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EDITOR

Elizabeth Rata, *School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland, New Zealand. Email: e.rata@auckland.ac.nz*

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Editorial

Elizabeth Rata

This is the first issue of *Pacific-Asian Education* published solely by the new editors based at the University of Auckland. As the journal of the Pacific Circle Consortium, *Pacific-Asian Education* has a distinguished tradition through its contribution to the region's dynamic educational research culture. Its placement in Pacific and Asia does not mean, however, that the journal is not part of the innovations, trends, and debates that characterise educational research world-wide. Indeed, in our globalised world, it is essential that the journal look outward while at the same time maintaining a focus on Pacific and Asian concerns.

This issue reflects that outward focus while remaining true to the aims of the Pacific Circle Consortium. Its purpose is to bring the debate currently shaking educational theories about knowledge and the curriculum into the journal's purview. That we have been able to include two articles by Michael Young, the major social realist writer in the international debate, means that this issue of the journal is able to make a significant contribution to introducing the debate to Asia and the Pacific. His two articles have been developed from major addresses given at the University of Auckland in August 2010. These articles, combined with an article also developed from an address given by the philosopher of knowledge and science, Robert Nola at the same event, provide a philosophical dimension to the issue of knowledge and the curriculum. By comparing scientific realism and anti-realist positions, Nola enables the reader to approach the Young articles with the conceptual tools required for deep analysis.

Both writers are interested in what knowledge is taught in schools. In discussing how beliefs can be based on culture, on evidence, or reason, Robert Nola lays out a framework for deciding how beliefs become knowledge. Michael Young's two articles take up that point to argue that the knowledge taught in schools should be different from the beliefs of our daily experiences. This addresses directly the social realism versus social constructivism dispute at the heart of the knowledge and curriculum debates. Young's concept of 'powerful knowledge' and his advocacy for separating curriculum and pedagogy are ideas that deserve full and thorough discussion by educators. In addition, his overview of the contribution of Durkheim, Vygotsky, and Bernstein to educational theory are useful reminders of the impressive body of educational thought upon which contemporary research builds. Kathryn Ecclestone's original and challenging account of an epistemology of the emotions takes the social realist analysis into another area of educational research, that of the preoccupation with the emotions by social constructivists. Like the other contributors to this volume, her concern is with the question at the heart of the sociology of education throughout the world: Does the

knowledge taught in schools contribute to greater social equality or does it contribute to the reproduction of inequality?

While such philosophical considerations may at first seem a world away from Chris North's concerns about environmental education in New Zealand, from Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh's analysis of higher education in Vietnam, and from Theresa Tan and Rob Strathdee's discussion of the social studies curriculum in Singapore, these three articles do in fact demonstrate the conceptual link between philosophy, educational theory, and research into the practice of education. Countries throughout the Pacific and Asian region are developing extensive education systems. What should be taught is pivotal to not only the nature of those systems but to the society as a whole. Drawing on Basil Bernstein's theoretical insights, Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh uses her analysis of the credit system being introduced into Vietnamese higher education to open up the broader issue of what happens to knowledge when the boundaries between knowledge fields are increasingly blurred. The prospect of uncommitted and unmotivated students is one of a number of unintended outcomes discussed in the article.

Theresa Tan and Rob Strathdee's analysis of the gap between Singapore's goal of creative, innovative and experimental education and the actual prescriptive and centralised educational system brings into focus the question that underpins all the contributions to this issue: What makes education transformative? While Tan and Strathdee focus specifically on the concept of citizenship, the implicit question about how citizenship is to be conceptualised in a diverse society operating in a highly diverse world links this article to the question posed by Young: What should we teach in schools? Arguing that citizenship education is as much about preparing people to cope with the complex world of the global era as it is about learning to live in the local context, the writers argue that the social studies curriculum in Singapore needs to be broadened if it is to develop active citizenship at home and global awareness abroad.

Chris North takes us to a different country - New Zealand - and a different school subject - environmental education. He shows that when knowledge is reduced to information and rule-bound behaviour it is neither translated into understanding nor into the practice that comes from really knowing why we behave as we do. Despite the very different approaches and subjects of their respective articles, North, Young, and Nola, like the other contributors to this issue, are talking to teachers. Their shared purpose is to get teachers thinking about what and how they teach.

The two reviews, one by Graham McPhail and the second by Airini, introduce the reader to books that consider that question in specific countries. Leesa Wheelahan's analysis of differential access to knowledge in higher education in Australia and the Young and Gamble edited volume about knowledge, curriculum, and qualifications in South Africa show the truly global nature of the curriculum debate. The reviews also raise the question at the heart of the sociology of knowledge. Can 'cultural knowledge', that is, the context-dependent knowledge of Bernstein's horizontal discourses and the knowledge required for good pedagogical relations, also be epistemic or powerful knowledge? For Bernstein, Young, and other social realists, the inclusion of cultural knowledge in epistemic knowledge diminishes and dilutes its strong verticality, where, as Graham McPhail comments, content sequence and coverage are of paramount

importance. That very inclusion of context-dependent knowledge is in fact what turns vertical knowledge into horizontal knowledge and weakens the curriculum.

Airini shares this position saying that ‘knowledge in this sense’, that is, culturally or contextually bounded knowledge should be ‘communicated through pedagogic and organisational practices that emphasise the cultural assets of students rather than deficits’. She also suggests further exploring the relationship between cultural knowledge and epistemic knowledge. Is such a relationship possible? Is not a basic tenet of social realism the idea that knowledge is differentiated between the two types, either as Durkheim’s profane and sacred orders of knowledge or conceptualised by Bernstein as vertical and horizontal discourses? Perhaps a way forward in the theoretical discussion developed so ably by the two reviewers may be found in Habermas’s concepts of rationality (following Kant). Is the context-dependent knowledge of the horizontal discourses similar to Habermas’ ‘moral rationality’ and ‘aesthetic rationality’? If that is the case, then perhaps epistemic knowledge may include content-dependent knowledge. Or is epistemic knowledge, by its very nature universalist and context-independent, already inclusive of the moral and aesthetic dimensions. It may well be that the inclusion of these dimensions is what safeguards science from reactionary instrumentalism.

The value of this issue of *Pacific-Asian Education* is that it contributes to the rich vein of theoretical developments being developed by major writers in the sociology of knowledge. It also contributes to stimulating that debate in our own region to produce the articles, books, and symposia that show a research community in good heart as it wrestles with the difficult question: What is the purpose of education and how is that purpose best served in what and how we teach?

Why educators must differentiate knowledge from experience¹

Michael F D Young

Institute of Education, University of London

Introduction

This paper begins with a brief autobiography. I do this because I have changed my own ideas on the question of knowledge in education quite substantially in the course of my academic career and particularly between my first book (Young, 1971) and my most recent book (Young, 2008). I hope that this brief account may help readers more familiar with my earlier book gain an understanding of this change of ideas at the personal as well as the intellectual level. For researchers embarking on postgraduate studies, I hope it may reassure them that to take up what they may later come to see as well intentioned, but misguided or even mistaken ideas, can have positive as well as negative outcomes.

A brief autobiography²

I started my educational career as a high school chemistry teacher. At the same time, as a part-time evening student of sociology, I was trying to understand the society that I had grown up into and, up to then, taken as a given. My ideas about knowledge at the time were largely unreflective and uncritical. Chemistry, for me, was a body of knowledge *to be taught*, and what I did during the day as a teacher. Sociology was likewise, a body of knowledge *to be learned*, something I did in the evenings as a student. Insofar as I was aware of questions like ‘what is knowledge?’ I thought they were for philosophers, not for ordinary teachers like me. Nothing in the sociology that I studied at the time led me to think otherwise; I treated it simply as another body of knowledge.

The experience of being a full time student of sociology on a Masters programme changed everything for me, especially given that my tutor was the already well-known sociologist of education, Basil Bernstein. It was he who taught me to think about education sociologically. This meant understanding not only that all that goes on in education, from its institutions and curricula to the everyday activities of teachers and pupils, is a microcosm of the wider society, but that we can learn much about the society we live in and how it is changing from understanding what is happening in its educational institutions.

Knowledge is a social construct

When I started studying sociology of education, I thought it was only concerned with how education was effected by external factors such as social class, bureaucracy,

and the role of the state. I accepted quite uncritically a kind of input/output model, which distributed success for the few and failure or relative failure for the majority. I still think the way teaching and learning in school is shaped by external factors is important; education is not an island and is, of course, shaped by its wider context and history. However, in the final term of my MA, Bernstein said to me, 'why not write your dissertation about the curriculum?' From my experience of studying sociology up to that point, nothing could have seemed more strange, or more difficult; what could be sociological about the curriculum? I did not know where to turn in the research or the textbooks. After some time wondering what he meant, I wrote a dissertation on why sociology of education had neglected the question of knowledge. It became the basis of chapter one of my first book, *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971). The thesis of the book was that knowledge, whether physics or maths or the knowledge you have about the town or village you live in, is socially constructed. Or, to put it another way as I saw it at the time, all knowledge is no more or less than someone's or some group's experience of making sense of the world. On the other hand, if this experience is that of a member of a profession, of an expert and even of a teacher, it is treated as something special, and referred to as 'knowledge' with all the authority and power associated with that word.

In *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971), I argued, therefore, that any serious study of education had to begin with the question of knowledge: what was transmitted, to whom, and how? In a sense, I was asserting two ideas I still think are important. First, that education and knowledge are inseparable. What could education mean if it was not about what, as students, we learn or hope to learn and, as teachers, we want our students to learn? To challenge or question the knowledge of teachers or other experts seemed, at the time, extremely radical and even subversive. In other words, by raising sociological questions about knowledge and the curriculum one was inevitably drawn into wider debates about the distribution and exercise of power in society. Until the 1970s, sociologists had focussed almost entirely on the question 'who gets education?' not on the question 'what did they get?' With few exceptions, they did not see that the two are inescapably related. My second idea was not only that the sociology of education and indeed all educational research must begin with the question of knowledge, but that from a sociological perspective, knowledge (and specifically the curriculum) is not a given but just as much a social construct as any of the institutions that make up societies, like the families or factories that sociologists had traditionally studied.

Following up on the link between power and knowledge, I developed two arguments. One was that the structure of knowledge in the curriculum-its boundaries, its exclusions and inclusions-could be seen as an expression of the distribution of power in society. The second related argument was that the structuring of knowledge in any education system determines how educational opportunities are distributed and to whom. I still think we need to remember these points that relate power and knowledge in education, not as the only way of thinking about education, but as tendencies in the kind of societies we live in.

Four consequences follow from these arguments. Firstly, if what counts as knowledge is socially constructed, and so is an expression of power relations in society and in the

school, the curriculum must be fundamentally a political instrument for maintaining existing power relations. Hence any serious curriculum change is primarily a political not just an educational project.

Secondly, if the structure of knowledge is an expression of the distribution of power in society, there can be no objective basis for distinctions between different types of knowledge and whether some can make stronger truth claims than others. All differences can be understood as between knowledge defined by 'the powerful' and knowledge defined by those without power, 'the powerless'. Taken to its extreme, this argument leads to a relativism that sees knowledge differences as merely expressions of the experience of different groups. The only sociological issue about education and specifically the curriculum becomes the question of power. More recently, I summarised this approach as a focus on 'knowledge of the powerful.' A focus on 'knowledge of the powerful' concentrates on the knowers not the knowledge. In other words, the key question becomes, "who has the power to define what knowledge is?" I have found it useful to distinguish this approach from one that focuses on the idea of 'powerful knowledge.' The key question then becomes not 'who knows?' but 'what is it about certain forms of knowledge that gives power to those who have access to it?' Do they explain? Do they predict? Are they more reliable? Do they enable people to move beyond their experience and locate themselves in a wider context?³ In an earlier paper, I relate these questions to the broader question 'what do we have schools for?' (Young, 2009b).

Thirdly, attempts to distinguish school or curriculum knowledge from the everyday knowledge and experience that pupils or students bring to school, are, from what I will refer to as a 'knowledge is power' perspective, no more than the ways some groups have to legitimise their views about knowledge and mask the power relations that underpin them. Readers familiar with the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, will recognise this approach in his descriptions of pedagogy as 'symbolic violence' and school subjects as a form of 'cultural tyranny' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Finally, this approach offers a powerful basis for criticising school curricula and indeed any kind of institutionalised or specialised knowledge. Hence it is not surprising that for some radicals it led to an anti-school, anti-curriculum, anti-teacher stance and became associated with those proposing a learner-led approach to pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and even with those like Ivan Illich (1973) who thought schools should be abolished altogether.

The title of this paper stresses the importance of distinguishing knowledge from experience. My first book, *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971), took the opposite view. I inverted the conventional priorities of the time and privileged pupil experience over knowledge. I argued that the distinction between knowledge and experience was ideological and relied on the power of those defining what counted as knowledge rather than any objective criteria. Linked to a radical educational politics, this pro-experience stance led many teachers to an uncritical identification with subordinate groups, whether students, the working class, or indigenous or minority groups. It can, perhaps, be best described as a kind of naïve radicalism based on an uncritical oppositionist politics, a view of the world, which, at the time, 30 years ago, was one that I unthinkingly endorsed!

The idea of power being embedded in all claims to knowledge was and remains important for the questions it raises as well as the political vision that inspires it. It is a way of challenging power and authority structures, and a basis for reminding us that ‘ruling ideas’ are never beyond critique and always need to be questioned. It took me many years and much anxious thought and debate to fully recognise that holding together the ideas of knowledge and power in all circumstances had weaknesses as well as strengths. Finding ways of respecting different cultures (or in the school situation, valuing the knowledge that a pupil brings to school) at the same time as recognising that some ways of seeing the world offer an objectively better basis for understanding the world than others is not easy. It took me even longer to discover a way of thinking about knowledge that recognised that, despite its inescapable social basis and despite its links with power structures, neither exclude its claims to objectivity.

I am now convinced that there is an approach to knowledge and the curriculum that provides a more realistic basis for the original political and educational agenda that I started with in the 1970s, of overcoming (or at least reducing) social inequalities in education. I refer to it as social realism.

The ‘Knowledge is Power’ thesis and its problems

As a theory, the sociological approach to the curriculum that I proposed in my book, *Knowledge and Control*, or as I have referred to it in this paper, the ‘knowledge is power’ thesis, had, I later came to realise, at least three basic problems. First, it was contradictory. It never applied its thesis to itself. Why should anyone accept it when it claims to be the basis for rejecting the idea that some knowledge is more reliable than others? Second, it flew in the face of the reality that in all societies some knowledge *is* judged better or more reliable, more nearer to the truth, than others. Third, it provided no grounds for an alternative curriculum, or for including or excluding any particular knowledge on grounds other than some having the power to do so. If the curriculum is defined as ‘knowledge of the powerful,’ the only alternative must be ‘knowledge of the powerless,’ and what could that be?

Doubts about what a sociological approach to education could offer led me, in the 1980s and 1990s, to give up sociology and become involved in practical curriculum reforms and teacher development in the United Kingdom and later in South Africa. In the latter case, the stakes were very high and the ‘knowledge is power’ thesis had great political attractions for those involved in searching for an alternative to the apartheid government’s support for Bantu Education. This was a curriculum for Black Africans based entirely on excluding them from any sort of power. Both Apartheid and Bantu Education were so clearly social and historical constructs that these ideas became political slogans rather than a basis for a sociological analysis. I came to realise that the approach had practical as well as theoretical problems, and even dangers. Where did it leave teachers, especially when most had had limited professional training? Should they ask their students, ‘the powerless’ what they wanted to learn, when they were often more interested in political protest than education? It was the absence of alternatives or a set of principles that might underpin such alternatives that forced me, as an educational researcher who had been invited to advise the South Africans, to start

searching for a better theory. I needed a theory that could suggest what a new post-apartheid curriculum might look like. The theory that knowledge is power that had underpinned the critique of apartheid education had nothing to say about alternatives. It had the well intentioned but unrealistic aim of ‘freeing’ teachers but with little idea as to what they would be ‘freed’ to do.

Towards a social realist theory of knowledge

Given my own intellectual background as an undergraduate and postgraduate student of sociology, I turned back to the sociological theories I had studied 30 years earlier; those of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim⁴. I had read, misunderstood, and too easily rejected Durkheim when I was a student in the 1960s. I learned that he was a conservative, a functionalist, and a positivist: all terms of abuse among sociology students in that period. Distanced in time and in a very different political climate in the 1990s after 18 years of Conservative government in the United Kingdom, I found that my former criticisms of Durkheim said more about the prevailing politics of the 1960s and 1970s than it did about Durkheim⁵. Returning to Durkheim some decades later, I read his texts in a very different way, which I think was truer to his own purposes and incomparably more relevant to my problem of finding a better social theory of knowledge. A number of things helped me in my re-reading of Durkheim. First, I began with his books *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim, 1926) and *Primitive Classifications* (Durkheim & Mauss, 1963) and his collection of lectures to trainee teachers published as *Pragmatism and Sociology* (Durkheim, 1983), none of which I had read before. Second, I owe a lot to a small but growing community of sociologists of education who began by criticising my earlier work and were led to ask similar questions to those I was concerned with⁶. Third, and for reasons to do with my research on vocational education, I began reading the Russian cultural psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. I found myself comparing and contrasting the ideas of Vygotsky and Durkheim. They were near contemporaries whose work I saw as complementing each other but as a result of disciplinary boundaries between sociology and psychology, had never, as far as I am aware, explicitly been brought together⁷. Finally, my re-reading of Durkheim helped me grasp the enormous influence his work had had on the work of my former tutor, Basil Bernstein. Re-reading Durkheim gave me a new respect for Bernstein’s work and how I could use his ideas.

Knowledge and experience in the work of Durkheim, Vygotsky, and Bernstein

The next part of this paper focuses on the approach to knowledge and education that I developed from my reading of Vygotsky and Durkheim. I refer to it as ‘social realist’ for two reasons that draw on Durkheim and Randall Collins’ (2000) interpretation of Durkheim’s work. Social realism represents an element of continuity but also stands in stark contrast to the social constructivism of *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971). The continuity is that it recognises that knowledge is inescapably social in its origins. However, it rejects the argument of my earlier book and most sociology of knowledge in the Marx/Mannheim tradition. Mannheim argues that it is the sociality of knowledge

that gives knowledge its bias. For Durkheim, and this is now my view, the opposite is the case. It is the social basis of knowledge that gives knowledge its objectivity and its claims to truth; hence the shift from social *constructivism* to social *realism*. I am not speaking here about truth in an absolute sense (that is a question for debates about belief, especially religious belief), but in the sense of being the nearest we can get in our search for truth. This is a view of truth that is fallible but the most reliable that we have. It is an approach to truth that places a primary commitment on being truthful and is expressed in the American philosopher C.S. Peirce's 'communities of enquirers' (cited in Coppock, n.d.) and in Michael Polanyi's 'Republic of Science' (Polanyi, 1962). It is the commitment to pursuing the truth in a truth seeking community and in its commitment to fallibility (in other words its openness to disproof); it distinguishes knowledge and truth from opinion. A corollary is that knowledge must be understood as distinct from experience, which is all that opinion has to draw on.

I now turn to the importance of separating knowledge from experience and to the educational implications of this separation by discussing the work of the three theorists who have most influenced the new approach to knowledge on which my current work is based: Durkheim, Vygotsky, and Bernstein (Young, 2008).

Durkheim

The importance that Durkheim gave to distinguishing between knowledge and experience can be traced back to his early work, when he rejected Kant's reliance on transcendentalism in his doctoral studies, which later became his first book, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Durkheim, 1949). He developed his alternative to 'transcendentalism' with his concepts 'sacred' and 'profane' that arose from his research into the religions of very primitive societies

In his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim, 1926), Durkheim initially used the sacred/profane distinction to describe the separation of religion and everyday life as two quite distinct ways of thinking and forms of social organisation that he found in the primitive societies he studied. However, the distinction became, for him, a basic social and conceptual distinction at the heart of all societies, even those that had become largely secularised. He saw the distinction as referring to two systems of symbolic meaning and argued that in their initial attention to the afterlife (the conceptual) and to problems of survival in everyday life (the practical) was the basis for the development of science and all forms of intellectual speculation in modern societies. For this reason, he even refers to the examples of the sacred that he found in the religions of primitive societies, as 'proto-sciences.'

Thus, Durkheim argued that the conceptual and social differentiation of the everyday world of survival (the profane) from the sacred world of totemic religion within which primitive societies were able to speculate about the afterlife, became the social basis of science and other forms of knowledge. Without this separation, he argued, no society as we know it, and no social progress would have been possible. In contemporary terms, he is distinguishing the practical and the everyday (the profane) from the theoretical/intellectual/conceptual (the sacred) that was originally expressed in religion or theology but historically became secularised to include science and any intellectual activity.

Hence we are left with the basic distinction between theory and practice as a feature of all societies for Durkheim. This is, of course, very different from Marx's view of the theory/practice issue. Whereas for Marx philosophers only interpret the world, when the point is to change it, for Durkheim the knowledge (or theory) that we need as a basis for changing the world must be separate from and prior to the practical activities involved in social change (Durkheim, 1983).

Durkheim's use of ethnographies of aboriginal societies available at the time has been questioned and criticised by some anthropologists. However, what remains is a powerful basis for explaining the development of knowledge and the conditions for it, namely that knowledge is created in contexts that are modeled like religion, on the separation of theory and practice, or, as in early pre-scientific societies, on the separation of the 'sacred' from the 'profane'.

