitters that signal satisfaction and security probably in order to help us maintain the state of positivity. Damasio describes an unbroken loop between body and mind – the happy/healthy body promotes a more happy/efficiently working mind and vice versa. If this is the case, then seeking curricular opportunities to create the sense of joy in as many children as possible must be considered a desirable way for them to be and to learn. Teaching with *enjoyment* as a major aim seems to have the potential to serve mind and body, here and now, and also to create in children a positive sense of self that will benefit them well into the future.

These findings mirror those by 'positive psychologists' like Csikszentmihalyi (2002), Fredrickson (2003, 2009) and Seligman (2004), who also propose that positive emotional states are the optimum mental conditions for learning, social and intellectual connection-making, discovery, creativity and invention. A particularly accessible hypothesis in this regard is Fredrickson's 'broaden and build' theory of positive emotions. This is examined in Chapter 4.

There also seem to be strong links between happiness and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Veteran 'people watcher' Desmond Morris has suggested that our feeling of happiness relates to 'the degree to which we find ourselves able to exercise the particularly human skills of creativity, the use of symbols including symbolic language, and family relationships' (Morris, 2004). A recurring theme of this book is the relationship between the self involved in creative activity and the sense of contentment, achievement, fascination, engagement and joy we often call happiness.

Illustration 1.9   Enjoyment is not always shown in the smile, but shows itself here in intricacy, concentration and application (Courtesy Gifted and Talented Summer Academy, Canterbury)

The developing self of the child is also prey to a powerful set of negative influences. Notions of rampant materialism, excessive wealth, risky behaviour, violence, fame and narrow concepts of physical beauty are all too easily assimilated (Greenfield, 2010). These features of young life are constantly reinforced by toys, advertising, television, film, computer, internet and video images. Human young are probably genetically predisposed to finding joy in these things, but it is also commonly held that such simple pleasures do not bring particularly long-lasting satisfaction. Indeed, studies of lottery winners throughout the world have demonstrated the short-lived nature of happiness from material wealth. Left to their own devices without ICT to distract them, children quickly find enjoyment in physical and social activities. Physical play clearly engages the vast majority of young mammals. A casual observation of children during games sessions and at playtime shows most exhibiting wide grins, sparkling eyes, relaxed faces and joyful conversation – the key signals of happiness. It seems particularly disastrous that school sports and PE are so constrained by time, especially since negative body image and obesity are growing issues in developed societies like the UK and the USA (WHO, 2012, website; Young Foundation, 2010).

Schools of the twenty-first century are right to be thinking hard about what implicit and explicit values they wish to teach their pupils. Perhaps the call for more complex and challenging activities in the curriculum results from a feeling that it is in creative, often symbolic, physical activity that lasting human satisfaction is to be found (Morris, 2004). Political demands on schools have sometimes resulted in significant conflicts of values in this regard. In the context of 'back to basics' demands on US education (Hirsch, 1999), Csikszentmihalyi castigated schools and parents for:

> making serious tasks dull and hard and frivolous ones exciting and easy. Schools generally fail to teach how exciting, how mesmerisingly beautiful science or mathematics can be; they teach the routine of literature or history rather than the adventure. (1997: 125)

Csikszentmihalyi provides evidence from his own research which suggests that creative individuals in all walks of life go beyond the limitations of genetic or cultural programming to live 'exemplary lives … [which] show how joyful and interesting complex symbolic activity is'. Attitudes to the self – how I learn best, what I find fascinating, satisfying, pleasure-giving, helpful – can be developed through education, but it is essential that we consider carefully what kind of 'selves' we are helping to create in our classrooms.

How can we know what it is like to be a child in the twenty-first century?

Life is hard for many children in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Children suffer disproportionately according to a range of measures. In the developing world, five-sixths of the world's children have the least access to scarce resources and around 25,000 of them die each day because of poverty; 150 million under 14 have to work for their and their family's survival (UNICEF, 2010, website). On the evidence of researchers and current media headlines, many young people in the resource-rich and developed world live a pretty sad and lonely existence too. Poverty of all kinds singles children out for special problems. The gap between rich and poor continues to widens but so too does the gap between rich and poor within the USA and the UK. Health inequalities, a current focus of international and UK studies (WHO, 2012, website; Young Foundation, 2010), show, for example that life expectancy and restricting illnesses correlate closely with levels of deprivation. Children born in the UK into low-status, low-income families have a higher death rate in infancy,

Illustrations 1.10, 1.11, 1.12   Seek out the facial manifestations of happiness, the smile, the shining eyes, the raised cheekbones and the un-furrowed brow (Photos: Cherry Tewfik)

lower birth weights, are smaller, more prone to psychological problems and have higher levels of stress and illness than their richer neighbours (Marmot, 2010, website; Rees et al., 2012).

