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The National Curriculum [NC] for English is in its 25th year and has been through many versions since 1989. When the seminal Cox Report appeared [DES, 1988] it was the first ‘official’ definition. Although highly contested in principle by English teachers, research suggested [Goodwyn, 1990] that much of the content of the curriculum was essentially welcomed. Research showed that later versions [Goodwyn1997] were increasingly unpopular with the profession and the Framework for English1997-2010, was profoundly alienating.[Goodwyn 2000].

In the original Cox Report, 5 models of English were proposed, these were, Personal Growth, Cross-curricular, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Analysis and Adult Needs. It was speculated that all English teachers drew consensually on all five. Research [Goodwyn1990 and 1992] suggested that these were viable models, excepting Cross-curricular which was vehemently argued to be a whole school model. Personal Growth was the key model with the other three a ‘joint second’ in importance. The respondents also felt that the first National Curriculum broadly reflected those models. Subsequent research up until 2005 showed that Personal Growth remained ‘Number 1’ and that Cultural Analysis had become the second most important model. However, teachers saw the revised NC increasingly privileging Cultural Heritage and neglecting Personal Growth.

As yet another version of English is put forward in the latest NC proposals, operating from 2014-16, what do English teachers believe is the true identity of the subject and what are their current beliefs about what matters in the subject?

This paper will report on an opportunistic on-line survey of English teachers undertaken in early 2014 and related to a conference focused on the future of the subject, enquiring into their views of the 25 year old models, the extent to which they remain at the heart of the English and remain current, or need adaptation or have become irrelevant. The survey of 90 teachers will be followed up with telephone interviews from a representative sample of the respondents. The data will offer an insight into the current beliefs of English teachers, the extent to which those views have changed or remained constant over the last 25 years and if there is an emergence of a new conceptualisation of the subject. It will also reveal whether tensions continue to exist between the ‘official’ definition of the subject and the unofficial but, it can be argued, authentic view of the subject held by its actual practitioners.