Durkheim's argument about the differentiation of knowledge from experience is developed in his book *Pragmatism and Sociology* (Durkheim, 1983). The principles of reliable knowledge have, for him to be *a priori* not *a posteriori*. To rely on usage or, in modern terms 'whether something works', opens the door to relativism. Durkheim's argument was that to rely on whether 'something works' or 'is useful' is no criterion for knowledge after all, as so often a policy or idea turns out 'not to work'. Hence the grounds for truth are both social (located in society) and 'prior to' not after the event.

In *Pragmatism and Sociology* (1983), Durkheim's primary target was the pragmatists, specifically William James and John Dewey, and their claim that 'something was true if it was useful'. He saw this as undermining the conditions for the growth of science. The reliability of knowledge could never rely on the contingency of its outcomes. His second argument was against Kant. The *a priori* status of knowledge was, for Durkheim, not 'in the mind' or in some transcendental realm, as it seemed to be for Kant, but social and in society. A limitation of Durkheim's theory was that he was never very clear what he means by 'society', especially when he extrapolates his ideas to the complex modern societies of his time. The other key issue that Durkheim focused on was the consequences of specialisation, both in the occupational structure and in the development of knowledge. This raised the question that was at the heart of his sociology: how do societies based on specialisation hold together and not fragment? In his later works he began to explore a solution through the role of education and the growth of professions as 'mediators of specialised knowledge'⁸.

Vygotsky

Vygotsky's life could hardly have been more different from Durkheim's. His short career began shortly after Durkheim died, at the time of the Soviet Revolution, with the publication of his essay on Shakespeare's Hamlet and his critique of the dominance of behaviourism in the psychology of his time. However, he soon began to focus on the immediate problems facing teachers in the new society in which the autocratic culture of Tsarism was still dominant, where few were trained, and schools were only just being established. The idea of differentiating knowledge and experience was fundamental to his concept of the 'zone of proximal development' and arose from his theory of human development. He was also searching for a practical solution to a pedagogic problem:

how could teachers help students to develop the higher order concepts that they would not have access to in their everyday lives?

Like Durkheim, Vygotsky's (1986) theory of the differentiation between knowledge and experience relied on a binary distinction. For Vygotsky this was between two kinds of concepts: theoretical (or scientific) and the everyday (or common sense). As concepts, they have some remarkable similarities to Durkheim's 'sacred' and 'profane' although he gave them a very different significance. The task of the curriculum, and schooling more generally, for Vygotsky, was to provide students with access to theoretical concepts in all their different forms from history and literature to the sciences and mathematics. Furthermore, he saw that access to higher order concepts was a complex two-way pedagogic process. Initially, the learner's everyday concepts are extended and transformed by pedagogy through engaging with the theoretical concepts of the curriculum. The process is then reversed; learners draw on their newly acquired theoretical concepts to re-engage with and transform their everyday concepts. Differentiating theoretical knowledge from experience was, therefore, central to his concept of pedagogy and the role of schools in ways barely touched on by Durkheim. A limitation of Vygotsky's work was that he never really made explicit his idea of 'scientific' or 'theoretical' concepts. One of the few researchers who have taken his ideas further is the Russian educational psychologist V.V Davydov (1995) and his idea of 'kernel knowledge'.

Bernstein

Bernstein took Durkheim's ideas of knowledge differentiation and the crucial role of boundaries between the sacred and the profane further in a number of ways. Here, I will draw brief attention to a number of points from his complex body of work. His concepts of 'classification' and 'framing' were first expressed in what has since become a classic paper (Bernstein, 1971). Both concepts refer to boundaries between knowledge domains. Classification refers to the boundaries between the subjects of the curriculum and the extent to which these boundaries are 'strongly' or 'weakly' classified. Framing refers to the boundaries between the school knowledge of teachers and the everyday knowledge that students bring to school. These boundaries, Bernstein argued, can also be 'strong' or 'weak'. Each set of boundaries express relations of power and control in the school and in its relations to the wider society.

Bernstein developed Durkheim's idea of boundaries as the key social category separating types of knowledge and knowledge from experience. He argued, following Durkheim, that boundaries are the social basis of people's identities and in the case of schooling, of the identities that students develop as learners. It is the boundaries between subjects in the curriculum and their loyalty to them that, Bernstein argued, enable pupils to build their identities as learners. Without such boundaries as a basis for building new identities, learners, Bernstein argued, can be trapped in their experience and never move beyond it. Bernstein went on to analyse the implications for learners with different cultural backgrounds, of boundaries being weakened or dissolved.

In his later work, Bernstein elaborated Durkheim's concepts of the 'sacred' and the 'profane' in terms of two types of discourse: 'vertical' and 'horizontal' (Bernstein, 2000). He argued that knowledge progresses in vertical discourses by specialisation in

two ways: in hierarchical knowledge structures of ever-greater abstraction (typically in the natural sciences) and in segmented knowledge structures (typically in the humanities), as new concepts are developed to pose new problems. The social sciences, for Bernstein, are left in a somewhat ambiguous position between these two tendencies. Reflecting on the sociology of his time, he was inclined to place the social sciences at the segmentalised end of the continuum, as more similar to the humanities (Bernstein, 2000).

Forms of knowledge differentiation and their implications

In this final section of this paper, I want to comment briefly on the educational implications of five of the main aspects of the social differentiation of knowledge that arise from the ideas of Durkheim, Vygotsky, and Bernstein.

The first aspect is the fundamental differentiation between knowledge and experience. Without this difference, which lies at the heart of Durkheim's social theory of knowledge, the idea of a curriculum and indeed schooling itself makes little sense except as an institution for child minding, something not far removed from Foucault's view in his influential book *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1991). Why would a society want specialised educational institutions like schools if all they offered were just additional experiences? The problems that arise from rejecting Durkheim's differentiation argument have been demonstrated by the failed attempts of successive generations of progressive and radical educators who have collapsed the categories of knowledge and experience and attempted to construct an experience-based curriculum. Most socially damaging is the extent to which curricula that claim to offer educational possibilities to slow learners, to those disaffected from schooling, and to those from cultural or indigenous minorities⁹ have been based largely on *their* experience. The result is that such learners remain fixed in those experiences. The way this damage is expressed in vocational education programmes is ably demonstrated in Leesa Wheelahan's new book, *Why Knowledge Matters in the Curriculum* (Wheelahan, 2010). Although Wheelahan draws on the Australian experience, many involved in vocational education programmes in other countries will identify with her analysis.

The second aspect is the differentiation between 'theoretical' and 'everyday' concepts. This is a narrower and more specific expression of the first difference and is explicitly drawn from Vygotsky's work. He was very clear that the role of schooling was to enable pupils to engage with 'theoretical' concepts that they would not have access to in their non-school lives. If the differences between the two kinds of concepts are dismissed or blurred, it becomes increasingly difficult to make reliable decisions about what to include and exclude in the curriculum or indeed to say what formal education is for. The key issue must be what criteria we have for ensuring that students are progressing in their learning. Theoretical concepts are located in subjects, and as I argue in my other paper in this issue, subjects provide these criteria and so any curriculum needs to be based on a clear distinction between the two kinds of concepts that Vygotsky identified. This does not mean that the everyday concepts that students bring to school are not important, but rather that they should be a pedagogic resource for teachers (and for students) not a goal of the curriculum. However, the distinction has broader implications as well. Without a recognition of the differences between theoretical concepts (located

in specialist domains like history and chemistry) curriculum decisions are inevitably reduced to politics or individual choice.

Another aspect of differentiation is that between knowledge domains. These differences refer to what Bernstein describes as the classification of educational knowledge (or the curriculum). A theory of knowledge differentiation presupposes that domain differences are not arbitrary but in some degree are the product of what the French philosopher Bachelard refers to as the historical processes of 'rectification and critique' (Young, 2009a). An understanding of the extent to which domain differences such as those between disciplines and between school subjects have an epistemological or pedagogic basis and are not arbitrary and based on convention is crucial to debates about how the curriculum should be organised.

A final aspect of the social differentiation of knowledge that I want to comment on is the differentiation between school and non-school knowledge. These differences follow from the first two differences and more specifically from Vygotsky's distinction between theoretical and everyday concepts and Bernstein's concept of the framing of educational knowledge. However, the differences between school and non-school knowledge have an additional importance, which I discuss in my other paper in this issue of the journal. They indicate why it is important to distinguish between: **the curriculum**, as the conditions for acquiring new knowledge, and **pedagogy**, which refers to the activities of teaching and learning involved in the processes of transmission and acquisition.

This is a distinction that both Durkheim and Bernstein were somewhat ambiguous about. Durkheim, in particular, assumed a somewhat top-down model of education as 'cultural transmission,' which played down the active role of the learner and therefore the importance of a theory of pedagogy as distinct from a theory of the curriculum. Vygotsky, on the other hand, was more sensitive to the complexity of pedagogic issues. He was aware that a teacher's pedagogy involved helping students, as I mentioned earlier, to acquire theoretical concepts *and* to connect them back by transforming their everyday concepts. He was, as I suggested, less explicit about exactly what he meant by 'theoretical' concepts. This is one reason why some educational researchers have mistakenly assumed that Vygotsky had a positivist concept of science and tried to replace it with a social constructivist view of the learner that neglects that learning involves acquiring as well as constructing knowledge¹⁰. Pedagogy necessarily involves the teacher in taking account of the non-school knowledge or experience that her/his students bring to school. In contrast, the curriculum, designed to stipulate non-school knowledge, does not.

A concluding point

I have argued that the principle of differentiating knowledge from experience must be crucial to how we think about education and traced some of the roots of this currently neglected idea in the work of Emile Durkheim, Lev Vygotsky and Basil Bernstein. I have focused primarily on its implications for the relationship between school and non-school knowledge in the curriculum and pedagogy and discussed only some of the aspects of this differentiation and its educational significance. There is much to do.

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Endnotes

- 1 This paper is based on a lecture I gave as the School of Critical Studies in Education Distinguished Fellow, in the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, August 2010.
- 2 For those interested in a more detailed account of my intellectual biography, they might like to look at the paper I wrote for the book, *Leaders in Curriculum Studies* (Young, 2009c).
- 3 The two terms 'knowledge of the powerful' and 'powerful knowledge' imply two different meanings of the concept 'power'; 'power over others' and 'power to do something'
- 4 I have recently come across an excellent book *Social Theory in Education Primer* by Philip Wexler (2009), which takes the reader through a very similar journey that I followed. Wexler argues that many, if not all, the twists and turns in social theory in recent decades can be understood as responses to and elaborations of the ideas set out by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim over a century ago.
- 5 Durkheim was, I later came to realise, a liberal on civil liberties issues, a critic of how capitalism was developing (Durkheim, 1992) though certainly not a Marxist, and only a positivist in the sense that he wanted to establish the reality of social facts as external to, and acting on individuals.
- 6 Initially, the group was very small and consisted of Rob Moore at Cambridge and Johan Muller at Capetown, but has since extended to include researchers in Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, and Portugal as well as the UK.
- 7 See chapters 3 and 4 of Young (2008).
- 8 There is a more detailed discussion of these issues in the final chapter of my recent book (Young, 2008).
- 9 This idea of basing the curriculum on the cultural experience of pupils was the basis of Bantu Education developed by the architects of apartheid. Despite 15 years of majority democratic government, South Africa still lives with this legacy in the persistent low achievement of African students. It is somewhat ironic to see that a curriculum indigenous minorities based on the same principles as Bantu Education is presented by some erstwhile radicals as progressive or even 'emancipatory.'
- 10 Jan Derry presents a powerful corrective to this view by showing that Vygotsky's ideas need to be understood in light of his reading of Spinoza and Hegel (Derry, 2008).

The future of education in a knowledge society: The radical case for a subject-based curriculum

Michael F D Young

Institute of Education, University of London

Introduction

Much is written in current educational policies about preparing students for a knowledge society and the important role education has to play. These policies, however, say very little about the role of knowledge itself in education (Young, 2009a). What is it, in other words, that is important that our young people know? More worrying than this, many current policies almost systematically neglect or marginalise the question of knowledge. The emphasis is invariably on learners, their different styles of learning and their interests, on measurable learning outcomes and competences and making the curriculum relevant to their experience and their future employability. Knowledge is somehow a taken for granted or something we can make fit our political goals (Young, 2010).

It would not, in the case of England, Scotland and some other European countries, be overstating the case, to say that the recent curriculum reforms are leading to a reduction or even an ‘evacuation of content,’ especially for those already not succeeding in school (Yates & Young, 2010). Often these reforms are well intentioned and have progressive aims. They stress opening access, widening participation, and promoting social inclusion. This makes them difficult to question without being seen as conservative and elitist.

In this paper, I want to make the case that if we are to give the importance of education in a knowledge society any serious meaning, we need to make the question of knowledge our central concern and this involves developing a knowledge-led and subject-led, and not, as much current orthodoxy assumes, a learner-led approach to the curriculum. Furthermore, I will argue that this is the ‘radical’ option—not as some claim, the ‘conservative’ option—provided we are clear about what we mean by knowledge. I use the term ‘radical’ here to refer to the key issue facing most countries today: the persistence of social inequalities in education. I prefer the term ‘radical’ to alternatives such as ‘progressive’ and ‘critical.’ Whereas the former term has had a close, and in my view, unfortunate association with learner-centred pedagogies and the emphasis on ‘learning from experience,’ the latter term, despite being part of a much broader intellectual heritage that can be traced back to Kant and the 18th Century Enlightenment, has, in educational studies, been equated with the empty rhetoric of much of what passes for critical *pedagogy*.

The rest of this paper is concerned with how we think about the curriculum; it has

two parts. First, I draw on the example of the 2008 reforms of the National Curriculum in England, which I describe as adopting an ‘instrumentalist’ approach. I will explain what I mean later by this. I will argue that instead we need to see the curriculum not as an instrument for achieving goals such as ‘contributing to the economy’ or ‘motivating disaffected learners’ but as intrinsic to why we have schools at all. The second part of this paper shifts focus from the curriculum to schools and suggests how school subjects can be thought of as the major resource for the work of teachers and pupils in school.

In the final section, I address two of the strongest arguments made against a subject or more broadly, against a knowledge-based curriculum. The first argument is that any form of subject-based curriculum will continue to discriminate against disadvantaged, and particularly working class and ethnic minority pupils. This issue has a particular urgency in the United Kingdom at this time. A traditional subject-based curriculum is strongly endorsed by the new Conservative Secretary of State, Michael Gove. A month before the General Election he was quoted as saying that he was an unashamed curriculum traditionalist, and he believed that most parents wanted their children:

to sit in rows, learn about Kings and Queens, read great works, do proper mental arithmetic, start algebra by 11 and learn foreign languages. (Gove, 2009)

It is important to distinguish between Gove’s traditional view of a subject-based curriculum and the view of curriculum that I want to argue for. I shall do this in two ways: in terms of their different concepts of knowledge, and in terms of the different assumptions they make about learners’ relationships to knowledge.

The traditional model treats knowledge as given and as something that students have to comply with. In contrast, although the model I am arguing for also treats knowledge as external to learners, it recognises that this externality is not given, but has a social and historical basis. I also distinguish the knowledge-based curriculum I am arguing for, from the traditional model by their different relationships with learners and, therefore, their different implications for pedagogy and what teachers and pupils do. The former I shall refer to as a ‘curriculum based on compliance’ and the latter as a ‘curriculum based on engagement.’

What the two models have in common and where they stand in contrast to the instrumentalist model that underpins the 2008 reforms in England is that both start with knowledge and not the learner, nor the contexts faced by learners, as is implied by curricula designed to accommodate to learner’s future employment.

The second argument against a subject-based curriculum, which I will comment on more briefly at the end, is the claim that it is at odds with what is often claimed to be a global trend towards de-differentiation, in other words, towards the weakening of boundaries between occupations and knowledge domains

The 2008 Reforms in England: Instrumentalist curricula and their problems

Curriculum policies are inevitably developed in social, political, and economic contexts. My argument is that in the last decade, under well-known global pressures, curriculum designers in the United Kingdom have taken too much account of these contexts in two

senses. Firstly, they have responded to governmental pressure to contribute to solving social problems such as unemployment. Secondly, they have also responded to what they perceive as learners' needs and interests, especially those learners who achieve little in school or leave early.

As a consequence, the proposals have neglected or at least played down the fundamental educational role of the curriculum, which derives both from what schools are for and what they can and cannot do. While we must remain mindful of the wider context, curriculum choices have to be addressed for what they are: alternative ways of promoting the intellectual development of young people. The more we focus on how a reformed curriculum might solve social or economic problems, the less likely those social and economic problems will be addressed where they originate, which is not in the school.

A former Prime Minister, Tony Blair once stated, 'education is the best economic policy that we have.' This said much, by implication, about his economic policies. However, it also represents the kind of instrumentalism that has plagued educational policies in England for the last 30 years; it addresses what politicians hope that education can do 'as a means,' not what it is for 'as an end.' It is as if questions about the purposes of education are too philosophical and abstract for policy makers and politicians. Regrettably, philosophers of education have tended to compound the problem by invoking ideas like 'wellbeing' (White, 2007). Of course, human wellbeing is an important goal for all societies; however, it is as much a goal for families and communities as schools, and says little about the distinctive role of schools.

The major priorities of the 2008 reforms were to shift the balance away from subject content to topical themes that cut across a range of subjects, and to seek ways of personalising the curriculum by relating it more directly to pupil's everyday knowledge and experiences. The curriculum designers began with two genuine problems that I am sure are not unique to England: an 'over-crowded' curriculum, and too many disaffected students. The reforms attempted to link the two in accounting for the failure of schools to motivate a significant proportion of students. The reformed curriculum put a greater emphasis on its flexibility and its relevance to the experience that students bring to school. In other words, they viewed the curriculum as an instrument for motivating students to learn.

Why is this a problem?

My argument builds on a short paper by Tim Oates (2009). It is that an instrumentalist approach to the curriculum both misunderstands what any curriculum can do, and confuses two crucially separate educational ideas. The first idea concerns **curriculum**, which refers to the knowledge that a country agrees is important for all students to have access to. The second idea concerns **pedagogy**, which, in contrast, refers to the activities of teachers in motivating students and helping them to engage with the curriculum and make it meaningful.

Curriculum and pedagogy, I suggest, need to be seen as conceptually distinct. They refer to the distinct responsibilities of curriculum designers and teachers and each depends on the other. Whereas teachers cannot create a curriculum themselves,

they need it to guide them in what they have to teach, curriculum designers can only stipulate the important concepts that pupils need access to. Curriculum designers rely on teachers to motivate students and give those concepts a reality for pupils.

Attempts to include the experiences of students in a 'more motivational' curriculum blur the curriculum/pedagogy distinction and the very different roles of curriculum designers and teachers. As most teachers know well, they have to take account of the experiences and prior knowledge that students bring to school and what initially motivates them. These are part of the resources teachers have for mobilising students and are the basis for students to become active learners. That is quite different, however, from including these experiences in the curriculum.

I want to mention two other problems that can arise from an instrumentalist view of the curriculum. Both are related to the blurring of the distinction between curriculum and pedagogy and hence both lead directly to a discussion of the role that subjects have in the curriculum. Firstly, an instrumentalist view of curriculum *can* lead to a disturbing development, vividly demonstrated in the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) guidelines on the web (see <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/curriculum/36.aspx>). I am referring specifically to the proliferation of specific guidelines for teachers. Although teachers are not statutorily required to adopt these guidelines, the authoritative nature of their origins in the QCDA, together with their links to subject specifications on which examinations are based, make them difficult to ignore. The assumption of the guidelines appears to be that a solution to the lack of motivation of students is more curriculum guidance for teachers rather than a strengthening and supporting their subject and pedagogic knowledge, and as a consequence, their professionalism.

In a wider political context where much stress is laid on pupil grades and test scores and where schools can be ranked nationally on the numbers gaining certificates, it is not stretching the argument too far to suggest that the curriculum itself is increasingly becoming a form of accountability rather than a guide for teachers. Two contrasting examples of curriculum specifications illustrate this point. One came from the QCDA and was being used by a state school; it was 10 -12 pages long. The other, from an Examination Board, was being used by a fee paying private (in English terms, Public) school and was a page and a half long. Both addressed the issue of quality. However, they had very different ideas of teacher professionalism, the distinction between curriculum and pedagogy, and how far teachers could be trusted.

The second problem that arises from treating the curriculum as an 'instrument' is that it becomes possible for governments to claim that social or economic problems can be 'solved' by changes in the curriculum. I am not denying that the curriculum should always be open to democratic debate. However, unless political demands from governments have to face explicit educational criteria from curriculum designers about what a curriculum can do, there is a danger that the more fundamental purposes of schooling, to take pupils beyond their experience in ways that they would be unlikely to have access to at home, will be neglected. That surely is what schools are for.

To summarise my argument so far: firstly, the curriculum needs to be seen as having a purpose of its own: the intellectual development of students. It should not be treated as a means for motivating students or for solving social problems. Secondly,

intellectual development is a concept-based not a content-based or skill-based process. This means that the curriculum should be concept-based. However, concepts are always about something. They imply some contents and not others. Content, therefore, is important, not as facts to be memorised, as in the old curriculum, but because without it students cannot acquire concepts and, therefore, will not develop their understanding and progress in their learning. Thirdly, it is important to distinguish curriculum and pedagogy as they relate differently to school knowledge and the everyday knowledge pupils bring to school in different ways. The curriculum should exclude the everyday knowledge of students, whereas that knowledge is a resource for the pedagogic work of teachers. Students do not come to school to learn what they already know.