Wealth too has brought its problems. Young people in some advanced economies are reported to be increasingly involved in risky behaviour. Several studies demonstrate the rapid growth in behavioural and emotional difficulties amongst the young, and rising rates of teenage alcoholism, early smoking, depression, self-harm and suicide (Collishaw et al., 2004; Layard and Dunn, 2009). Indeed, Collishaw's report recorded that in the UK behavioural and emotional problems among teenagers had risen by over 70% in the past 25 years. The UNICEF and WHO reports (UNICEF, 2013, website; WHO, 2012, website), graphically present many of the possible causes of such trends: family breakdown, bullying, loss of trust, lack of success or pleasure in school, stress, loneliness and subjective health problems. Within many categories of health-related behaviour, young people in England (not necessarily in the UK as a whole) and the USA were shown to be amongst the least happy in the Western world. Eighty-five per cent of British children continue to report high levels of life satisfaction but it is difficult to argue with the well-established research methodologies and comparative figures of international bodies.

The most important way of finding out about what concerns children is by asking them. The pupil voice movement is still in its infancy in the UK and USA but increasingly schools are listening. In *The School I'd Like*, Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor asked children their views on school (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003) and life in general (Davey et al., 2010). The collected children's statements plead for a very different school environment to the one that many adults may *think* children would like. Here are a few provocative suggestions for the schools of the future:

- Children will learn more about the future than the past.
- Adults will listen to them and not dismiss their opinions.
- Children will be free to be children.
- Children will not be 'treated as herds of identical animals wanting to be civilized before we are let loose upon the world. It will be recognized that it's our world too.'
- Playgrounds would have 'something to play with'.
- 'Power will be evenly spread throughout the school.'
- 'More time should be devoted to art, design and technology.'
- The curriculum will be 'concerned with fulfilment'.

Several case studies from this book will outline projects where children have taken the lead in successfully defining and achieving what they

Illustrations 1.13, 1.14, 1.15   Each child shows engagement in a different way, but it is recognizable across time and culture (Photos: Cherry Tewfik)

wanted to learn and make in environments where the 'locus of control' was passed to them. These may still seem radical more than 200 years after Rousseau's idealized, and naturally good, 'noble savage' approach to the education of the child (see Introduction).

The reconstruction of children's services under the *Every Child Matters* initiative (DfES, 2004, website), was based upon 'five outcomes' arising from consultations with children about their hopes and needs. The basic needs to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being formed a guide to education, social and health policy until 2010. Since May 2010, requirements for schools to report on the well-being of children were relaxed, but government continued to see itself as enabling children

> to overcome disadvantage and deprivation so they can fulfil their innate talents and take control of their own destiny … [and affirming a] belief in the power of human agency to give meaning, structure and hope to every life. (Gove, 2009)

Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989, website) national education systems across the world are charged not just with the education and socialization of children, but also the active promotion of their personal/emotional security, health and well-being. Schools are the only agencies in a position to enact such policies and philosophies amongst all children. In the next chapter we examine some schools' attempts to address the central issues for children of the twenty-first century.

Summary

The twenty-first century has challenges like every other century. Aside from the obvious implications of overpopulation, there are three major differences to the challenges of this century: the much more rapid *pace* of change (Figure 1.2), their perceived often *negative* character in the minds of modern children and their *global* characteristics.