Fourthly, it is teachers, in their pedagogy, not curriculum designers, who draw on pupils' everyday knowledge in helping them to engage with the concepts stipulated by the curriculum and to see their relevance. Finally, the knowledge stipulated by the curriculum must be based on specialist knowledge developed by communities of researchers. This is a process that has been described as *curriculum re-contextualisation* (Barnett, 2006). However, these research communities are not involved in schools. It follows that the curriculum cannot lay down how access to this knowledge is achieved; this further process of 're-contextualisation' will be specific to each school and the community in which it is located and relies on the professional knowledge of teachers. Why then must the curriculum be subject based? This is the topic of the second half of this paper.

Subjects, the curriculum, and the purposes of schooling

In this section, I want to shift my focus from the curriculum to the school and from curriculum designers to subject teachers. I draw here on the work of the French sociologist and philosopher, Bernard Charlot (Charlot, 2009). He starts with school and what kind of place it is. I will extract five related steps in elaborating his argument.

Schools are places where the world is treated as an 'object of thought' and not as a 'place of experience.' Subjects such as history, geography and physics are the tools that teachers have for helping pupils make the step from experience to what the Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, referred to as 'higher forms of thought.' Subjects bring together 'objects of thought' as systematically related sets of 'concepts'.

Sometimes, these concepts have referents outside school, in the environment of the pupil's life, in a city like Auckland, for example. However, pupils' relationships with Auckland as a 'concept' should be different to their relationship with their 'experience' of Auckland as the place where they live.

It is important that the pupils do not confuse the Auckland that the geography teacher talks about with the Auckland in which they live. To a certain extent, it is the same city, but the pupil's relationship with it in the two cases is not the same. The Auckland where they live is 'a place of experience.' Auckland as an example of a city is 'an object of thought' or a 'concept.'

If pupils fail to grasp the difference between thinking about Auckland as an example of the geographers' concept of a city and their experience of living in Auckland, they will have problems learning geography, and by analogy, any school subject that seeks

to take them beyond their experience. For example, the teacher might ask her class what the functions of the city of Auckland are. This requires that the pupils think of the city in its role in government and business and not to just to describe how they, their parents, and their friends, experience living in the city.

This argument can be expressed in another way as follows. The ‘theoretical’ concepts of subjects like geography and the ‘everyday’ concepts that make up the experience that pupils bring to school are different and using them involves very different thought processes. Again, it was Vygotsky who first pointed out these differences. It is worth summarizing them.

Theoretical concepts have origins in specialist knowledge-producing communities, like physicists and geographers. These concepts have specific purposes in that they enable us to make reliable generalisations from particular cases and test our generalisations. Theoretical concepts are systematically related to each other (in subjects and disciplines) and are acquired consciously and voluntarily through pedagogy in schools, colleges, and universities.

In contrast, everyday concepts are ‘picked up’ unconsciously by everyone in our daily lives and are acquired through experience in *ad hoc* ways for specific purposes related to particular problems in particular contexts.

They form the knowledge we need to live in society. Subjects, therefore, are sets of related theoretical concepts, such as the city and suburbs for urban geographers and geography teachers. They are also the forms of social organisation that bring subject specialists together and give them their identities.

Sometimes, in geography as in other subjects, curriculum concepts do not have a referent in the environment of the pupil’s life. Such concepts belong only to a specific world, constructed by specialist researchers involved in developing new knowledge. Good examples are atoms and electrons in science. On the other hand, because they have been tried and tested by specialists, access to them is the most reliable way we have of extending extends a student’s understanding.

Charlot (2009) draws the conclusion that teachers have two fundamental pedagogic tasks. One task is to help students manage the relationship between the concepts of the different subjects that make up the curriculum and their referents to the students’ everyday lives. The second task is to introduce students to concepts, which have meanings that do not derive from or relate directly to their experience.

Subjects, then, have two features as a basis of curriculum design. Firstly, they consist of relatively coherent sets of concepts with distinct and explicit relationships with each other. Different subjects have rules that define boundaries between them and other subjects and for how their concepts are related. These rules will vary in how precisely they are defined; Bernstein uses the concepts ‘hierarchical’ and ‘segmented’ to distinguish between subjects like physics and literature (Bernstein, 2000).

Secondly, subjects are also ‘communities of specialists’ with distinct histories and traditions. Through these ‘communities,’ teachers in different schools and colleges are linked to each other and to those in the universities producing new knowledge. Increasingly, they also link teachers in different countries through journals and conferences and the Internet.

Two features distinguish this view of subjects, which is associated with what I referred to as a 'curriculum of engagement' from the traditionalist view of subjects associated with a 'curriculum of compliance.' The first

is that subjects are dynamic historical entities that change over time, partly through internal development by specialists, and partly under external political and other pressures. In contrast to the traditional view of subjects, they are not part of some fixed canon defined by tradition with unchanging contents. This does not mean that it is possible to have a subject or a discipline without some form of the 'canon' of agreed texts, concepts and methods. It means that the canon itself has a history and though not fixed and unchangeable, has a stability as well as an openness that students can build on in establishing their identities.

The second difference is that in acquiring subject knowledge students do not just comply with specific rules and contents as if they were instructions. In acquiring subject knowledge they are joining those 'communities of specialists' each with their different histories, traditions and ways of working. Subjects therefore have three roles in a 'curriculum of engagement.' The first is a curriculum role. Subjects provide guarantees, through their links with disciplines and the production of new knowledge, that students have access to the most reliable knowledge that is available in particular fields. The second role is a pedagogic one. Subjects provide bridges for learners to move from their 'everyday concepts' to the 'theoretical concepts' associated with different subjects. The third is an identity-generating role for teachers and learners. Subjects are crucial for teachers' sense of themselves as members of a profession. Subject knowledge provides teachers with the basis of their authority over pupils. For pupils, moving from their everyday world where concepts are developed experientially in relation to problems that arise in specific contexts, to the world of school, which treats the world as an object for thinking about, can be a threatening and even alien experience. The everyday world is not like school. It is not divided into subjects or disciplines. This identity-generating role of subjects is particularly important for students from disadvantaged homes and for their teachers. Many such students will come to school with little experience of treating the world as more than a set of experiences, in other words, conceptually. Subjects, with their boundaries for separating aspects of the world that have been tested over time, not only provide the basis for analysing and asking questions about the world, they also provide students with the social basis for a new set of identities as learners. With the new subject identities that student's acquire through the curriculum, to add to those they came to school with, students are more likely to be able to resist, or at least cope with, the sense of alienation from their everyday lives outside school that school can lead to.

As a former chemistry teacher and lecturer in sociology, I have some idea of chemistry's concepts, like periodicity and valency, and those of sociology, like solidarity and social class. Such concepts, the relationships between them and to the world of every day life have their own subject histories. They are what constitute subjects and provide the most powerful ways we have of generalising beyond our experience of the world. It is for this reason that I argue for subjects as the basis of the curriculum.

Conclusions and challenges

I have developed an argument for the key role of subjects in the school curriculum and indicated some of the reasons why this role has been undermined by recent curriculum developments. A number of issues, however, remain.

In many countries, a non-subject-based curriculum based on themes, lines of enquiry or topics derived from the interests of pupils is being attempted and has proved attractive to teachers and pupils. It appears to resolve the issues of curriculum relevance and 'pupil interest' and the experience of subjects as a form of 'cultural tyranny.' My argument has been that such curricula, which quite explicitly blur the curriculum/pedagogy distinction, will inevitably lack coherence and be limited as a basis for pupils to progress. The basis for choosing topics or themes would be largely arbitrary or based on the experience of individual teachers not on the specialist subject knowledge of teachers and researchers developed over time.

In such a curriculum, teachers would have to rely more on their positional authority in the school and not on their specialist subject knowledge. Furthermore, the students could have difficulties in establishing their identities as school learners and would incline either to personal loyalty to specific teachers or reject the teacher's positional authority as bureaucratic and illegitimate, the beginnings of disaffection that often leads to drop out. Despite these problems, support for an integrated or thematic curriculum is unlikely to disappear, especially among 'radical' teachers. Such curricula appear to offer a way of overcoming the over-specialisation problem; how, in a subject-based curriculum do students acquire the resources to 'make connections' and gain a sense of the world as a 'whole'? This issue is important but beyond the scope of this paper. I will, therefore, restrict myself to some brief observations. The 'connection' problem has no easy solution, and there is no evidence that intellectual specialisation is likely to go into reverse. For schools, I suggest, it is a pedagogic not a curriculum problem. In curriculum terms, there is no adequate alternative to subjects for stipulating the concepts that we want students to acquire. There are no general 'connecting' curriculum principles as I thought (or hoped) some years ago might give the idea of 'connective specialisation' some meaning (Young, 1998). My provisional response is that the capability to connect or 'cross boundaries' can be developed by teachers and arises out of the strength of a student's subject identity and the problems that he/she finds that the subject-based concepts cannot adequately deal with.

There is a parallel that needs exploring further between this point and the idea expressed by Abbott (2001) and more recently by Moore (2011) and Muller (2011) that in the field of knowledge production, 'a form of inter-disciplinarity' is a normal part of the growth of knowledge. It is an inter-disciplinarity that arises out of the openness and its limitations of disciplines and not from some imposed external principle. In the context of the school, it is the subject teacher's responsibility to monitor, criticise and at times support those students who struggle to move beyond the rules of the subject.

I want finally to consider two rather different objections to my argument for a knowledge-based curriculum. The first is that, despite distinguishing between 'compliance' and 'engagement' curriculum models, my engagement model of a subject-based curriculum is very little different from the traditionalist curriculum supported by

our new Secretary of State. In other words, it would inevitably perpetuate an elitist and unequal system and continue to deny learning opportunities to many students from disadvantaged homes. It is a familiar argument and is consistent with the critique of subjects that I made in my first book *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971).

As I discuss in the second paper in this issue (Young, 2011), I have been led to rethink my earlier ideas about knowledge, the curriculum and the role of schooling. This does not mean that I now disregard how schools in capitalist societies reproduce social class and other inequalities. However, the reality that *some* boys from working class families do succeed at school despite their cultural disadvantages and that in many countries *girls do better than boys* (Marrero, 2008), despite gender discrimination in society, suggests that the role of schools and the subject-based curriculum is more complex than sustaining inequalities.

In unequal societies such as England, any school curriculum will sustain those inequalities. However, schooling also represents (or can represent, depending on the curriculum) the universalist goals of treating all pupils equally and not just as members of different social classes, different ethnic groups or as boys or girls.

Common schooling with the goal of maximizing the intellectual development of all students can be thought of as an institution like science, democracy and trade unions. None have fully realised the aims associated with them, but none are the products of capitalism, or colonialism and their divisions alone. Common schooling arose, in part, out of the needs of an expanding industrial capitalism and the social class inequalities that it generated. However, it was also a product of the 18th century Enlightenment and the values of universalism and equality associated with it. Schools and the curriculum, like political institutions such as democracy and trade unions are in constant tension with their context. They are not just products of that context.

It would be naïve to imagine that any curriculum could overcome inequalities generated elsewhere. Capitalist societies, to different degrees will always produce inequalities in education, health, housing, or any public service. On the other hand, a subject-based curriculum has a degree of objectivity based on the assumption that it is the most reliable way we have developed of transmitting and acquiring ‘powerful knowledge.’ No one would imagine that the creation of new knowledge could begin with experience or everyday life. Isaac Newton is reported to have said, “*If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants.*” It is no less true of acquiring knowledge. Subjects link the acquisition of new knowledge to its production. To deny this in the curriculum is no different from denying access to anti-retrovirals to Africans with HIV Aids on the grounds that it shows lack of respect for their local knowledge.

We can link this argument back to my earlier account of subjects. On average, middle class families give their children more experiences of treating the world ‘as an object’ or in a way that has some parallels with subjects and not just as an experience, than working class families; not surprisingly the former are better prepared for a subject-based curriculum. We can call this a middle class subsidy. At the same time, subjects with their sequencing, pacing, and selection of contents and activities, are the nearest we get in education to providing students with access to reliable knowledge. In other words, at their best school subjects express universal values that treat all human beings

as the same, not as members of different social classes, ethnic groups, or as boys or girls. Elite schools are successful for two reasons. The first is the ability that charging high fees gives them to be both socially and intellectually selective. The second is that they have the resources to recruit the best teachers of specialist subject teachers. The lack of well-qualified subject teachers is a major reason why, in relative terms, state schools do not do so well. Weakening the subject basis of the curriculum will make it more difficult for students to distinguish between the ‘objects of thought’ or concepts that constitute a curriculum and their experience. One reason why our new Secretary of State is wrong is that he is endorsing a universalistic goal: subject teachers treat all learners equally, in a non- universalistic context: not all students have the same access to specialist subject teachers.

A second objection to my re-conceptualised subject based ‘curriculum for engagement’ is that it takes no account of the global transformations of society that have and are taking place. Here, I can only hint at my response; it needs another paper. Weakening boundaries between school subjects and everyday knowledge is often presented as consistent with political and economic transformations associated with globalisation. Parallels can be drawn with the recent enthusiasm for a shift from what is known as Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge as the basis for a new approach to knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994). The case is then made for an inter-disciplinary or thematic school curriculum as being more in tune with the world ‘as it is becoming’ (Young & Muller, 2010). My argument here is that even if these global trends are an accurate prediction of social change in occupations, we have no grounds for assuming that they apply either to the conditions for acquiring reliable knowledge or for producing it.

Producing new knowledge by research and acquiring it through formal education are relatively recent phenomena in human history. There is a body of work in the sociology of knowledge, which can be traced back at least to the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, over a century ago, which explains the conditions that made this a possibility. Durkheim argues that differentiating between knowledge and experience and between theoretical and everyday knowledge are the most fundamental conditions for acquiring and producing new knowledge (Durkheim, 1983; Young, 2008).

I will conclude with a quote from Max Weber, the German sociologist whose career ran between the 1890 and 1920. At the end of his famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he wrote,

In Western civilisation, and in Western civilisation only, cultural phenomena have appeared (and the subject-based curriculum could be thought of as one, though he was not referring to it) which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having universal significance and validity. (quoted in Kronman, 2007)

For some this might sound like a form of early neo-colonialism, trying to extract a set of ideas from their political and historical context and claiming their universality. I think Weber was raising a question with very deep implications for those of us in education. The question goes something like this: What are the educational and political

implications of there being some knowledge, which has generalisable meanings and a degree of objectivity that cannot be reduced to its contexts or origins? The implications are whether there are grounds for denying access to such knowledge to the next generation, whatever their social or cultural backgrounds.

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Knowledge, belief, critical evaluation and education

Robert Nola

Department of Philosophy, The University of Auckland

For the purposes of the Symposium on Knowledge and Education held at the University of Auckland in August 2010 (at which an earlier version of this paper was originally presented), I thought I would set out what I wanted to say in the form of 6 opposing theses and anti-theses that are central to the notion of knowledge. They will provide a map of some of the disputed terrain that the topic of the Symposium covered but without providing any detailed arguments (though follow-up arguments are vital). Issues concerning the nature of knowledge are important in education, some claiming that knowledge is the main goal of education. However, the topic of knowledge remains a contested area in both philosophy and education, though the areas of contestation are quite different in the two fields. I will begin by saying something about realism and then move on to considerations about knowledge and truth and the issue of whether power has anything to do with knowledge.

Thesis 1: Concerning commonsense and scientific realism.

We commonly assume that when we are not looking at things, such as our bedroom and its contents, they are all still there roughly as we last saw them (setting aside the natural processes of change that all things undergo). They have an independent continuous existence that does not depend in any way on ourselves being present or observing them. More strongly, we can say that the whole world goes on in much the same way as we currently observe it to do even if we humans were never to have existed. If we humans had not come into existence through the processes of evolution there would still have been a solar system and there would still have been dinosaurs, and the like. This is the central idea behind commonsense realism.

The contrasting non-realist position (which goes under a number of different names such as ‘idealism’ or ‘constructivism’ etc.) wants to make the items in the world somehow dependent on us and our perception of them. The realist position gets expressed in the common assumption that a tree falling in a forest when no one is around still makes a noise as it crashes down. The noise still happens just as much as the falling of the tree happens (noiseless fallings of trees is quite rare). Of course if there is no one around, then there is no one to experience the noise that the falling tree makes, or even to see the falling. The opposing non-realist position denies that there is any noise, and sometimes even more strongly denies that we can attach any sense to the idea there is any tree falling if there were to be no possibility of it being observed.

‘Commonsense realism’ is the view that the common objects of daily life do have

an existence independent of ourselves. Realists express their position by saying that such items and their properties have a mind-independent existence. In contrast, various kinds of non-realism deny that there is such mind independence; rather there are various forms of mind-dependence to take into account.

The same goes for the items postulated in science. Scientific realists maintain that science can tell us about the contents and structure of the world. It is through science that we have made important discoveries about a mind-independent world, which includes such entities as electrons, quasars, DNA molecules, tectonic plates, mass, electric charge, and so on. In contrast, non-realists about science claim that these scientific postulates do not have an independent existence; in a way that needs to be spelled out, they depend on us and our mental structures.

What does mind-independence mean? It says that if we humans were not to exist, then the items mentioned would still exist; more specifically if we did not use language to refer to these items, or we did not develop theories about them, or we did not have perceptions or thoughts concerning them, then these items would still exist. Their existence depends in no way on our existence or our mental activities. Realism simply points out the mind-independent character of the world that science investigates, and also the commonsense world of our everyday lives. What non-realists wish to claim in opposition is that the entities of science somehow depend on our activities of theorising, or the language we use, or the conceptual schemes we construct, and the like. What exists, even in science, depends on our theories, or languages or conceptual schemes.

Not everything that science can investigate has this strongly realist character; when it comes to social facts, a quite sensible version of constructivism can prevail. The philosopher John Searle (1995), along with many others, has convincingly argued that social facts like money, marriage, the military, and being top model are constructed out of collective human intentions. Again we can admit to the existence of experiences, feelings, thoughts, and similar mental entities. These exist, of course. But they do not exist mind-dependently; they depend for their existence on there being some other entity that has them, in other words, people with minds. There are no social and mental entities that exist independently of people; if people were not to exist then there would be no social or mental items (perhaps apart from those of animals and insects). The topic of independent and dependent existence is an important matter in philosophical metaphysics, and though it needs to be introduced, following this up in any detail it is outside the scope of this paper.

The above has outlined a strong form of commonsense and scientific realism. It is in conflict with any kind of positivism or empiricism in science, or any kind of constructivism or relativism about what is out there in the world. It is inconsistent with ideas like Thomas Kuhn's paradigm relative world, or quite often with doctrines that derive from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the 18th century German philosopher. In fact, one could more generally endorse a doctrine called 'scientific naturalism', in other words, though science has only done part of the job, it will in the long run tell us what is in the world. And science is all we will need; we will not need anything else to tell us about what is in the world. The last clause is the controversial bit! But what is important is that a distinction has to be made between (1) the doctrine of realism, which turns on

the idea of mind independent existence, and (2) the doctrine of naturalism, which tells us that *only* science is needed to tell us what is in the world. One can be a realist without being a scientific naturalist.

Anti-thesis 1: As indicated, there are a variety of non-realist positions. Clearly, commonsense and scientific realism are opposed to what the philosopher of education, von Glasersfeld, calls ‘radical constructivism’ in the context of theories of education and knowledge. This says that the items of science, as well as everyday objects, are some kind of construct out of our mental activities (experiences, meanings, etc) – they do not exist independently of them. The following question was once put to von Glasersfeld (1993, p. 28): “Does reality exist outside from one’s construction of reality? How do you know?” His reply was: “I do not know.” It is not clear what von Glasersfeld does not know, but it must be something like the following: we have theories of electrons or tectonic plates but we can never know what independently existing entities these theories are about, in particular electrons or tectonic plates. When it comes to the objects of the commonsense world, such as chairs, von Glasersfeld adopts the same stance. The philosopher and historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, says much the same sort of thing concerning scientific theories: “the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its ‘real’ [in inverted commas] counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 206). This I call ‘Immanuel Kant’s revenge’! Given this kind of deep scepticism about our ability to know anything about the nature of the independently existing world, the appeal to reality becomes not only unnecessary but impossible. So forget about it! All one is left with is one’s constructions.

The thesis and anti-thesis sketched above give rise to a mainly philosophical dispute between realists and non-realists, such as constructivists, about the nature of science and reality. What has this dispute got to do with science education? I would say – nothing. Yet it has got caught up in some leading theories of education concerning science. One, of course, might need to learn about this dispute concerning the nature of our knowledge of the world; but it is not essential to it, and nor need it be placed at the centre of education. Theories in education ought to be independent of, or at least neutral between, such philosophical disputes about the nature of science and our knowledge. Yet certain epistemological doctrines have found their way into science education, and education more generally, and in their wake they have brought along with them certain anti-realist conception of science.

Thesis 2: The rationality of scientific method.

I wish to support the idea that there are rational methods in science that have enabled us to make discoveries, like those mentioned above, and to develop theories about them. Importantly, these methods are used to test our theories and to tell us when they are true or false. One such method of test would be the hypothetico-deductive method or the method of randomized clinical trials, though there are lots of other methods to be found in science. These methods are, in part, an extension of our commonsense ways of thinking. They have evolved over the course of human scientific investigations (think of statistics, which was not around 100 years ago). They also have a degree of objectivity and are not to be understood in some relativistic sense.

Anti-Thesis 2: A number of views are opposed to this, one being the Strong Programme in the sociology of scientific knowledge. This is a view put forward by David Bloor (1991) in his aptly entitled book *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. In quick summary, Bloor says that for any scientific belief or item of knowledge (these two notions are often run together), there are a number of factors that enter into what causes our believing; but amongst these factors there must be social factors that (a) must be present, and (b) play a dominant and decisive role in causing the scientific belief. Such a claim runs counter to the idea that there are principles of method to be employed in the adjudication of theories. If one were to ignore these social factors, then the social would be relegated to a quite minor role. So Bloor says of the sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim, that “his nerve failed him” since he thought that there could be aspects of science, particularly its methods, which are largely independent of such social factors (p. 11). Foucault’s power/knowledge doctrine has a lot in common with the Strong Programme (to be mentioned later in Thesis 6).

Advocates of the Strong Programme provide a number of case studies from the history of science, which allegedly illustrate their claim. One example is Forman (1971) who claims that the prime causal factor in belief in the indeterminacy principle of physics in the 1920s was due to the physicist’s awareness of the cultural milieu of post-WWI Germany in which they lived, particularly its hostility to science and its accompanying antagonism to analytic rationality and to the idea of causal connections. The point these sociologists wish to make is that it is the scientists’ awareness of their cultural milieu, a social factor, which is the main causal factor in the belief in acausality, or indeterminism, in physics. It is not any particular development internal to physics that is the cause of this belief, for example the seeking out of evidence and the testing of hypotheses using principles of method. Given that scientific beliefs are alleged to arise in this social way, this, if correct, would undermine the rationalist picture presented by those, like me, who see that application of the methods of science, something non-social, as being the prime causal factor in the acceptance or rejection of the claims of science.

The Strong Programme does get some mention in science education literature, and as such it is often used to show that social factors play an allegedly unacknowledged role in the formation of scientific belief. But note that this claim is first made about science itself; it is then carried over to theories of education in relation to science. But should it be? Like constructivism, I think it is an unwelcome interloper that need not be there.

Thesis 3: Concerning knowledge and belief.

What is the difference between knowledge and belief (or opinion)? To illustrate the difference, here are some questions that students can be asked.

Q1: ‘Who believes that the Sun rotates daily about the Earth? It looks that way, doesn’t it?’ Some put their hands up, but often they withdraw when they see that they are in a minority. That at least indicates that there is some doubt about what they really do believe.

Q2: ‘Who believes that the Sun is stationary and the Earth rotates daily about its

axis?’ More respond positively to this, but not all.

Q3: ‘If you do believe that the Earth rotates daily on its axis, *why* do you believe it?’ Here there are a range of possible answers that can be investigated. Often students believe this because it is what everyone tells them, from their family to their teachers, the books they read, what it says on the web, and so on. A follow-up question can then be: ‘Is it a good enough reason to believe something on the basis of what everyone else says?’ Here we begin to reflect on what we believe asking questions about how this belief got into our heads in the first place. Clearly, the belief seems not to have got there on the basis of the consideration of evidence and reason.

Evolutionary psychologists tell us that there is a selective advantage for the young simply to adopt the general rule of thumb, ‘believe what one’s peers tell one,’ or ‘believe what one’s tradition sanctions.’ Thus one’s peers will say, ‘do not eat green berries.’ Following the general rule in this case will, on the whole, prevent the young from having painful experiences (as adults believe, but not the young, most of the time unripe berries cause stomach pains). Following the general rule will save a lot of effort for the young in many domains; they do not have to work out everything from first principles, or on the basis of direct experience. So here is one ground for believing something; it is picked up on the basis of one’s cultural inheritance on the basis of following a general rule about believing what one’s peers, or culture, sanctions. One might say that one’s cultural context is a strong casual factor in bring about what one believes. However, it is important to note that there is no guarantee that the beliefs one picks up are true or false; if one is lucky one might pick up largely true beliefs, but there is nothing in this process that guarantees that one picks up only truths. In the past people picked up, in much the same way, the belief that every 24 hours the Sun orbits a stationary Earth, and experience seemed to fit quite well with this. But now the same processes of cultural belief transmission transmits a different belief, namely, that the Earth rotates daily on its axis. Mere social transmission of a belief is no guarantee of the correctness of the belief.

There are other ways in which one can pick up a belief about, say, the Earth’s daily motion. One might ask: ‘Did you get the belief about the Earth’s daily motion on the basis of evidence, or reasons? If so, what is the evidence and how good is it as evidence?’ If these questions are put to students, very few can offer any reasons or evidence. One quite common response is to say that astronauts have flown beyond the Earth and looked back and seen it rotating. Well, that is evidence of a sort. But what was the evidence before the astronauts went up? The very science of rocket-launching is based on the supposition that the Earth is rotating. So what did earlier scientists say the evidence was? At this point, the students are not able to say with any degree of confidence what the evidence is. So do they *know* that the Earth rotates or do they merely *believe* (or merely have an unfounded *opinion*)?

We now come to the central question to ask here: ‘What is the difference between belief and knowledge?’ Beliefs can be true or false, and they can be held without reason or evidence, or with some evidence that need not be very compelling for the truth. The big difference lies in the role evidence or justification plays in turning the mere belief into knowledge.

This classical definition of knowledge (first proposed by the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato) proposes the following. A person knows that p (where p is any proposition, say, that $2+2=4$, or the Earth rotates daily on its axis and so on for the infinity of propositions that can be formed) if and only if the following three conditions hold:

1. a person has a belief that p (say, the Earth rotates daily on its axis).
2. the belief p is true.
3. the person's belief that p has been subject to a critical inquiry, which is reliable for the truth; that is, the person has sought out and obtained evidence (or justification or reasons), which is sufficient for the truth of p .

More will be said of this in the next section. But here we need to distinguish between two broad ways in which we can come to know something.

First, there is the kind of knowledge which is based on direct perceptual experience, without the appeal to any further evidence. This arises in cases where one observes by looking, hearing, feeling, and the like (providing of course that one's perceptual apparatus is working properly and you are not drunk or on drugs). Thus, one has the auditory perceptual experience of, say, a viola sounding, and then one believes, and so knows, that a viola is sounding (without further appeal to evidence); or one has the visual experience of a green leaf and then one believes, and so knows, that the leaf is green (without further evidence), and so on. Perhaps you can readily agree with the second of these examples. (You might ask: How could one not have a belief that the leaf is green in this context of perception?). But you might have doubts about the first; one can have viola experiences, but not have the belief that it is a viola sounding. It might take a good deal of discrimination on the part of people not acquainted with stringed instruments to make this judgement. Answering these, and other questions, are all part of important issues to be raised in theories about our knowledge based on direct perception. They involve matters to do with the important difference between perception and conception (a matter which we cannot go into here). The main point of introducing these matters is to point out that there are kinds of knowledge that we have based on direct perceptual observation that do not require further evidence; conceptualized experience is enough.

Second, knowledge can be obtained by inference from other things we know. Such inferential knowledge is obtained when your belief is subject to a critical inquiry, using either common sense methods of inquiry or scientific methods. And the inquiry has to be good enough to take you to the truth of what you believe. Such is the case in our claim to know that the Earth rotates on its axis daily, or our claims to know based on evidence heard in a court of law, or the claim to know that eating oranges or lemons will prevent scurvy.

Anti-thesis 3: There are a number of anti-theses that can arise at this point. The first is a broad *scepticism* that denies that there is any difference between belief and knowledge; the attempt at finding evidence is simply unavailing or if some is found it is without compelling force. Second, a *dogmatic* stance simply says that we should eschew all attempts to find evidence and stay with the beliefs we have. Third, there is *relativism*: the view that there are beliefs that are true relative to you, beliefs that

are true relative to me, and beliefs that are true relative to others; there can never be any beliefs that are objectively true for all. So those who think there is such a thing as knowledge as distinct from belief will have to combat views such as scepticism, dogmatism and relativism amongst others, a task not undertaken here.

Thesis 4: Knowledge is something you personally have to get!

I am going to qualify this thesis a bit later. But here is a point that constructivists in science education and realists have in common. Constructivists want to say that knowers have to construct their own knowledge. And I agree with this in the following sense. Take the belief that the Earth rotates daily. I said that one can turn this belief into knowledge by subjecting it to critical inquiry, by justifying it, or by finding reasons and evidence. Here there are a lot of things you have to do to be a knower: conduct an inquiry, get a justification, find reasons and evidence. You have to do it if you, personally, are to know. Maybe others can help. But in the long run for you personally to know, you have to do a lot of work! Moreover, it cannot be any old inquiry or evidence or reasoning. It has to be of the right sort that takes you to the truth. So yes, in a certain sense, we are active makers of knowledge and not passive recipients. This is strong requirement on knowledge indeed. It puts the entire onus on you to become a knower. Without it you simply do not know even though you may believe.

Some might argue that this is too strong. As mentioned in setting out thesis 3, there are lots of things in science and everyday life that we take on the say-so of others. And we are right to do so. We are all told and perhaps believe, say, that the ratio of mass to the charge on an electron is a constant and does not vary (this is one outcome of Millikan's oil-drop experiment). But have any of us shown this? No, none of us, certainly not me, have ever subjected it to critical scrutiny. So, on this definition of knowledge we do not know this. But perhaps there is a somewhat weaker notion of knowing that does not require us to have conducted an inquiry or to have found the evidence.

The weaker sense of knowledge is this. Suppose a few scientists work out, say, that the mass/charge ratio for electrons is a constant (and they even get a value for it within a degree of error). Well, there are a lot of other scientists who do not get involved in this kind of work; and the rest of us non-scientists do not get involved in this either. Yet we can come to believe this, either by reading about it, or hearing about it, or being taught it.

In the light of this, some propose a less demanding account of knowledge; you do not have to work it all out yourself. Rather, they put emphasis on the idea of your getting your belief by a reliable process of belief formation. Thus, a second quick definition of knowledge says: A person knows that p = the belief that p is true and is formed by a reliable process, that is, reliable for the truth. Justification arises when you use processes that are reliable for the truth.

There are many such reliable processes. Perception is, on the whole, reliable; as is inference making. But wishing that something be so and believing it on that basis is not a process that is reliable for the truth. What about institutional processes like getting a paper researched, peer reviewed, published and disseminated? Such processes might well be highly reliable but maybe not 100% reliable all the time. What this suggests

is that what you pick up from others could count as knowledge providing the means whereby you get it is a reliable institutional process for forming and maintaining beliefs. Note that this kind of process is an institutional process; the reliable process theory does allow for social elements. But not all the reliable belief forming processes need be social, so this is a weak kind of social involvement. It is not a strong, constant involvement of the social like that proposed in the Strong Programme.

Here we have two different theories of knowledge; where they differ is over the kind of justification required. One appeals to foundations in further observations; the other appeals to belief-forming processes that are reliable for the truth. But what they are both agreed upon is that there is a justification to be found; the idea of justification has not been abandoned, but modified.

Anti-thesis 4: Rival views attack the idea of justification, or critical methods of inquiry. The Strong programme does this, as does Foucault's power/knowledge doctrine; justification is not even mentioned by Foucault. In another way, Wittgenstein also attacks the idea of justification. He sees all knowledge taking place in a language game. And he says of a language game: "it is not based on any grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life" (Wittgenstein, 1975, p. 559) This is to rest all knowledge on conventions, on our practices or on our language games with no further grounding in anything rational. This seems to me to be a very conservative approach and it explicitly avoids any attempt to look for the justification of a practice. After all, why accept a practice without subjecting it to scrutiny? The reliability theory of knowledge does provide a ground for the acceptance of our practices; they have to be reliable for the truth.

Thesis 5: Truth and how the world is.

Truth is an important feature of our commonsense claims about the world and for our scientific theories. It is even an essential part of the notion of knowledge (as set out in both the classical and reliabilist theories of knowledge). As such, it is important for knowledge and is at the heart of what we take the aim for education to be. But what is truth?

The realist conception of truth is famously stated by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* (1011b25-26): "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." To give a simple illustration, if one says 'it is raining now' but it is not, then one has said something false. If, in the same situation, another says 'it is not raining now' then they say something true. Alas, Aristotle's important message about truth has got lost in the fog of misunderstanding that has prevailed in much modern philosophy that has informed education theory (but luckily not all!).

Anti-thesis 5: Truth is unknowable and/or irrelevant and is to be replaced by something else. A realist view of truth says, at least, that it is the way the world is that makes our statements true or false. An anti-realist view of truth is one that denies that the world can play such a central role for truth and so it gets replaced by something else. Von Glasersfeld (1993), who follows Piaget in this respect, says as much: "Truth is an act of faith. . . . Constructivism replaces the notion of truth with that of viability,

which does not refer to anything outside the experiential field” (p. 27). One immediate problem is to give an account of viability without appealing to the notion of truth. But this might be hard to do, since the viability of the claim will depend on its being correct; incorrect claims turn out not to be very viable at all.

Piaget is a complex case to unravel. On the one hand he wants to claim that there is a real world out there that science investigates; he also takes his theory of biological evolution realistically. But then he also wants to claim that knowledge is essentially construction (a theme of section 23.1 of Piaget 1971) and that knowledge and truth are not a copy of reality. It is hard to see how Piaget can hold all of these claims, so he is a complicated case with which to deal. But what is clear is that he rejects the copy theory of truth. What does he mean by ‘copying’? Is he trying to reject Aristotle’s theory? But it does not mention copying at all (though sometimes it is said to be a correspondence theory of truth). Maybe it is the ‘copy’ metaphor that misleads Piaget. In what sense does the sentence ‘there are people in the room’ copy this room in order to be true? The metaphor creaks considerably. Whatever the case, his followers, such as von Glasersfeld, also reject the copy theory of truth and even reject the whole idea of truth altogether in favour of talk of our conceptual structures being viable. But being viable seems to indicate that somewhere something has been got right, that is, truth re-enters.

Other kinds of sociologists of knowledge also give an anti-realist account of truth that I can sum up as follows: A statement p is true = p is what we all agree to; or p is a negotiated belief that is the outcome of dispute resolution. The influential philosopher Richard Rorty (1980) also adopted a view like this saying: ‘true’ means “what you can defend against all-comers” (p. 308) and that a person S knows that p is just “a remark about the status of S ’s reports amongst his peers” (p. 175).

Some have summarised the Rorty position on truth as follows: the true is what your contemporaries will let you get away with, and so the false is what your contemporaries will not let you get away with! But, alas, this cannot be right. Galileo said that the Earth moves; and he was right, that is, he said something true. But his contemporaries did not let him get away with that and made him recant it and put him under house arrest. And again just about everyone before Copernicus said that the Earth was stationary; their contemporaries let them get away with that but they were wrong to do so. Unless of course you are a complete relativist about truth, in which case anything goes!

To sum up, there are a number of theories of knowledge and truth that have been taken to inform education. I have tried to indicate some of them as theses and antitheses. In many respects, I do not think that theories of learning need get caught up in these issues. But they have, and so it is necessary at least to try to keep the account of what has gone on reasonably clear.

Thesis 6: Knowledge involves truth and justificatory evidence.

We have considered the classical conception of knowledge as justified true belief. We have also considered cases in which we have knowledge but no justification is necessary (i.e., reports based on direct perceptual experience). We also considered a different conception of knowledge as a belief formed by a process that is reliable for

the truth. Both conceptions of knowledge involve truth; where they differ is how they spell out the justification condition. Importantly, they both agree that some kind of justification condition is necessary; the task that both are agreed upon is to work out how the justification is to be understood.

We have also considered the case where knowledge gained by some experts (the ‘producers’) is then transmitted to non-experts (the ‘receivers’) who may not have knowledge in the same way; rather they merely pick up a true belief (by reading or hearing about it) without working through the justification themselves. The justification remains with the expert producers who uncovered the knowledge but not with those who are merely receivers of what is knowledge for others. In such a situation, the receivers can be appropriately said to be receivers, not of knowledge, but of information. This marks an important distinction between knowledge on the one hand and information on the other. In the case just described, the information that *p* will be true because it originates in expert producers of knowledge and so the claim that *p* must be true. But there are also cases where what the receivers pick up are the beliefs of others; so the information they acquire may be not be true and can be false. The important point here is that information, like beliefs, may be true or false; there is no guarantee of truth as in the case of knowledge (which by definition must be true).

Now what has all of this to do with power? The notion of power has not been mentioned. If one considers the case of knowledge as justified true belief, then knowledge is a normative concept. Normativity arises from the fact that it involves beliefs that have gone through a critical process, which involves providing a sufficient *justification* for truth. The normative notion here is that of *justification*, a kind of reasoning. There is nothing involving power in this process; it involves only our capacity to reason, and reasoning is not a power relation (though some might mistakenly think it to be so). Anybody can go through a (hopefully, correct) reasoning process to work out the justification for any belief they hold on grounds that go beyond what they can observe. But in doing so, the only power involved is their ability or capacity, to reason.

Anti-Thesis 6: Knowledge is Power. Michel Foucault is fond of talking about power/knowledge and even power/truth (Foucault, 1980). This idea has unhappily entered into theories of education. So what does ‘/’ mean? What is the connection between knowledge and power? There is no essential connection on the account of knowledge given here. And the same applies for truth; there is no essential link between truth and power. The understanding of truth (see the definition given from Aristotle) and the understanding of knowledge (as say justified true belief) are quite independent of power. It is a confusion to regard them as so linked. Part of the confusion is engendered by the free floating ‘/’, which can be made to mean whatever one likes (as Foucault seems to indicate in some places). But then in many cases the claim that power is involved is mistaken. For Foucault the ‘/’ is a placeholder for some alleged connection between knowledge and power, but what connection often remains obscure.

More charitably, perhaps ‘/’ can be understood as a non-essential (contingent) empirical connection. It so happens that if some people have a bit of knowledge then they are empowered in certain ways. Thus, if a person knows as the result of experimentation that taking oranges or lemons will prevent scurvy occurring, then they are empowered

in certain ways that they would not have been before. James Lind was one of the first to show in the 1750s that citrus fruits can prevent, and even cure, scurvy—a matter not always taken up by the British Admiralty but recognised by James Cook. James Lind first provided the justification for this claim (he did a small controlled experiment) and was in the position to transmit the knowledge to others. Perhaps others such as Cook picked this up as a piece of knowledge, but more likely, since he did no experiment of the sort Lind carried out, he did not strictly acquire knowledge but acquired a true belief. So in this sense Lind was empowered by what he knew when he gave sailors citrus fruits to eat and Cook was empowered by a truth when he gave (even forced) sailors to have a certain kind of diet.

Is this what Foucault's power/knowledge doctrine comes to? If so, it is one with which we can agree; but understood in a stronger way it is false. In fact, the weaker form of the doctrine was first advanced a long time before by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who also said "power is knowledge" but he did not mean that they were identical despite the form of language used (see Urbach 1987, pp. 59-60). What he meant was that if we acquire a piece of knowledge, then we are able to do things with it and have an outcome that is highly likely to be successful. In contrast, if we lack knowledge then, at least if we have a truth, we can also get success (a point made a long time ago by Plato). But if we acquire a belief that is false then success is not guaranteed – in fact it is highly unlikely. So in this weak sense, knowledge can empower us, as can true beliefs, but power has nothing essentially to do with the nature of knowledge, or truth. At best, it is a kind of 'by-product' that some pieces of knowledge can have for us humans when we decide to use it in some way.

The upshot of the above discussion is that knowledge is a normative notion that involves providing a justification or evidence or reason for what we believe. And what we believe must be true. This is something that sociologists of knowledge often do not recognise. Sure, there may be social causes of belief (of the sort investigated by advocates of the Strong Programme). But the causes of knowledge are not social; they are the rational normative justifications that we need to provide for ourselves. If the causes of one's belief are social then one does not thereby have knowledge. The rational and the social (including power relations) are at odds with one another in this respect. If one has knowledge that, say, citrus fruit prevents scurvy, then power is irrelevant to its being knowledge; if one comes to believe that citrus fruit prevents scurvy as a result of power relations (say an advertising blitz), then one might have a belief but not knowledge.

The same applies to Foucault's knowledge/power doctrine. Power is irrelevant to something being known; and if one gets a belief by means of power it cannot be knowledge. In this manner, knowledge and power are exclusive of one another. Power is mistakenly assumed to be an essential part of knowledge when it is not. At best, it is an accompanying consequence of having some knowledge. But note that there are quite a number of pieces of knowledge we have that do not empower us as far as practical actions are concerned.

Conclusion

The realist idea that there is a physical and biological world that is mind-independent (and a social and psychological world aspects of which are mind dependent) is an important part of our understanding of science as well as our common sense knowledge of the world. Another part of science and our commonsense ways of thinking is that there are quite objective normative methods for carrying out any investigation. The idea that there are no normative methods of justification and that knowledge involves either social or power relations really undermines the idea of knowledge. To think this is a mistake. What the above considerations set out are the positive theses, which favour both realism and the normativity of knowledge while the anti-theses do not. Arguing the case for the theses, and against the anti-theses, is an important part of a realist and rationalist conception of knowledge.