The changes and challenges in our world, and consequently our minds, cannot be kept local; our global economy, instant communications and global pollution have meant that whatever happens in one place quickly affects every other. If they want, ordinary people, particularly teachers and children, are now in a position to exert some influence over the interrelated future of this world, but to do so effectively we need to be very clear about what we value most. The answers to questions of value

How long it takes new technologies to reach a mass market
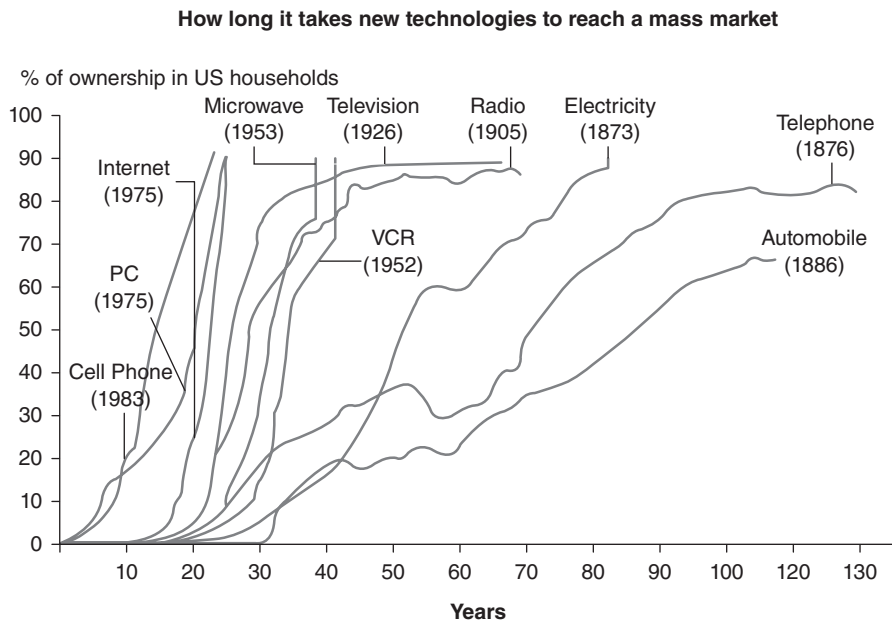
% of ownership in US households

Figure 1.2   How long it takes new technologies to reach a mass market. Where cell phones, internet and personal computers penetrated 20% of the US market in less than 20 years, it took the car and the telephone 50 years to achieve the same take-up

should underpin all our education decisions. So far, we have selected and examined five key areas of special interest to children:

- the future (which is taken to include environmental as well as personal concerns)
- ICT
- global politics
- relationships
- the self.

Research and experience in these areas point to the needs for a curriculum that liberates children from the combined threats of materialism, fear, exclusion and lack of confidence and fulfilment. Each of the following statements suggest arguments for a more cross-curricular, creative, meaningful and child-centred approach:

1. *Security about the future is an essential prerequisite for the happy child.* A curriculum that addresses children's anxiety about the personal and global future (as well as insecurities about the self and

relationships) is crucial if we agree that school activities should be relevant to their lives.

2. *A sense of personal control over aspects of their daily life is central to children's motivation for learning.* A concentration on developing emotional literacy, the constructive use of ICT and establishment of personally meaningful, curricular experiences to interpret and examine is more likely to generate personal engagement among children.

3. *It is possible for ordinary individuals to make a positive impact upon global and environmental issues.* It is suggested that cross-curricular themes that touch upon children's culturally or genetically determined interests in any area are more likely to generate involvement.

4. *Opportunities to build and deepen positive relationships with others are embraced by children.* We should seek a curriculum, teaching methods, community links and classroom organization that offer a range of activities to promote and utilize such relationships.

5. *The child's positive self-image is fundamental to a healthy mind and body.* Education should therefore be physically active and individualized as far as possible and aim to promote a personal sense of achievement and resilience and to discover the strengths of each individual.

Research and professional opinion across health education and social care is united in focusing on mental and social health, the sense of security, feelings of autonomy and choice. Each of these concepts and each area of special interest to children is dependent upon judgements of value. Every school should work to identify, agree *and live* its guiding values and establish a values-led curriculum designed to improve the lives and daily experience of all children. I believe such decisions and actions would significantly and positively impact on the character of twenty-first-century life.

Key questions for discussion

- Do you think that we are living in pessimistic times?
- What do you think schools can do about integrating family learning into the curriculum and structures of the school?
- What can the playground tell us about children's learning? How could this be integrated into the curriculum?
- What are the pluses and minuses of ICT in the lives of children?

(Continued)

(Continued)

- How can we make relationships a more central part of our curriculum?
- How can we ensure times of happiness and positivity for every child?
- What can the school do about the health of the child?

Further reading

Greenfield, S. (2003) *Tomorrow's People*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hicks, D. (2014) *Educating for Hope in Troubled Times: Climate Change and the Transition to a Post Carbon Future.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Robinson, K. and Aronica, L. (2010) *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.