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Commercialising higher education: lessons from Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh

Abstract

This article investigates potential changes to student identities when the credit system replaces the fixed study plan in Vietnamese higher education. It starts with explaining the reasons for introducing the credit system in Vietnam, before analysing Bernstein's concepts of *singulars*, *regions*, and *generic modes* as explanatory bases for students' identity formation. Based on this theoretical frame, together with a review of the particular history of the Vietnamese higher education system, the article problematises claims made by the Vietnamese government about the benefits of a credit system. Although the article has a narrow focus, the argument found here can be generalised to both developed and developing countries where the education system is increasingly influenced by market forces.

Introduction

The world is witnessing a large-scale restructuring and transformation of education systems in many countries. In the words of Ball (2003), "[a]n unstable, uneven but apparently unstoppable flood of closely inter-related reform ideas is permeating and reorienting education systems in diverse social and political locations which have very different histories" (p. 215). One of the reform trends detected in higher education is the introduction of various forms of student choice and other market-like mechanisms (Levin, 1997). This article will focus on one of these popular reform ideas: the use of the credit system at tertiary level, examined here in a specific country: Vietnam. The article will serve two main purposes: first, to investigate potential changes to student identities when one knowledge structure (supported by the fixed, full-year study plan) is replaced by another (supported by the credit system); second, the article will locate the education reform in the country's socio-political environment. The first goal will use the English sociologist, Basil Bernstein's (2000) concepts of *singulars*, *regions*, and *generic modes*. The second goal will employ the dichotomy of *intrinsic* and *institutional logics* in education coined by Raffe (1992) and Young (2003).

The article is developed in three sections: (i) The reasons that validate the introduction of a credit system for the Vietnamese higher education, (ii) Bernstein's concepts as explanatory bases for students' identity formation, (iii) potential problems that arise when a credit system is adopted in the context of Vietnam. Although the focus is on the implementation of a credit system in Vietnamese higher education, I believe the theoretical frame that justifies the argument can be generalised to other countries, both

developed and developing, that are facing similar changes. Vietnam serves as a case study for problems in an education system that is increasingly influenced by market forces, which resonates with the situation found in many other countries.

Rationale for adopting a credit accumulation and transfer system

Pressures for reforms from international organisations

Both external and internal pressures for embracing a credit system in higher education can be found in Vietnam. To begin with, the education policy formation process in Vietnam comes under the influence of supra-national organisations. Two of the most prominent are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the World Bank. Vietnam has been an active member of ASEAN since its admission to the association in 1995. Although education initiatives, projects, or cooperative ventures are taken by ASEAN members on a voluntary basis, there is a convergence in higher education trends amongst the members. For example, the plan to extend the higher education sector by encouraging the involvement of the private sector, along with various quality assurance schemes are not only on the Vietnamese reform agenda. These policies may be seen in other ASEAN neighbours such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines (Welch, 2007).

The credit system seems to be another example of the ASEAN higher education convergence. Although no universities in the region are obliged to take up the credit system scheme, the ASEAN University Network (AUN) has come up with a quality assurance project that consists of minimum standards to be achieved by universities involved in the project. One of the project's aims is to encourage the mobility of faculty members and students, "facilitating collaborative researches as well as credit transfer among AUN members and ultimately across the region" (ASEAN University Network, 2008). As can be expected, accepting and providing credit exemption or transfer between or among member universities has been used as one standard. What is more, another project named EU-ASEAN Credit Transfer (EACTS), which models on ECTS promoted by the European Union has been implemented to support student mobility and joint-award degree programmes. Although the initial number of ASEAN universities participating in this project is still modest, EACTS is likely to act as an agent to further accelerate the introduction of credit systems in ASEAN countries.

The second international organisation that has been influential in the shaping of higher education policies in Vietnam is the World Bank. While Vietnam has received funding and loans for education from other prominent actors such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Japanese official development assistance (ODA), the World Bank is the biggest fund provider for projects in higher education. Simply named Higher Education Project (1998-2007) and Second Higher Education Project (2007-2012), these two consecutive projects provide valuable financial resources that are badly needed for planned reforms in higher education. The World Bank, with its neo-liberal orientation and emphasis on open trade and privatisation (Olssen & Peters, 2005) will, without doubt, ensure that their funds are spent in specific ways, in accordance with the Bank's policies. Only by

accepting the Bank's recommendations or by proposing action plans that win the Bank's approval, can Vietnam secure future loans and grants from this major sponsor. With reference to the role of the World Bank in higher education development in Vietnam, Mason, Arnove, and Sutton (2001) remark:

Among the objectives to be met by a multi-million dollar loan from the World Bank is to "increase coherence, flexibility, and responsiveness of higher education to the changing demands of society and the market economy" (World Bank 1997). Inasmuch as financial resources are so desperately needed to improve the quality of education in Vietnam and an organization such as the World Bank represents one of the few agencies that can provide such resources, it is likely that educational reforms in Vietnam will, at least through the early part of the next century, include measures to decentralize the educational system and align it with the demands of their emerging market economy. From what we have seen in recent years, one aspect of those reforms will certainly be a credit-based system of higher education. (p. 129)

Pressures for reforms from Vietnamese society

While influences of international organisations on the education policy formation process might be felt at a rather abstract level, calls for reforms are more audible from within Vietnamese society. The reasons for education reforms in Vietnam reflect both obstacles that are faced by all developing countries, and those that are typical in the case of Vietnam. Typical problems in developing countries include dilapidated buildings and facilities, obsolete curricula, or under-qualified administrative and teaching staff. Other weaknesses are the legacies of various influences that are particular to the Vietnamese history, which shall be discussed in more detail.

Economic rationale

The first rationale often quoted in Vietnam for educational reforms is the incongruity between the current quality of higher education output and the demand for a knowledgeable and a well-qualified work force required by rapid economic developments. In particular, following the Soviet model, the curricula used in Vietnamese universities are extremely rigid and all are expressed in the form of full-year programmes. In most cases, these programmes are highly specialised and focus their attention on scientific knowledge. Thus, most graduates from Vietnamese universities, though they may be experts in their specialised subjects, are considered unemployable and not ready for the 'real' world.

The ivory tower of academe with its sluggish response to swift changes in Vietnamese society contrasts with rapid economic growth the World Bank has referred to as "one of the most spectacular success stories in economic development" (World Bank, 2008). Economic growth is high on the development agenda of all developing countries. However, for a booming economy like Vietnam, it is all the more crucial to address the urgent need for young and talented workers. Vietnam is a transitional economy that has changed from a centrally planned economy to a 'socialist-oriented

market economy' since 1986. As a socialist country, Vietnam experienced the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist bloc at the end of the 1980s as a shock. This event led to a loss of Vietnam's traditional trading partners, as well as the loss of aid from the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), on which Vietnam had relied heavily.

This economic difficulty was further exasperated by the fact that until 1993 Vietnam was denied foreign aid and loans as a result of the trade embargo imposed by the United States after the Vietnam War (Zhu & Fahey, 1999, p. 179). To lift the country from the mounting economic stagnation, the Communist Party opened its economy to private and foreign companies in 1986. This date enters contemporary Vietnamese history as a particularly important milestone. It was when the Sixth Party Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam formally abandoned Marxist economic planning and began introducing market elements as part of a broad economic reform package called *Đổi mới* (Renovation). From that time the economy blossomed, with real GDP growth of 7.3% annually during 1995 – 2005. Needless to say, this fast-paced development has required human resources greater in quantity and quality.

Great demand for higher education in the society

The education reforms also stems from the inability of the current higher education system to accommodate the voluminous demand for higher education in the society. There are two explanations for this. First, the percentage of young people in Vietnam is high. Over half of the Vietnamese population is under the age of 25 (Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency, 2008). And although the Vietnamese education system in general has seen remarkable expansions in recent years (e.g., from 1999 to 2006 the number of universities and colleges grew 101% and 118% respectively according to the Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2007), this expansion has not kept up with the number of students who want to go to university. In fact, only around 10% of students who have the desire to study at higher education are accepted into universities and colleges every year (Doan, 2004; Hayden & Lam, 2006). This number is surprisingly low, and is behind the prediction of the large-scale expansion of tertiary education in the future.

Other developing countries also experience a surge in higher education demand due to their youthful age structure. There is a second reason, however, that makes demand for higher education a burning issue in Vietnam, one cultivated in the Vietnamese culture itself. Vietnam belongs to the group of countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore that are heavily influenced by Confucianism. Confucianism supports a hierarchical patriarchal order and emphasises hard work, respect for elders, discipline, and education. These values are said to encourage Asian parents generally, and Vietnamese parents particularly, to invest more in their children's education (Kim, 2002). The appreciation of academic knowledge leads to a widely held belief in Vietnam that education is the most feasible means for social mobility. Vietnam is an agricultural country with around 60-70% of its population living in rural areas (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper, 2008), and higher education is considered by many farmers and their children as the chance to escape poverty.

The impact of Confucianism on higher education demand is made more evident in one study by Kim (2002) where she compares the academic achievements of Vietnamese and their Cambodian neighbours in the United States of America. She found that the appreciation of education, the family structure, and the collectivism culture inherited from Confucianism led to more involvement from Vietnamese parents in their children's studies. While Cambodian parents consider the mastery of various academic subjects as a predetermined disposition, which not all children possess, and, therefore, view school study as something that cannot be forced on a child, Vietnamese parents value effort and tend to push their children academically. Thus, it is suggested that the Cambodians do not have the same degree of social and family solidarity as the Vietnamese and that Cambodian children may not receive the same amount of pressure to do well in school as Vietnamese children.

The overall picture of higher education in Vietnam painted above explains the enthusiastic welcome for a credit transfer and accumulation system by the Vietnamese government, which can be seen as an obvious strategy for changing an outdated and sluggish higher education system. It appears to offer just what the current system lacks: flexibility, multi-disciplinary, market-orientation and learner-centredness. But there is considerable difference between the philosophy behind a credit system and the well-founded teacher-centredness in teaching and learning methods. The latter is a legacy of Confucianism that requires a theory that can illuminate the possible changes to projected identities of learners when the more traditional knowledge acquisition route is replaced by credit accumulation and transfer. For this I draw on Basil Bernstein's analysis of *singulars*, *regions* and *generic modes*.

Singulars, regions and generic modes as explanatory bases for identity formation

Definitions of singulars, regions, and generic modes

Bernstein (2000) defines singulars as:

Knowledge structures whose creators have appropriated a space to give themselves a unique name, a specialised discrete discourse with its own intellectual field of texts, practices, rules of entry, examinations, licenses to practice, distribution of rewards and punishments (physics, chemistry, history, economics, psychology, etc.). Singulars are, on the whole, narcissistic, oriented to their own development, protected by strong boundaries and hierarchies. (p. 52)

When singulars are recontextualised and combined to form supra-disciplinary units, these are called *regions*. Classical examples of regions include engineering, medicine, architecture, while more contemporary ones are cognitive science, management, business studies, communications, and media. The selection of singulars to be incorporated in a region depends on the recontextualisation principle and its social base. Thus, as time goes by a region can be extended to embrace newly introduced singulars. Regions are considered the 'interface' between singulars and the technologies they make possible (Bernstein, 2000) with projected orientation to the external market for their output, leading to a necessary "weakening of the strength of the classification of discourses and their entailed narcissistic identities" (p. 52).

Generic modes, or what Beck and Young (2005) later term ‘genericism,’ are formed and distributed outside, and are independent of the formal pedagogic curriculum. Although originated in further education, generic modes have extended much more widely, “partly in response to the perceived need to functionalise education for a world in which futures are held to be increasingly unpredictable and where the capacity to react rapidly and appropriately to changing market demands is at a premium” (Beck, 2002, p. 23). Bernstein (2000) elaborates on the concept:

Generic modes... are based on a new concept of ‘work’ and ‘life’... which might be called ‘short-termism.’ This is where a skill, task, area of work undergoes continuous development, disappearance or replacement . . . Under these circumstances it is considered that a vital new ability must be developed: ‘trainability’, the ability to profit from continuous pedagogic re-formations and so cope with the new requirements of ‘work’ and ‘life’. These . . . it is hoped, will realise a flexible transferable potential rather than specific performances. Thus generic modes have their deep structure in the concept of ‘trainability.’
(p. 59)

The concept of ‘trainability’ or the more recent buzz notion of ‘learning to learn’, lies at the core of genericism. Generic models are normally encountered in terms such as key and core skills, problem solving, teamwork, and so on which are supposed to be applicable to all subjects and fields of practice (Young, 2008).

Singulars, regions, and generic modes as explanatory bases for identity formation

So how does Bernstein’s classification of knowledge base provide insights into the potential changes to learners’ identities once a credit system is implemented? Bernstein contends that singulars create strong inner commitments “centred in the perceived intrinsic value of their specific knowledge domains” (Beck & Young, 2005, p. 185), concentrating on the “socialisation into subject loyalty” (Bernstein, 1971, p. 56):

The sacred face [of singulars] sets them apart, legitimises their otherness and creates dedicated identities with no reference other than their calling . . . From this point of view singulars develop strong, autonomous self-sealing and narcissistic identities.
(Bernstein, 2000, pp. 54-55)

Bernstein accounts for the increasingly weakened insulations between education and production in the last few decades of the twentieth century by demonstrating how regions are progressively replacing singulars. He conceives of this development as a response to the market conditions of autonomous higher education institutions, rather than as being politically imposed (Beck, 2002). With reference to identity building, while singulars ‘face inwards’, regions are reckoned to face both inwards towards singular, and outwards “towards external fields of practice” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 55). Of great importance to identity formation is the increasing dependence of regions on external requirements from related fields and the market. Influenced areas include not only the contents of regions, but also the pace and directions of change (Beck & Young, 2005). The consequences of these influences to identity formation are far-reaching,

and can lead to what Beck & Young term “an increasing flexibilization of the self” (p. 189):

Identities here are what they are, and what they will become, as a consequence of the projection of that knowledge [required knowledge in external fields] as a practice in some context. And the future of that context will regulate the identity. The volatility of that context will control the nature of the regionalisation of the knowledge and thus the projected identity. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 55, original emphasis, my added explanation in square brackets)

Regionalisation raises the extrinsic above the intrinsic, resulting in a steady decline of academic autonomy, albeit with uneven impacts among prestigious and lower-status institutions, as well as among different fields (Beck & Young, 2005).

The third pedagogic mode in discussion is genericism. In terms of identity, Bernstein contends that ‘trainability’, the concept underlying generic modes, seems empty: “an emptiness which makes the concept self-referential and thus excluding” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 59). It is necessarily empty and self-referential because its whole point is the promotion of responsiveness to whatever new concepts and practices appear next. It is excluding because it lacks intrinsic contents to allow recognition and differentiation. Genericism detaches itself from the long-established professional and academic identities that are “centred in relatively stable identifications with (and loyalties to) clearly defined knowledge *traditions* that ‘partook of the sacred’ yet that were linked to practices in ‘the world’” (Beck & Young, 2005, p. 191). Bernstein goes on to argue that the loss of recognition and differentiation produced by genericism must be filled with something so that the actor can ‘recognise him/herself and others’. His conjecture is that identities will likely be driven by “the materialities of consumption, by its distributions, by its absences” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 59). To put it differently, considerably stable identities with inner commitments, which were previously forged through subject loyalty, will gradually be substituted with short-term instrumentalities. In this way, the profane outer is likely to become the inner (Beck, 2002, p. 624). Bernstein (2000) concludes his essay on pedagogic models with a rather pessimistic remark:

The specialised recontextualising field [of generic modes] produces and reproduces imaginary concepts of work and life that abstract such experiences from the power relations of their lived conditions and negate the possibilities of understanding and criticism. (p. 59)

Potential perils of adopting a credit system in the Vietnamese context

In order to analyse the Vietnamese government’s reasons in favour of a credit accumulation and transfer system, I shall refer to the distinction between the *intrinsic* and *institutional logics* of education reforms. This dyad was first introduced by Raffé (1992) in his study of modularisation, and then taken a step further by Young (2003) by separating the *macro* and *micro* aspects of each type of logic. *Intrinsic logics* refer to reasons for implementing a reform that retain their credibility regardless of the actual context in which a reform happens. It is the intrinsic logics that are often raised to defend the introduction of a certain reform. They also form the basis for arguments for

or against implementing reforms. For example, some intrinsic logics of credit systems are the flexibility they create for students, the greater access to academic programmes, and the increased relevance of students' knowledge to the world of work. *Institutional logics* refers "to the social, political and institutional contexts, and the divisions, power relations and interests which constitute them and the role that they will play in how (and whether) any reform is implemented" (Young, 2003, p. 201). Institutional logics can be further categorised into *macro* and *micro* aspects. Macro aspects are shown to have observable effects on education reforms, examples of which are forms of stratification, power relations, and institutional structures. On the other hand, micro aspects act as the determining factor for processes like qualification or learning to take place. The importance of distinguishing between the intrinsic and institutional logics of reforms lies in the observation that while governments usually pay due attention to avowed intrinsic logics, they tend to neglect both aspects of institutional logics (Young, 2003).

As can be expected, intrinsic logics of a credit transfer and accumulation system are often used by the Vietnamese authorities to support the universal implementation of such a system for Vietnamese higher education. In other words, the reasons for endorsing a credit system, as well as judgements and scepticisms about its credibility all come under the rationale for or against the use of credit systems that do not take into account other factors in the actual context of application. The line of reasoning for the endorsement of a credit system in Vietnamese universities and colleges is quite similar to those found in other countries. What the government expects from a credit system is:

- *Flexibility*. Students can choose which subjects to study and when to study them. Students that are capable can graduate earlier, and those who need more time to complete courses can do so at their pace.
- *Access*. Credit systems make possible training routes that may not be available in the former system to 'unconventional' students with extra responsibility such as jobs or children. Depending on their conditions, students can also choose to exit or enter the system at different points.
- *Transferability*. Students can move between different disciplines within one institution or between two different ones, choosing double majors or changing their programmes without having to repeat all modules.
- *Relevance*. As institutions can omit or add new modules more easily in a credit system, they can quickly answer to the market's new demands, making programmes more relevant to the workplace.

However, when a credit system is put into practice, university staff have raised problems, that can be grouped under the micro and macro aspects of institutional logics, at conferences organised by MOET. Complaints are mainly spread over the infrastructure and facilities, the students and the lecturers, which I will only mention briefly. First, representatives from universities are concerned about the effectiveness of a credit system when their institutions do not have enough books, computers and other facilities to help lecturers teach effectively and for students to study independently. Second, and what seems to be the most worrisome of the raised concerns, is students'

inactiveness during the learning process. The vast majority of Vietnamese students are accustomed to being told what to do by teachers. They expect teachers to explain lessons to them, sometimes reciting parts of the lessons so they can take notes. Because they are so used to passive ways of acquiring knowledge, when students are suddenly given the chance to organise their own learning and to choose their own learning routes, they are at a loss. Third, lecturers may be unwilling to adapt to the credit system and opposed to the idea of being challenged by students in class. It should be noted that as part of the Confucianism influence, teachers in Vietnam, in general, consider it a loss of face if they are cannot provide satisfactory answers to their students' questions. Finally, there is the serious lack of experienced course advisors who know enough about their own fields as well as others available in their institutions and even in different institutions to guide students' learning.

In my opinion, the above-mentioned difficulties are valid claims in the current context of Vietnam, although they may appear to some as excuses to justify the universities' delay in rolling out the credit system at their institutions. Increased investment will, however, gradually fill the infrastructure gap. Students can be taught to be more active, although it is a daunting task that needs coordinating with the school sectors. Lecturers who are unwilling to update their knowledge and face up to new challenges can be dismissed. Course advisors and facilitators can be trained. All in all, the obstacles voiced do not attack the long-term validity of credit systems, and the credit system is still considered the way forward by both the government and HEIs. Thus, I shall now consider some other institutional logics that, from my viewpoint, explain the enduring unsuitability of a credit system in the context of Vietnam. For this purpose, Bernstein's analysis of singulars, regions and generic modes, and the potential changes to learners' identities when one knowledge structure is replaced by another, can offer a deeper and theoretically informed explanation.

First, a credit system is unlikely to create the generation of committed, well-educated specialists that Vietnam needs if the country is to progress. Here I would like to emphasise the *quality* of education outputs, which I think the hasty application of a credit system will not yield. Vietnam needs students who will be experts in their fields of study with high levels of reasoning and critical thinking while the credit system tends to mould students with no specific dedication, into unfixed and fragmented identities. Moreover, the early introduction of practical knowledge to students, which claims to make degrees more relevant to the real world, can also deprive students of the powerful knowledge that can transcend specific circumstances. This following comment from the head of the Marxism – Leninism Department in a reputable university in Hanoi offers powerful insight into this potential pitfall:

Modules designed for a credit system are necessarily general so that they can be transferred between departments and institutions. But I believe different institutions have different visions and missions, which cannot be assimilated. The Philosophy module designed for a language student necessitates different contents from one for a future engineer. Thus, I personally prefer teaching my own students to accepting transferred credits from other universities. The higher level education

gets, the more specialised the knowledge domain should become. I see the potential risk lurking in making modules more and more general. If this continues, one day students will not know what to do with what they learn because they cannot relate the knowledge they gain to their specific fields” (personal correspondence).

Second, the introduction of a credit accumulation and transfer system will result in a significantly deteriorated relationship between teachers and learners, which will, I believe, in the case of Vietnam, be detrimental to the teaching and learning process. As already mentioned, Vietnam belongs to the Confucian Heritage Culture group of countries that appreciate teachers highly. Vietnamese children are taught the Vietnamese proverbs, ‘Without teachers you can achieve nothing.’ They are also told ‘Learning to love and respect your teacher takes precedence over knowledge acquisition.’ Teachers, in the eyes of Vietnamese students, are not just people who teach. They are role models from whom one can learn righteous behaviour and the way to live. The teacher is treated with deference, even when the student is no longer at school, and this respect remains for life (Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006). In the case of Vietnam, it is fair to say that the bond between teachers and their students play a crucial part in assuring successful learning.

Without doubt, the deep penetration of a credit system into Vietnamese higher education system will significantly alter the current teacher–student relationship. Research from European countries has shown the pivotal role of the pedagogic relationship in effective learning (Fabos & Young, 1999 and Hall, 2001, cited in Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). Evidence from these studies suggests a reconceptualisation of teachers and students to ‘service providers’ and ‘consumers’ is likely to be corrosive on both sides of the relationship. If this is the case in European countries, there may be even more dramatic effects in Vietnam. With regard to the changes to student identities and citing literature from North America, Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) contend that, when encouraged to see themselves as customers, students are more likely to regard studying as a commercial transaction in which education success is a right they can insist on. Students who consider themselves as customers are also more likely to isolate themselves from the academic community and to think of themselves as passive receivers of the education process. Along with this comes a resistance to engage meaningfully into the learning process and a lost of responsibility for their learning. Gumport (2000) shares the same view (my added explanation in brackets): “This conception of students [as customers] drastically reduces the potential richness of teaching and learning relationships, inclinations toward mentoring and sponsorship, and students forging meaningful bonds with their peers” (p. 80). The ramifications of this disposition may be far-reaching. It may well hamper the qualities and attitudes required of autonomous and lifelong learners, an unwelcome situation in any economy, especially a developing one like Vietnam.

To conclude, Bernstein’s partition of *singulars*, *regions* and *generic modes* offers insights into the detriments that might be caused by the widespread application of a credit system to the Vietnamese higher education system. The analysis of terms coined by Bernstein shows how crucial the preservation of sacredness and otherness

among different knowledge categories is to students' identity formation. The strong classification among different knowledge fields will enable students to progress hierarchically on the knowledge ladder, permitting the development of more advanced cognitive skills. Bernstein's work in these areas also indicates the potential damage to students' knowledge acquisition and identity development processes that may occur when the higher education sector is affected by external factors.

Bernstein's forecast of uncommitted, unmotivated students with fragmented identities who cannot distinguish themselves from others when economic rationale and other external causes gain control over higher education has direct applications to the current Vietnamese education reform movement. In particular, one can find a strong connection between Bernstein's theoretical stand with the comment from the Marxism – Leninism professor quoted above. The realisation that the increasingly blurred boundaries among knowledge fields may one day lead to students not being able to relate the knowledge they gain to their specific fields may show the usefulness of Bernstein's complex terminology.

Economic factors have been gaining a strong foothold in education worldwide. However, there is a need to problematise the pursuit of short-term, economy-oriented goals based on market principles by the education sector in Vietnam; the adoption of a credit system being but one example. Education systems in countries like Japan, Korea, and Singapore, countries that have achieved remarkable economic successes, were not driven by the market and other economic factors. Increased efficiency in producing commodities does not necessarily go hand in hand with the commodification of education. On the contrary, it can be argued that the relative insulation of education systems from external forces will best ensure long-term economic prosperity. This is a lesson that Vietnam should heed.

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Promoting emotionally vulnerable subjects: The educational implications of an ‘epistemology of the emotions’

Kathryn Ecclestone

Abstract

A greater focus on emotion has emerged in social and education policy in growing numbers of countries around the world, responding to diverse perceptions of educational and social problems and proposed remedies offered by a range of interest groups. As part of a small body of critical work which challenges the long-running demise of realist forms of knowledge in education, this paper builds on earlier work by the author which has explored the ways in which contemporary political, professional and academic preoccupation with emotion, and its underlying images of the human and curriculum subject, have created an ‘epistemology of the emotions’. I focus here on the implications of these developments for forms of pedagogy and knowledge offered to students deemed to be ‘non-traditional’. Despite being highly unfashionable in sociological, political and philosophical theory, and in educational thinking, I argue that a humanist view of human subjectivity challenges this epistemology and raises new versions of old questions about forms of knowledge offered to those most socially and educationally disadvantaged.

Key words: emotional well-being; humanism; post-structuralism; psycho-social; therapeutic culture.

Introduction

State interest in fostering emotional and psychological well-being has emerged rapidly over the past ten years in the social and overseas policies of governments in Britain, other European states such as Belgium and Denmark, the United States, Singapore, Australia and Canada. Emotionally and psychologically-focused interventions, rooted in different branches of therapeutic, psychological, and psychiatric practice, and with different psychological rationales and claims, are becoming more prevalent in the legal systems, humanitarian and aid interventions and social policies of these countries (see Amsler, 2009; Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008; Furedi, 2003; Moon, 2009; Nolan 1998, 2009; Pupavac, 2001; Summerfield, 2004, 2009). Since May 2010, the advent of a new government in Britain indicates that notions of ‘emotional well-being’ are being subsumed within discourses of ‘resilience’, ‘moral and character development’ (see Leverhulme Trust 2010; Lexmond & Reeves, 2009).

In part, this shift in the British context reflects the way in which various interest groups promote very different concerns around the broad theme of ‘emotion’ in social

policy, with diverse and sometimes competing underlying aims. The widespread political, academic and public consensus that the state should intervene to develop emotional well-being in diverse areas of domestic social policy and international politics has been explored through an inter-disciplinary seminar series funded by the British Economic and Social Science Research Council, related journal articles and a book, and two small-scale empirical studies (Ecclestone, 2010a, b, in press-a, b, d; Ecclestone & Bailey, 2009; Ecclestone, Clack, Hayes & Pupavac, 2010, Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008). This article builds on a recent theoretical evaluation of the relationship between contemporary calls for more attention to emotion and changes to the curriculum in the British education system, their explicit and implicit images of the human subject, the sort of knowledge we believe enable humans to understand and challenge the world, and forms of knowledge deemed to be appropriate for particular groups and individuals (Ecclestone, in press-d). Although the article takes Britain as its focus, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that a) trends discussed here are emerging in policy and academic arenas in growing numbers of countries, including Australia and Singapore (although, of course, they take different cultural and political forms) and b) the implications of these trends for knowledge and images of the human subject remain largely unchallenged and therefore in need of much wider debate, both between academics from different disciplines, between academics, policy makers and practitioners, and between those groups in different countries.

In my attempt here to contribute to this debate, I first summarise briefly the main arguments in the British education system for more emotionally-tuned teaching, subject content and research. Second, I relate educational interest in emotion to broader philosophical and political disenchantment with traditional forms of knowledge and the universal human subject. Third, I identify some implications for the forms of knowledge and pedagogy that emerge from an ‘epistemology of the emotions’, blurring the boundaries between formal educational settings and our interior psychic worlds, and create a diminished view of the human subject. I conclude by reasserting a humanist view of human subjectivity as the basis for much needed debates about the types of knowledge offered to non-traditional students.

Educational concerns about emotional subjects

At the levels of policy and practice, concerns about emotion focus on two meanings of the ‘subject’. First is the human subject, and the social and individual factors believed to comprise the universal essence of humans in relation to understanding and changing both an internal world (a sense of self, as well as emotional and psychological responses to an external social and political world) and an external world. Second is the curriculum subject and ideas about what is or should be the foundation for particular forms of knowledge, how those forms of knowledge depict human experience, and offer what Young (2008, 2010) calls ‘epistemic access’ to ‘powerful knowledge’, through concepts, ways of thinking and a common language.

A relatively recent trend in education policy and practice, both in the UK and America is the powerful influence of American positive psychology as the basis for policy-sponsored developments for more attention to, and direct intervention in, emotion in

educational settings. This has created a significant shift in both academic research and popular thinking, from individual psychopathology and remedying emotional and mental health problems, towards identifying social and individual characteristics of subjective well-being and building on assets (see Eid and Larsen 2008; Seligman, Randal, Gilham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009). In America and Britain, this has led to a large expansion of universal and specialist interventions in educational settings, designed to train children in the measurable constructs of emotional well-being (stoicism, altruism, optimism, self-esteem, emotional literacy and emotional regulation, resilience and mindfulness (or being in the moment) and to bring these aspects of the self into the remit of formal assessment. A significant shift is from interventions for those deemed to have emotional problems and other groups deemed to be ‘at risk’ or ‘vulnerable’ towards the idea of universal prevention or ‘emotional inoculation’, building on strengths of those who are emotionally-well while including those who might not be. The idea that neuroscience offers convincing evidence for effective interventions is enthusiastically promoted (see Ecclestone, in press-a; Huppert, 2007; Layard, 2005; Layard, 2007; Seligman et al. 2009; Suissa, 2008). Such interventions parallel other emotionally-based activities and proposals for qualifications in areas such as personal, social and health education, relationships and parenting.

These developments are the latest manifestation of the inexorable rise of ideas from behavioural and cognitive psychology over the past hundred years, and the corresponding demise of sociological, religious and philosophical understandings of emotion (see Hendrick, 2009; Stewart, 2009). In this respect, the psychologisation of the curriculum and ideas about learning and learning is hardly new, indicating the need for historical analysis that illuminates the impact of different psychological fashions on ways of understanding human character and identity amongst educationalists, bureaucrats, health professionals, parents and young people (see Thomson, 2006).

In the British system, another influential constituency brings together professional associations, policy ‘think tanks’, children’s charities, parental groups and academics around two linked concerns. First is a widespread consensus that schools are outdated and irrelevant to a fast-changing world, requiring substantial changes to curriculum content, teaching and assessment in favour of generic personal and life skills in areas such as financial education, sustainability, health and citizenship (see Johnson et al., 2007). Second is the goal of inclusive forms of pedagogy and curriculum content for children and young people with various special needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties (e.g. Lewis & Norwich, 2005; Rayner, 1998). From both perspectives, schools need to move away from traditional subject disciplines, in favour of broader curriculum themes and an institutional ethos and inclusive teaching and assessment methods that develop ‘learning to learn’ or reflective skills, self-awareness, values and self-image and emotional literacy, and require teachers to regard their subjects as able to ‘deliver’ an increasing array of affective, personal and social outcomes (e.g. Antidote, 2007; Kirk & Broadhead, 2007; Weare, 2004).

In part, such arguments are the latest manifestation of a long-running view that formal education is alienating, outdated, inauthentic or merely boring, for a minority disaffected, disengaged and unable to succeed in traditional schooling. Yet, in the

British context, concerns about emotional well-being and the need to counter what is seen widely as an 'over-rational, over-tested' curriculum, create a view that this is true for most, if not all, children and young people. This goes beyond advocacy of specialist interventions and a more emotionally-focused education for a minority diagnosed with particular needs, to a fundamental change in ideas about what most learners are capable of, willing to put up with, and need. In this vein, as Michael Young notes, others go further to cast doubt on the fundamental social legitimacy of schools, the lack of a homogenous audience for education, and the epistemological security of any knowledge (see White, 2007; Young, 2010).

Reflecting another long-running debate in education, a third constituency seeks to counter the old 'Cartesian' binary of emotion/rationality, as part of what it sees as a break with rationalist or linguistic accounts of the self. From this perspective, teachers and researchers can understand better how to engage students as "fully functioning selves in their learning ... and to consider the affective dimensions of learning in ways which do not reduce to individual psychology, but instead preserve the idea of human beings with their full range of emergent responses" (Beard, Clegg & Smith. 2007, p. 235-6).

Within this broad set of interests, some hope to encourage emotional and spiritual reflection in order to counter an unhealthy emphasis on the rational, cognitive and measurable and discouraging self-obsession, whilst also embracing social concerns. This requires educational institutions not merely to develop students' knowledge and skills, and their critical understanding of inequality, but also to engage much more directly than in the past to the "identities, needs, values and life stories struggle and emotional grief and suffering involved in inequality" (Hyland, 2009, p. 129). Also within a liberal-radical tradition, others argue that teachers and students need to use psychodynamic methods and insights in order to understand the ways in which we all have tendencies towards "defensive reflexivity" and the need for a "stasis of identity" where early personal and educational failures leave many adults with 'subtle emotional blocks and difficulties that inhibit the openness and reflexivity that learning requires' (Hunt & West, 2009, p. 77).

From more radical political standpoints, some post-structural feminists regard liberal interest in the 'whole person' and the dominance of individualised psychological skills as equally unable to recognise the "psychic landscape" of class and the need to "work with emotions". From this perspective, we need to understand how the contemporary subject is formed through popular discourse, education and other life experiences, how those from oppressed groups invest emotionally in education, and how, in turn, "social and embodied forms of emotion structure the identity of subjects as well as come to inhabit the shaping of social structures" (Leathwood & Hey, 2009, p. 431). Building on sociological studies of class identities that are both shaped by, and found in, practices and accounts of practices, the "generative dynamic between thinking, feeling and practice" shows how "emotions and psychic responses to class and class inequalities contribute powerfully to the making of class" (Reay, 2005, p. 912). This requires researchers to relate the ways in which oppression is lived emotionally as well as socially, in order to understand the complexity of social reproduction and privilege. Drawing on radical

interpretations of Freudian psychoanalysis, via theorists such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, post-structural perspectives explore how the psychic landscapes of class and gender are manifested in the constant, embodied and felt experiences of everyday inequality both inside and outside everyday classroom practices and curriculum content, and aim to understand their effects on psychological or emotional capital, both inside and outside educational settings (see Hey, 2006; Leathwood & Hey, 2009).

Of course, the summary above cannot do justice to the educational and political commitments of different proponents (for more detailed analysis see Ecclestone, in press-a, b, c). Nevertheless, three salient points are relevant here. First, although the perspectives above reflect important differences in their diagnosis of intractable educational and social inequalities, they appear to coalesce around new generalisations about the human subject and its emotional and psychological needs. Second, these generalisations and needs are derived from concerns about disadvantaged or excluded groups and then extrapolated much more widely. Third, although perspectives informed by psychodynamic and psychotherapeutic ideas and by behavioural and positive psychology are not compatible at the level of psychological or political principles, pessimism about the persistent inequalities of formal education and traditional forms of knowledge enables a wider spectrum of psychologically and emotionally-oriented knowledge and associated pedagogies to be included than was the case in the past. This indicates that deeper underlying philosophical, cultural and political shifts are taking place.

New challenges to old forms of the curriculum and human subject

A more emotional focus to understanding students' 'needs' and barriers to learning and achievement, and subsequent injunctions to change curriculum content, teaching and assessment, are the latest turn in the blurring of boundaries between formal pedagogy and curriculum content, and everyday knowledge. According to Michael Young, this blurring is evident in growing numbers of education systems (Young, 2010). The philosophical roots of concerns to understand the self and its everyday experience as a route to understanding an external world are linked inextricably to political ideas in radical feminist and black movements. This section explores both strands, beginning with the educational shift towards socio-cultural and constructivist ideas which focus on processes, practices and meanings of learning, rather than questions about what curriculum knowledge is being participated (see Baldwin, 2010; Young 2008).

Through the widely cited ideas of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, constructivist theories resonate equally with perspectives that reject individual, psychological explanations for achievement within subject disciplines, and those which regard formal education as irrelevant and inauthentic. Constructivist theories encourage institutions and teachers to define authentic meanings and content of learning by drawing on experiences outside educational settings and formal subject knowledge. From this perspective, teachers and learners need to consider and discuss together how processes and 'communities of practice' shape identity, how meanings are 'co-constructed', and how coming to know oneself transforms or hinders 'identity' (see Baldwin, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 2001). This emphasises identity as a symbiotic process of self-awareness (or

‘reflexivity’) and ‘becoming’ and locates knowledge and pedagogy in the self and its participation within particular communities, rather than in externally-given, disciplinary knowledge.

Socio-cultural theories aim to counter the dualism between social and individual dimensions of learning, and to challenge over-emphasis on individual meaning, identity and participation by evaluating how structural conditions of inequality interact with other features of ‘context’ and ‘learning cultures’ to shape meaning, participation and ‘habitus’ (e.g. Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008). Nevertheless, knowledge and knowing in socio-cultural theories informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu do not, as Young points out, privilege subject knowledge. Instead, subjects are merely another ‘field’ in which ‘habitus’ and ‘horizons for action’ are created, struggled over and enacted, rather than objects for exploration in their own right (Young, 2008).

As Wenger observes, the popularity of constructivist and socio-cultural ideas have taken their originators by surprise (Wenger, 2010). Yet, while constructivist theorists might not adopt the perspectives on emotion discussed in the first section of this paper, two factors align them with concerns about the emotional human and curriculum subject. First, scepticism about attempts to objectify knowledge external to the self are the latest manifestation of a deeper political and philosophical antipathy to both the possibility and desirability of objective, external knowledge. There is not space here to do more than acknowledge briefly the historical stages through which the human subject demanded freedom from natural structures of social domination, expressed its social subjectivity through the rise of science and collective social engagement with knowledge as a way of acting on the world, and became profoundly disillusioned with the twin goals of scientific progress and the rational human subject that culminated in the Holocaust (see Biesta, 2006; Fevre, 2000; Heartfield, 2002; Malik, 2001; Panton, 2010). Epitomised in the popular texts of philosopher John Gray (2002), “a view of things in which humans are not central” challenges our “core belief in progress [as] a superstition” (p. x- xi), and undermines the “assumption that we have the power to remake the world” (p. xiv). Instead of humanity as a collective, agentic subject, Gray sees weak individuals, “only humans, driven by conflicting illusions and subject to every kind of infirmity of will and judgement” (p. 12). For Gray (2003), science encourages humans to see themselves as superior, rather than just one among many animals, ‘enlarging’ human power by generating the “illusion that humanity can take charge of its destiny” (p. 119). Humans are therefore inferior to animals because “Other animals do not need a purpose in life” (Gray, 2002, p. 199).

Second, one effect of disenchantment with rational knowledge is the popularity of common-sense reasoning which, according to Ralph Fevre, has emerged as a sub-category of rationality, replacing difficult moral debates about right and wrong (Fevre, 2000). In policy and practice around emotion, philosophical doubts about knowledge, pessimism about the contribution of formal education to social progress and political disenchantment with the human subject has created a vacuum for an emotional version of common-sense reasoning, namely what some sociologists and political scientists depict as a cultural and political ‘therapeutic’ sensibility (see Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008; Furedi, 2003; Lasch, 1976; Moon, 2008; Nolan, 1998, 2008; Pupavac, 2001;

Summerfield, 2004; Wright, 2008, 2009). Permeating the media, popular culture and numerous literary genres, this offers a popularised set of explanations and underlying assumptions about the emotional and psychological influences, responses and legacies of both individual and collective suffering. A therapeutic sensibility increasingly informs how we make sense of ourselves and others, in educational settings, at work, in personal and family relationships, through a number of unchallenged beliefs: behind our confident facades, we are all, to a greater or lesser extent, emotionally vulnerable; we all, to a greater or lesser extent, have ‘emotional baggage’ that we suppress or are in denial about; mundane and serious life events alike can leave lasting legacies for our behaviour and emotions; we need to address and manage negative emotions before we can be successful in learning, work and relationships; emotional well-being and self-awareness are integral to personal development, life and work success.

In part, then, it can be argued that contemporary psychological and psychotherapeutic interpretations of emotion, together with constructivist ideas about learning and participation, have emerged from philosophical disenchantment with knowledge and the coherent, rational, externally-seeking human subject. One effect is that philosophical and sociological theorising denigrates both this subject and the formal curriculum as classed, raced and gendered constructs (see Heartfield, 2002; Young 2008).

Inextricably linked to philosophical disenchantment, is the parallel rise of radical political antipathy to a humanist subjectivity has come to rely on emotional and therapeutic explanations for oppression and disadvantage. My summary below of what James Panton calls a ‘politics of subjectivity’ is schematic and does not explore its intellectual dimensions in feminism and critical race studies. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace the roots of emotionally-based pedagogies and knowledge to radical political movements that saw women’s and black groups’ social and individual identity and personal experience as the key to social liberation (see Lasch-Quinn, 2001a, b; Panton, 2005, 2010). These developments influenced educational ideas and practices because many activists in both the UK and America moved into further, adult and higher education to create new courses, subject knowledge and research programmes, whilst a politics of subjectivity permeated first liberal politics, sociology and new emancipatory approaches to therapy from the 1950s onwards, and then moved into popular therapeutic culture, politics and education (see Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008; Furedi, 2003; Nolan, 1998; Wright, 2008, 2009).

In response to the real failures of post-war western society to resolve social inequality and alienation, especially at the levels of class, race and gender, radical activists challenged the traditional liberal narratives of autonomous individuals as the locus of social and political organisation. Summarised in the well-known feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’, disagreement emerged in early Left wing political movements over the dichotomy between the public and private’ as functioning not “merely as a relational dynamic between... state, polity and market but as a relationship which exists on both a structural level and an ideological level between bourgeois polity and the individual in her private, personal and psychological life” (Panton, 2005, pp. 6-7). In ‘second wave feminism’, consciousness-raising methods explored initially how men in those movements subjected women to inferior roles, and then drew in wider examples

of felt, everyday experience as signifiers of subtle and not-so subtle oppressions from women of different class and race backgrounds (see Panton, 2005). In American race politics, consciousness-raising produced a similar inward turn, challenging liberal and socialist explanations of oppression with an experiential understanding of individual oppression, initially at the hands of white people, and then by black peers within a fragmenting civil rights movement (Lasch-Quinn, 2001b).

In both political movements, the ‘totalising’ social theory of a unified subject was seen as, at best, unsustainable, and, at worst, oppressive, thereby fragmenting experience of gender and racial oppression across class, race and ethnic groups. According to Panton, feminist insights about the significance of the private domains of experience broadened into a ‘politics of subjectivity’ through American left and liberal politics from the 1950s. This promoted the idea that insights into the feelings induced by everyday experiences gave “form and expression to feelings of helplessness and indifference, so that people may see the political, social and economic source of their private troubles and organise to change society” (Haydn cited in Panton, 2005, p. 9).

From this perspective, the complex, subtle ways in which external life is experienced are the only authentic, tangible way for individuals to understand themselves as part of wider structural conditions. Knowledge and political pedagogies that focus on the self are therefore seen as the route to understanding an external world. In parallel, radical forms of psychiatry and therapy aimed to highlight the failure of the Left to recognise psychological modes of capitalist oppression and to challenge the normative, individualising labels of behavioural psychology. Psychoanalytically-informed political theory and practice encouraged the rise of phenomenology in sociological theory, influenced by the work of C. Wright-Mills and his much-cited observation that social research has to understand the intricate relationships between personal biography, the patterns and effects of ‘private troubles’, external conditions and their effects on shaping men and history: “in the welter of the individual’s daily experience, the framework of modern society must be sought: within that framework the psychology of the little man must be formulated” (Wright-Mills cited in Panton, 2005, p. 8). Psychoanalysis also encouraged radical activists to publish their own accounts of how childhood experiences and their emotional legacies affected political motivation (Laing 1967; Lasch-Quinn, 2001b; Samuels, 2001).

Interest in the ‘felt’ experience of inequality in second wave feminism moved in third wave feminism from the 1990s to combine understanding of structural conditions with a post-modern deconstruction of discourse and identity to study gender “not as essence or socialisation, but as the consequence of the performative (i.e. recurring) citations of gender thought as actions” (Hey, 2006, p. 439). Influenced by the work of Judith Butler, a ‘radically deconstructive’ approach takes experience of identity, and the work that identity does in different settings, into the psycho-social landscapes of emotion, where “psycho-social formation” needs to be theorised]in terms of the “different materialities of class, sexuality and gender” (Hey, 2006, p. 451).

Notwithstanding strong disagreements within third wave feminism about the respective significance of identity, agency and structure, interest in radical interpretations of psychotherapy and their application both to the theory and practice of feminism raises

questions about the nature and focus of human agency inside and outside educational settings. A humanist view regards agency as integral to participation in a social endeavour (whether this endeavour is politically-focused or not) to understand not just individual oppression and everyday experience, but a world outside the self. Although post-structural interest in the interplay between private troubles, psychological worlds and structural conditions maintains a focus on individual and collective agency, research, knowledge and pedagogy shift towards the internal world of the self. For example, an ethnographic understanding of identity as a paradox, where identity is apparently fixed but inherently unstable, and where the norms and everyday performances of gender require constant maintenance, can help us understand and then resist the normalising effects of gender categories in everyday life (e.g. Hey, 2006).

From this perspective, agency is realised, in part, through theory that sets out to identify our emotional and psychological reactions to oppression, and the interplay between identity, feelings, sublimated emotions, conflicts and ambivalences, and then through understanding and resisting the pressure to be a coherent subject. Yet I would argue that while theory can describe experiences, performances or emotional responses and provide individual insights, it cannot explain those experiences, responses or performances, or offer social ways to change them. Its appeal is reinforced by psychoanalytical insights and practices which are compelling because they resonate so powerfully with everyday experience whilst remaining rooted in old promises of political emancipation. For example, Katie Wright argues that therapeutic understandings of individual and collective oppression in particular social contexts are often a necessary precursor to stronger forms of political resistance and insight (2008).

Such arguments reflect old, intractable questions about whether experience can be the foundation from which social theory must be abstracted, and whether externally defined or internally-generated knowledge is more valid than external knowledge. According to Panton, even attempts to theorise outwards from subjective experience are highly sophisticated, they will fail because “the process of interpreting experience involves an explanation of experience in terms of something other than its own content” (Panton, 2005, p. 21). Following this argument, as subjectivity becomes fragmented, so does knowledge and disciplinarity: the human subject as an actor in and on the world becomes both the source and locus of knowledge.

The educational implications of an ‘epistemology of the emotions’

An introspective turn towards the emotional self might be motivated by radical political commitments or the instrumental goals of positive psychology. Yet, whatever the underlying aims, this turn, cannot, on its own, render the human subject emotionally vulnerable. Indeed, the psychologising of both the human and curriculum subject is hardly a new phenomenon. This makes it important to understand what might be new or different about cultural, political and philosophical tendencies towards introspection, and, in particular, towards the appeal of psychological ideas and practices.

In the context discussed in this paper, philosophical and political antipathy to a universal, coherent human subject, scepticism about external knowledge, and preoccupation with the damaging legacies of emotion as integral to disadvantage and

inequality, combine to create what an ‘emotional epistemology’ (Ecclestone, 2010b). This privileges not merely emotion, but the innate emotional vulnerability of constantly unstable identities, where the human subject is constantly prey to irrationality and insecurity.

Popularised by psychologists such as Dorothy Rowe, this is ubiquitous in reality and lifestyle media and popular culture. It offers a new, common sense image of universality, where, according to Rowe, none of us can see reality and so have to construct it from our interpretation of what we perceive, tempered by experience. As a result, each of us exists in an individual world of meaning that is constantly at risk of being shattered by inconvenient facts. If we acknowledge them, they can destroy our sense of self and, in order to ensure that we will not be overwhelmed by the uncertainty inherent in living in a world we can never truly know, we shut them out by lying to ourselves (Rowe, 2010).

Of course, in certain emotional states, this depiction of everyday experience seems authentic and it seems also to provide a counter to, or respite from, another dominant cultural narrative, that of the successful, autonomous and self-seeking individual subject of neo-liberal capitalism. An emotional epistemology celebrates the common sense feeling that we experience a difficult and uncertain world individually and precariously, not merely as an obvious but mundane part of experience, but, instead, as key to the essence of the human subject. It offers an alternative version of what humans have in common, namely a permanent state of emotional vulnerability, irrationality and constant threats to identity. This contemporary version of the universal human subject needs knowledge about the world as means to understand this experience and the vulnerability we share with others. In response, in both popular culture and educational settings, ideas from different branches of psychology and psychotherapy compete to provide knowledge and pedagogy to illuminate our psychic interiors, especially those aspects we tend to deny or sublimate. Although this promises the possibility of transforming ourselves and our external worlds, the absence of an externally-seeking human and curriculum subject transmogrifies the old radical premise ‘the personal is political’ as ‘you must understand yourself before you can change the world’.

If an emotional epistemology is evident, and if my argument that it underpins a dominant cultural therapeutic narrative is valid, then calls to privilege emotion whilst also professing a commitment to subject knowledge cannot realise their goal of redressing an imbalance in knowledge, teaching and processes of learning. Nor can such calls realise their goal of harnessing emotions in either productive or emancipatory ways. Instead, in a therapeutic culture, the privileging of emotion fetishes emotional vulnerability as a natural human state that requires psychic support through an array of internal and external strategies. The summary of different interests in emotion in the first section suggests that despite strong differences in interpretations of social and individual problems and appropriate strategies, current educational practice can accommodate all-too easily behavioural and instrumental, emancipatory and psychotherapeutic approaches. Indeed, a significant feature of current policy and practice in this area is their highly inclusive nature, not least because they resonate so well with popular therapeutic beliefs and practices.

Therapeutic beliefs are the cornerstone of an emotional epistemology, blurring boundaries between what is learned in formal educational settings, and everyday personal and psychological experiences. Such beliefs are evident in all the perspectives on emotion summarised in the first section of this paper, as well as in policy texts, research reports, materials and guidance for teachers, professional development courses for new teachers and educational leaders, learning support systems and everyday discourses in schools and colleges (see Ecclestone & Bailey, 2009; Ecclestone & Hayes 2008; Ecclestone & Morrison, 2010; Gillies, in press).

One effect is a growing emphasis on teaching and assessing emotional skills, facilitated by outcome-based assessment systems that have hollowed out subject knowledge to accommodate an expanding array of life and work-related attributes, dispositions and attitudes and to bring these learning outcomes into the remit of summative assessment (see Bathmaker & Ecclestone, 2010a; Ecclestone, in press-c; Young, 2008). An emotional epistemology is also highly inclusive in its scope of methods, embracing research and pedagogy as tools for exploring the legacies of ‘learning biographies’ produced by emotional responses to previous educational and life experiences alongside psychodynamically-informed pedagogies, such as creative writing that ‘unblock’ emotions which hinder learning, and consciousness-raising activities to explore how identity and the emotional self affect different situations, ‘play out’ in certain ways and have particular effects on theory and practice (Hunt & West, 2009). Such approaches are seen as relevant, not merely for those seen to be, or who present themselves as, damaged by educational experiences, but for everyone.

Ideas from critical pedagogy can also be included within an emotionally-tuned curriculum, through challenging students to “ask critical questions about what [social and educational] destinies both offer and demand; and to ask why their education contributes so often to the reproduction of social inequality” (Colley, 2006, p. 27). Another critical approach is to subvert the policy-led emphasis on teaching people how to experience emotional well-being by educating children’s needs and desires in more radically utopian ways, even to educate *unhappiness*, the dissatisfaction with the prevailing order that has always been the driver of progressive social change (Amsler, 2009).

The incorporation of diverse pedagogies informed by an emotional epistemology creates dangers unanticipated by their advocates. First, Carl Rogers’ warning in the 1970s that liberal humanist counselling could become an instrumental technology applies to all emotionally-oriented pedagogies identified in this paper. For example, consciousness-raising, creative writing and ‘mindfulness’ might start out as an emancipatory political method or a progressive Buddhist process, and end up as a useful training technique in positive psychology. Second, philosophical and political disenchantment with the bureaucratic, instrumental and formal inequities of education (and their key tenets, such as ‘ability’, ‘intelligence’ and ‘achievement’) have led to attempts to expose, subvert and resist external, universal notions of knowledge. It can be argued, however, that an emotional epistemology opens a space for new, more insidious and subtle forms of power. This is perhaps most obvious in behavioural interventions to train children in the constructs of emotional well-being, where simplistic, even banal, claims about the

ease and efficacy of developing emotional skills conceal highly normative and complex moral judgements and decisions (see Cigman, 2008; Suissa, 2008). Such interventions are also compulsory. Yet, psychoanalytical or psychotherapeutic knowledge and interventions based on emancipatory claims to explore, expose or release sublimated or repressed emotions, and to show their oppressive effects, also offer highly normative judgements about participants, especially those who resist or challenge or deny that knowledge. This contemporary version of older ideas about ‘false consciousness’ presents external knowledge as uncertain, never reliable, and an oppressive social construct, while knowledge about the self is never complete and continually open to normative speculations about the hidden significance of silences and sublimations. A flip side to emotional power is that participants acquiring and using the ‘capital’ embedded in an emotional epistemology can manipulate it instrumentally to enhance existing social advantage: new opportunities offered by a therapeutic culture create new forms of emotional capital.

Third, normative labelling and judgements, whether from instrumental behavioural approaches and radical psychoanalytical ideas, emerge from a parallel expansion of professional diagnoses of emotional and psychological problems to more of the general population (see Summerfield, 2004). One effect is to extend the ubiquitous tendency to categorise people through cognitively-based descriptions of ability into an ever-widening spectrum of disorders, syndromes and ‘emotional issues’ that we use informally in everyday life. For example, in educational programmes for young people deemed to be marginalised, at risk and ‘vulnerable’, this tendency elides social and emotional descriptions in well-meaning, yet highly essentialising ways (see Ecclestone, *in press-c*; Gillies, *in press*). In a circular logic, the increasing tendency towards informal and formal labelling, blurs the boundaries between everyday life and formal education, and extends the need for emotionally-based knowledge and pedagogy.

Fourth, a deep irony in the radical feminist capture of emotion is that, as feminists noted 40 years ago, it too can become highly normative: as Juliet Mitchell argued, emotions are never true or false, good or bad, in themselves: instead, they and their effects depend on a social base (Mitchell cited in Panton, 2005). An emotional epistemology means that political rejection of the essentialising of women cannot counter the more powerful psychological tendency towards determinism, a tendency that Panton argues emerged through the politics of experience. By making “subjectivity programmatic[and] repudiating all objective theoretical thought.... women, allegedly incapable of thought and systematic thinking, but superior in sentiments and feelings, have repeated this in their very rebellion” (Jacoby cited in Panton, 2005, p. 16). Following this argument, it is difficult to see how contemporary radical interest in emotion in educational settings which presents some characteristics as ‘female’, including being caring, intuitive and emotional, and which repudiates rational and cognitive forms of learning as ‘hegemonic masculinity’ does not end up essentialising women and recreating the divisions it sets out to resist.

Finally, a recent study of young people on entry to employment programmes in further education, and another of pupils in emotional and behavioural units in secondary schools, indicate that diagnoses and generalised labels of emotional vulnerability

are integral to depictions of being socially and educationally ‘at risk’. One effect is pedagogies, knowledge, and underpinning research insights that limit these young people to assessment targets, teaching and knowledge about their emotionally vulnerable selves (Ecclestone, in press-c; Gillies, in press). As Young (2010) argues, confining certain groups to knowledge they could gain easily outside educational institutions is not only an abdication of the responsibility of formal education, but is more insidious than the explicit disadvantage created by selection for elite knowledge. Arguably, the stratification of educational access through an essentialising emotional epistemology is even more unjust.

Reasserting the humanist subject

It goes without saying that political and philosophical ideas about the nature, potential and limitations of the human subject are prone to acrimonious debate, where agreement or even consensus seems more impossible than at any time in the past, especially in relation to views about the respective roles of emotion, intellect and reason in learning and the legitimate remit of educational institutions. Nevertheless, I adopt the humanist idea that we share with others the potential to develop our subjectivity in ways that give us the courage to use our understanding of the world without direction from others, thereby releasing us from what Kant called ‘self-incurred tutelage’. A humanist view of subjectivity searches for what unites us, a universal essence realised through particular social and economic conditions. It also searches for what makes us distinctive from animals, namely “our ability to debate, to argue, to think out loud and to engage with the ideas of others, to understand what it means to be human, our relationship to the world, to each other, and to gods or God”, founded upon “an optimistic view of human potential to change the world for the better, politically, culturally, scientifically” (Cummings, 2006, p. 1).

It is important to acknowledge the rather obvious point that the privileging of the interior or external world, and corresponding depictions of the human subject in political and philosophical thought and action is the outcome of debates and struggles in response to particular social and political conditions. It therefore goes without saying that depictions of the human subject are highly normative (e.g. Cummings, 2006; Heartfield, 2002; Malik, 2001; Panton, 2010). It is also important to acknowledge here that ‘emotion’ and ‘reason’ are just two of many conceptual formulations which show the impossibility of separating the pursuit of rational autonomy from the emotions (and sometimes passions) that inspire or maintain autonomy, and which are often invested in presenting and defending it. Philosophy, history and religious studies also add rich and challenging ideas about the connections between emotion, moral and character development and formal education that develops external and internal knowledge (see Cigman, 2008; Mintz, 2009; Smyers, Smith & Standish, 2007; Suissa, 2008). In educational contexts, it seems obvious that we are not either ‘emotional’ or ‘rational’, but both, and that effective education and good teachers take account of each dimension (e.g. Leathwood & Hey, 2009).

Instead, the salient point for arguments developed in this paper is that the relative weighting given in different historical periods to rationality and emotion in political and

educational theory and practice offers very different, usually conflicting, accounts of the human subject. This may be the Kantian subject (autonomous and entirely rational) or humans as purposive and agentic, socially or psychologically vulnerable, or, in place of a universal subject, a fluid, multiple, shifting and performative identity (or identities). Yet in contemporary popular discourse, humanism is now understood as little more than an alternative to religion and its founding idea of subjectivity, that we are driven to understand the world in order to change it as well as ourselves, is regarded as, at best, old-fashioned and naïve, or simply unable to meet the educational challenges of enabling people to live democratically and inclusively (e.g. Biesta, 2008). At worst, humanist subjectivity and knowledge are seen, especially in academic discourse, as oppressive, offensive, ridiculous and reactionary and as a sign, whether implicit or overt, of class, gendered and cultural elitism. In philosophical and political thought, the idea of a universal rational, externally-seeking human subject is now widely held in contempt as an oppressive Western, white, male social construct, an anachronistic myth (see Biesta, 2008; Cummings, 2009; Fevre, 2000; Malik, 2001).

Recognising, therefore, that my commitment to a humanist view of subjectivity and knowledge is highly unfashionable, this paper has offered a highly critical account of the challenges presented by an increasingly emotional orientation towards the human and curriculum subject. Not least, it argues that a humanist education, based on subject disciplines, is a foundation for social justice, particularly for students deemed to be 'non-traditional'.

Of course, profound difficulties in creating some dialogue, let alone debate, around these arguments remain. In discussing this paper, one colleague asked why I am 'so wedded to, and invested in, the discredited and outdated myth of the universal, externally-facing human subject, and the 'failed project' of an education system based on this subject'. Another said that my adherence to the universal human subject is plain 'wrong', making engagement with my arguments 'impossible' and 'unpleasant'. Despite these very significant and familiar objections, I have aimed to show that the political and educational abandonment of this human subject and of forms of knowledge to support it, does not merely reflect just another belief or 'narrative', amongst many, about what knowledge is, and whether it relates to an external or internal reality about the role of education.

Instead, the political and educational abandonment of a universal human subject over the past 40 years or so, has a far more fundamental, and, to me, dangerous effect. In the philosophical and political context explored in this paper, theorising emotions for different educational and political goals does not simply fracture epistemologies that depict the self and knowledge as socially or linguistically constructed by offering another new category or sub-strand. Rather, it goes much further, offering a diminished view of the innately and permanently vulnerable human subject that turns knowledge inward to offer psychological or psychotherapeutic support. I do not believe that the self-seeking, individualistic human subject of neo-liberalism is more dominant as a cultural narrative. Nor is it an alternative to the narrative of the emotionally-vulnerable subject: rather, the images and associated practices of emotional vulnerability are integral to the neo-liberal narratives of self-seeking individuals (see Ecclestone, in press-b).

Conclusion

Promoted by an unlikely coalition of interests from different philosophical and political perspectives, education has been highly permeable to the emotional epistemology that emerges from, and fuels, tendencies explored in this paper. The remedies that emerge from diverse concerns about emotion might be very different, and be a cause of disagreement amongst these groups, but the underlying image of the emotionally vulnerable human subject and the need to address that vulnerability directly, unites them. As part of a challenge to the forceful attack on a humanist political and educational subject presented by this coalition, this article has aimed to show that an emotional epistemology is a logical outcome of an education system no longer committed to an externally-seeking human subject and forms of knowledge to foster it.

It is clear that the traditional forms of education fail people in large numbers, with widespread social, political and academic disaffection with this failure, and pessimism from all political perspectives about how to address it. Yet, however well-meaning, by accommodating to those failures, and basing our view of the human and curriculum subject on them, we may be resigning ourselves to new forms of inequality. Although practical manifestations of the dangers I propose here need to be explored empirically (Ecclestone, 2010a), one implication is that a more emotionally-orientated education cannot play the liberating, or transformative role for those individuals that radical and liberal advocates hope for.

Challenging a turn towards the emotional human and curriculum subject raises new versions of old questions about forms of knowledge (and the cultural capital they lead to) that are offered, and denied, to disadvantaged or oppressed groups. In this respect, it has often occurred to me that none of the coalition of diverse interests that has emerged around emotion in education, nor those trying to challenge them, could argue our position convincingly, or at all, without an education founded on goals for rational autonomy through the ways of thinking, using concepts and acquiring a common language that come from knowledge organised into subject disciplines. I therefore find it difficult to see how we can reject knowledge as irrelevant, reactionary, or understand its classed, raced or gendered relations and identities, without a secure grounding in powerful knowledge from sociology, philosophy, history and economics, and from other subjects too.

Of course, those subjects are contested, they change and evolve and they need to be struggled over. Not only is there no social, political or academic appetite to do this, there is no commitment to universal educational goals. Instead, the current trend in curricula and assessment in compulsory schooling, further and higher education towards an increasingly personal, relevant and emotionally-tuned interpretation of knowledge, particularly for those deemed to be incapable of, or disaffected from, traditional subjects, removes certain groups from universal goals. It is therefore salutary to recall that women, like their working-class and ethnic minority counterparts in the early programmes for widening participation access in further and higher education in which I started my education career in the 1980s, wanted forms of knowledge that took them beyond their narrow, introspective worlds to new possibilities and an external world. It is perhaps more salutary that students in elite settings do not allow an emotional

epistemology to erode the images of human subjectivity and forms of knowledge that make them powerful (Ecclestone, 2010b).

Difficult, possibly intractable, questions therefore remain about what subject content, concepts and ways of thinking should be the responsibility of formal educational institutions and which knowledge lies, rightly, outside them (see Furedi, 2009; Young, 2008, 2010). Gaining any recognition of the need to address these questions, let alone to decide which stakeholders have a legitimate role in debating them, is a formidable barrier in the current political, philosophical and educational climate of most advanced countries. The immediate challenge, however, is to resist the rapid incursion of an emotional epistemology and its diminished human subject into formal education, where claims from positive psychology mesh all too easily with more radical concerns. Positions which reject universal knowledge or, in contrast, simply advocate its traditional subject-based forms, cannot resist the psychologising influence of these different interests, and the essentialised images of the human subject they create.

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Citizenship, identity, and the social studies curriculum in Singapore

Theresa Tan and Rob Strathdee

Victoria University of Wellington

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between the social studies curriculum, citizenship education, and globalisation in Singapore. The social studies curriculum was developed within the context of National Education (NE), which was launched in 1997, as a nation-building initiative by the government. As such social studies became a major vehicle for NE, the form which citizenship education takes in Singapore. The paper argues that the social studies curriculum offered to primary level children needs to be broadened.

Introduction

It is widely argued that the people who are best placed to cope with the complexity, risks, and opportunities generated by globalisation are those who are intellectually autonomous, adaptive, and resilient to cope with uncertainties; who can take calculated risks; and who have the ability to make informed decisions for the public good as citizens in a culturally diverse, ideally-democratic society. Therefore, a creative and adaptive workforce that is proactive and able to take on complex challenges and problem solve is demanded. Given that many countries continue to struggle with the issues of ethnic diversity and national unity, which is no doubt heightened by globalisation, citizenship education has never been more important (Osler & Starkey, 2004; Sim & Print, 2009a; Sim & Print, 2009b). Invariably educators hold vastly differing views with regard to the conceptions of citizenship and the relative emphasis that should be given to the promotion of national citizenship and group identities (Pierce & Hallgarten, 2000; Sim, 2008; Sim & Print, 2009a; Sim & Print, 2009b). Of course different national contexts will undoubtedly offer different perspectives of citizenship and membership. Golmohamad (2009) writes that in Britain, for example, the notion of being 'British' tends to be backward looking, trying to construct a sense of identity and culture through a history of the past. His observation of the British case resonates with that of Singapore, more so in recent years with the onset of globalisation. Globalisation has further problematised citizenship as 'global' is often positioned in tension with the centrality of the nation, when the latter is still commonly regarded by governmental agencies as the basis of citizenship. Citizenship education naturally takes on great importance during an age of transnationality, which refers to the principle of carrying out an action that goes beyond national boundaries or interests. Over the past decade in Singapore, there has been some

concern regarding youth civic disengagement and young people's lack of knowledge and concern of the democratic processes, and, as Golmohamad (2009) shares, these concerns are arguably shared transnationally.

Social studies, as an integrated subject, was introduced in Singapore in 2001 for all upper secondary students (15 to 17 year-olds). Prior to this, social studies was only taught to Primary four to six students (10 to 12 year-olds). Perhaps it was assumed that feelings of patriotism and nationalism would or could be invoked implicitly in secondary school students through history and geography education. Social studies was developed within the context of National Education (NE), which was launched in 1997 as a nation-building initiative by the government. As such, social studies became a major vehicle for NE, the form that citizenship education takes in Singapore. Social studies was conceived of as a direct response to address the problem of young Singaporeans' lack of interest and knowledge in the country's history and the key issues central to its survival (Sim, 2010). In Singapore's highly centralised education system, curriculum development begins at the highest level of government.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between social studies, citizenship (or national) education, globalisation and multiculturalism in Singapore. To do that, it is imperative that we first question the place and purpose of social education, and decide how it will contribute to the overall education of our young people in the 21st century. We argue that the social studies curriculum offered to primary level children needs to be broadened. In addition, we discuss how the People's Action Party (PAP) government uses the framework of NE, specifically social studies, to produce and conceptualise notions of citizenship and the Singapore identity. The paper is in six sections. Section one establishes the context in which the social studies curriculum is situated. The following three sections explore how a) conceptions of citizenship, and b) multiculturalism and globalisation, find expression in the social studies curriculum. The next section considers the way the PAP uses the social studies curriculum as means of building national citizenship. The final section concludes this paper.

Key contexts

Once a British outpost and colony, Singapore became an independent nation when it separated from Malaysia in 1965. Demographically, it is a multiracial society built by immigrants from China, Malaysia and Southern India. Geographically, it is surrounded by Muslim countries. A tiny island at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore is without natural resources and during its early years of independence, was fraught with challenges such as high unemployment, racial riots and threats of communism. These issues emphasised to the PAP government that in order for Singapore to survive, nation-building in developing a shared national identity and modernising the economy were urgent priorities (Chua, 1995 as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2010).

According to Chan (1971, as cited in Sim & Print, 2009a) and Trocki (2006), the PAP government, which rose to political dominance after 1959, sought to consolidate Singapore's independence through the politics of survival, built on the principles of multiracialism, meritocracy and multilingualism. Trocki (2006) contends that aside from claiming there was a need for social stability to achieve economic development,

these important principals form the justifications for the PAP's social engineering agenda. Like many post-colonial states, survival and economic growth were prioritised and became recurrent themes on the political leaders' exhortations and the goals of their exertions, and underpinned the school curriculum (Chan, 1971; Chua 1995, as cited in Sim, 2008). Education has been viewed as instrumental in achieving both the development of human capital and the building of social, communitarian reflexes to bind together a highly diverse state (Gopinathan, 2007, as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2010). The education system in Singapore is centrally planned and remarkably responsive to the directives of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and its political leaders. With such a strong state presence in managing the educational needs and charting the educational future of the nation, it is, thus, hardly surprising to find that the aims of education in Singapore is inextricably linked to its government's political aims.

Sim and Print (2009a, 2009b) argue that in governing Singapore, the PAP's philosophy is that citizens favour a better quality life over political ideology, the basis of which is a strong economy. Therefore, people should just concern themselves with economically productive activities and leave politics to the PAP. As noted by educational ideologues (Chua, 1995; Tamney, 1996, as cited in Sim & Print, 2009a; Loh, 1998, as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2010; Trocki, 2006), the PAP government has provided for a tight and hegemonic system of political control that allows few opportunities for dissent to maintain the social order needed for economic advancement and development. If one was to question why no contending alternatives exist to this paternalistic ruling, it is sensible to argue that the assurance of material wealth and physical comfort has ensured that possible alternatives are made to seem negative (Trocki, 2006). As a result, citizenship in Singapore is perceived as passive; the citizen's responsibility is to elect a party into power and cooperate with it to govern so long as it gives him a good life. This has provided a stable environment for economic growth but has also regrettably produced a disengaged citizenry, self-centred and materialistic, with a general mindset to defer to the government (Sim & Print, 2009b).

Citizenship in Singapore is focused on cultivating national loyalty, patriotism, a sense of belonging, and the commitment to actively participate in the goals of national development (Green, 1997, as cited in Sim & Print, 2009a). With Singapore being a small city-state in a global economy, the PAP has consistently made the society conscious of its vulnerabilities, potential challenges and threats in global contexts. In order to remain competitive, a major educational reform, "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" (TSLN), was instituted in 1997. The then Prime Minister (PM) Goh Chok Tong insisted "TSLN is not a slogan for the Ministry of Education. It is a formula to enable Singapore to compete and stay ahead" (1997). However, as Gopinathan (2007, as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2010) argues, education reform in Singapore "is primarily a way of retooling the productive capacity of the system" (p. 59).

Globalisation has set the tone for massive changes in the social, economic and political landscapes in many countries, including Singapore. Even though this has destabilising effects on Singapore, the PAP has managed it rather well with pragmatic policies (Hill & Lian, 1995; Sim, 2008; Turnbull, 1989). Since its inception as a republic, Lee Kuan Yew, the dominant figure behind PAP, has geared the economy heavily toward export

markets, and attracted foreign capital and investments with incentives. Within eight years of its independence the city-state enjoyed economic boom in industrialisation, in providing full employment and in raising the overall standard of living (Turnbull, 1989). However, as Sim argues, the PAP cannot guarantee sustained prosperity, with economic competition from larger neighbours and the region's emerging superpowers. Additionally, as the then PM Goh revealed "knowledge and innovation will be absolutely critical" in the global economy (1997).

At the same time, younger Singaporeans have grown up amidst relative affluence, are more well educated, widely travelled, and technologically savvy. Compared to previous generations, they have more diverse needs and aspirations, with many wanting more control and more say in their lives. There is a general concern from the government that young Singaporeans are emigrating overseas, seeking 'greener pastures', thus leading to an eventual 'brain drain' from Singapore. With these concerns came the issue on how to develop and deepen national consciousness among the globally oriented Singaporean youth (Baildon & Sim, 2010; Sim, 2008; Sim & Print, 2009a; Sim & Print, 2009b). Developing citizenship is a complex task for both the government and educators. Survival in the global economy depends on the interplay between the nations but at the same time socio-cultural influences of globalisation have to be managed (Tan, 2007, as cited in Sim & Print, 2009b). Tan explains that globalisation has compounded the complex and shifting divisions of socio-cultural factors such as race, language, class, gender and religion, and as observed in Singapore, some segments of the society have become more cosmopolitan than others (Chua, 2003). Clearly, there is a tension between societal change and the conservatism of the PAP, with the fear that the nation-state would thus be divided.

Conceptions of citizenship

Before we examine citizenship education in Singapore's social studies curriculum, it is essential that we develop a common understanding of the key concepts. This ensures that our perceptions of citizenship are aligned to the same focal points. As Crick (2000) aptly points out, social and moral concepts often get defined differently by different people for different purposes. Thus, 'citizenship' can carry significantly different meanings. For instance, in a three-year study conducted in Singapore with high school social studies teachers (Sim, 2008; Sim & Print, 2009a, 2009b), the researchers found that even with the highly centralised educational bureaucracy, teachers read the policy text regarding citizenship education quite differently depending on their personal history and experience. As the research revealed, even in a highly centralised nation-state such as Singapore, an unexpected diversity of understanding of citizenship exists amongst teachers. Nonetheless, we can still offer some reasonable understanding of the main usages of the word.

Citizenship can be mainly conceptualised as a status, a feeling and a practice (Osler & Starkey, 2005, as cited in Osler, 2010). As a status, it is almost always exclusive, even if the individual holds dual citizenship. This means that one is either a citizen of a nation-state or is not. Such a concept of citizenship is one most commonly and formally conceived by governmental bodies. As a feeling, citizenship is conceptualised

as a sense of belonging. As Osler maintains, an individual's sense of belonging need not necessarily correlate with his or her formal status. Some prerequisites for belonging include social and psychological security, legal rights of residence and acceptance by others in the community. As such, if these prerequisites are absent or lacking, it is understandably difficult for a person to feel like he or she belongs. Citizenship as a practice is the everyday engagement and participation in making a difference as part of a community (Osler, 2010). In this sense, citizenship is the everyday involvement in political, cultural, economic, and social activities within the local community but it can also be taken to the national and global levels.

The three concepts are interlinked yet discrete (Osler, 2010). On one hand, citizenship status can bring about a sense of security thereby encouraging one's participation and involvement in society. On the other hand, one need not possess formal citizenship status in order to be an active member of society. Being aware of the relationship and interplay between these three conceptions is important in helping us understand how the social studies curriculum has been used as a vehicle by the MOE to implement national education so as to promote national cohesiveness and cultivate a sense of national identity among Singaporeans.

Multiculturalism and globalisation in Singapore

In order to understand how the PAP uses education as an instrument to advance its socio-political agendas, it is imperative that we briefly discuss two other concepts that underpin the Singapore social studies curriculum: multiculturalism and globalisation. Ho (2009) points out that multicultural education has been defined in diverse ways, proving that multicultural education scholars are divided about the field because of the tension between unity and diversity (Parker, 1997, as cited in Ho). Others, such as Feinberg (1998), suggest that multiculturalism and national identity exist on a continuum, with assimilationists and separatists at either end, and pluralists and multiculturalists in the middle. Whether the distinct groups exist in reality is debatable but it is of the writers' personal opinion that it is more likely that most individuals subscribe to a combination of these positions, depending on which aspect of multiculturalism they adhere to. Assimilationists advocate for the elimination of the influence of separate national or cultural group identities in favour of a common, national one through public education. At the other end of the spectrum, the separatists emphasise the maintenance of the distinctive identity of the group through the formation of separate educational institutions (Ho, 2009).

Singapore, like many multicultural heterogeneous nation-states, faces the problem of balancing the promotion of national identity, diversity, and global perspectives through education (Goh & Gopinathan, 2005; Ho, 2009; Nichol, 2006). The tension between the national and the global, and between unity and diversity is an increasingly relevant one in today's globalised world. On the one hand, critics of multiculturalism point out that multiculturalism promotes diversity at the expense of national unity and consequently creates conflicting loyalties and reduces national identities and patriotism. On the other hand, multiculturalists contend that there should be cultural fairness and that there should be no domination of one cultural group over another (Chua, 2003; Ho, 2009).

Postcolonial Singapore was originally conceived as a constitutionally multiracial state. The terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are frequently conflated in Singapore and ‘race’ is constantly being used in political and popular discourses. Due to its colonial legacy of racial divisions and episodes of racial tensions, the PAP government has continually implemented integrative policies toward different racial groups such as public housing and national education. Since achieving independence in 1965, there have been no instances of violent racial conflict although there were racial and religious issues that certainly could have sparked riots. In the 1990s, the PAP sought to establish and define a national identity that superseded racial ones by introducing national ideologies such as “Shared Values” that included messages like “nation before community and society before self”, “consensus, not conflict”, and “racial and religious harmony” (Tan, 2009). Unsurprisingly, these were actively promulgated through media and education.

It is perhaps not too difficult to see how globalisation has contributed toward many nation-states being more multicultural today than they were during the last century. Technological advancement has been one of the major attributing factors to this phenomenon. Major changes are going on in the world and it would be futile to ignore them and the consequences they bring about, especially the impact they have on the structures of governance. As the American sociologist Daniel Bell observes “The nation-state becomes too small to solve the big problems but too big to solve the small ones” (cited in Giddens, 2000, p. 19). As well, information technology is transforming the economy, radically shrinking the blue-collared manufacturing jobs in many developed societies (Giddens, 2000).

Giddens also asserts that another major global transformation is the impact of changes on our everyday lives. Although traditions and customs are still shaping our lives in Western and/or developed countries such as Singapore, it is much less than they used to. Consequently, the PAP government has consistently placed much emphasis on Asian values in social education to ensure that Singapore remains resistant to Western social ills and competitive in the global economy (Baildon & Sim, 2010). These values are outlined in the White Paper on “Shared Values” of 1991. As stated earlier, the TSLN launched in 1997 was a major educational reform instituted to develop a nation of thinking citizens capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century. However, as Baildon and Sim (2010) assert, other than its similarity to the emphasis on Asian values, what also marked the TSLN reforms is the explicit recognition that globalisation will strain the loyalties of young Singaporeans due to their technological prowess and high mobility.

Why social studies?

Now that we have established some common understanding of the concepts of citizenship, multiculturalism and globalisation, and their interrelationship in Singapore, it is fitting that we proceed to discuss these key concepts within the premise of education, specifically social education. In doing so, let us first consider some of the most fundamental questions: What is social studies? Why should we teach it? How does it contribute to the overall education of an individual?

Just like the concept of citizenship, there is no single precise way of defining social studies. The term ‘social studies’ means different things to different people. It has been described as simplified social science, a fusion and integration of social sciences, instruction in patriotism, and value inculcation, to name a few. Laughlin and Hartoonian (1995) argue “there is little use in defining the social studies as a content field without clearly stating how that content helps prepare citizens” (p. 17). Although the exact definition of social studies can be ambiguous, there is little contention that the proper aim of social studies is citizenship education (Golmohamad, 2009; Ho, 2009; Laughlin & Hartoonian, 1995; Parker, 2010; Ross, 2006).

Ross (2006) opines that social studies curriculum can be generally organised into three main themes: citizenship (or cultural) transmission, social science, and reflective inquiry. In addition, Allen and Stevens (1998) added a fourth dimension: personal development. Researchers may hold differing views regarding the relative importance of each respective theme but on one point they agree: the dominant approach practised in schools seems to be the transmission of facts and values (Ross, 2006). In spite of this, the aforementioned study conducted in Singapore has shown that teacher practice could be inherently dependent upon teachers’ personal understanding of citizenship (Sim, 2008; Sim & Print, 2009a, Sim & Print, 2009b). Sim’s study reveals that teachers in Singapore typically adopt three dominant stances in their understanding of citizenship, namely, the nationalistic stance, the socially concerned stance, and the person-oriented stance. The socially concerned teachers and person-oriented teachers were more likely to create safe and trusting classroom environments that encourage expression of issues and differing views. In contrast, nationalistically oriented teachers acted more like consumers of the given meanings and conclusions in the subject matter. They were chiefly concerned with the transmission of ‘official’ textbook knowledge. Ross rightfully asserts that this approach is “politically conservative, valuing stability and common standards of thought and behaviour” (p. 21).

Thus far it is quite clear that the curriculum is the site of struggle and tension between a socio-political agenda and educational aims. As such, Parker (2010) identifies that a good school curriculum should have social studies at its centre because it is where students learn to view and interpret the world, both the present as well as the past. In the 21st century, the social sciences of history, geography, government and economics are dominant in the social studies curriculum, which is partly brought about by globalisation and partly by the standards and accountability movement, which in Singapore, began as early as the 19th century during its colonial days (Gopinathan, 1974; Gwee, Doray, Waldhauser, Ahmad & Doraisamy, 1969). The latter has narrowed the Singapore curriculum to the point where social studies is frequently edged to the sidelines in favour of greater attention to language arts, mathematics and science instruction. This is especially true in primary schools where social studies is not an examinable subject (unlike in secondary schools). In the following section, we shall examine more closely and critically how national education is positioned within the social studies framework.

National Education in Singapore

The National Education (NE) project launched by the PAP in 1997 was deemed necessary for national citizenship in Singapore (Baieldon & Sim, 2010). This section studies how social studies is used as a vehicle for inculcating the key NE messages concerning a sense of belonging and patriotism, racial and religious harmony, and developing a secure and cohesive citizenry. It should be noted that there are a total of six NE messages but for the purpose of this paper, not all will be discussed. As elaborated above, globalisation has resulted in transformations in relationships and dealings between nation-states, markets and citizens. To remain competitive in the global economy, populations are expected to be adaptable, responsive and flexible to ever-changing circumstances. To reiterate, the then PM Goh (1997) expressed:

One of the defining features of the 21st century will be one of change, and increasingly rapid change. It will be change as a permanent state, not change as a transition to some known, final state. Change will be unpredictable but it will affect everything we do at work, in society and at home.

A world that has become borderless presents new challenges for nation-states. Globalisation has heightened anxieties over citizenship as we have seen from the Singapore context. Traditional notions of citizenship are being unsettled by forces of global capitalism, popular culture, new technologies and media (Park et al., 1999, as cited in Baieldon & Sim, 2010). As a result, citizenship education takes on new as well as great importance, as nation-states try to develop national affiliations and commitment for national projects that are vital for competition, survival and prosperity. According to Baieldon and Sim, this poses challenges for educators as they seek to educate students in ways that will promote national identities while also trying to develop students into citizens who are more cosmopolitan and global in their outlook. As Parker (2010) suggests, nationalism and cosmopolitanism tend to be viewed as dichotomies by educational systems. However, George Yeo (1989), one of Singapore's government ministers, aptly captured the delicate balance of the two:

[Singaporeans] must balance this contradiction between being cosmopolitan and being nationalistic. We cannot be a trading nation, if we are not cosmopolitan. We cannot be a nation, if we are not nationalistic. We must be both at the same time.

In response to issues and concerns mentioned, the NE project was launched in 1997 to develop the knowledge, values and skills necessary for national citizenship in Singapore. The aims of NE were to develop national cohesion; foster a sense of national pride; learn the 'Singapore Story', a straight-forward 'official' tale that charts how an independent Singapore overcame the odds to become a peaceful and prosperous country; understand Singapore's unique challenges, constraints and vulnerabilities; and instil the core values of meritocracy, harmony and good governance (MOE, 2004). It is noted that the Singapore Story has been criticised as mainly portraying the hardships and sacrifices of the founding generation and the PAP, and how the PAP has been

indispensable to the transformation of Singapore as a developed country (Baildon & Sim, 2010; Goh & Gopinathan, 2005). This is a particular version of Singapore's history. Apple and Smith (1991) acknowledge "what is constitutive of official knowledge is presented selectively, and the stronger the state and more centrally run the education system is, the stronger and more hegemonic the representation will tend to be" (as cited in Goh & Gopinathan, 2005, p. 204). This is, indeed, reflective of the social education in Singapore.

The primary social studies course implemented in 2000 was content driven and almost all 'Singaporean studies' rather than 'social studies'. It has since been updated as at 2008. However, a review of the new syllabus (MOE, 2005) suggests that very little has changed. There are a total of eight units throughout the primary course and out of these, seven are dedicated to the learning of the local communities and Singapore. Only the final unit exposes students to Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, and this is taught during the pupils' (12 year-olds) final year in the primary school. This leads us to ask: Can we develop students with a global outlook if the curriculum is essentially Singapore-bound?

Perhaps it is of no coincidence that TSLN and NE were both launched in the same year and as Baildon and Sim (2010) suggest, these two reforms present a conundrum for 'thinking' Singaporean educators. Against the backdrop of TSLN, NE and social studies put forth a dialectical tension. Whilst TSLN encourage critical and creative thinking to prepare students for the knowledge-based economy, post-industrial labour and complex challenges, NE and social studies emphasise a form of nationalism and citizenship that is both convergent and parochial. Within the social studies framework, there is a drive to educate the young regarding the historical 'truth' of the Singapore Story. Although the textbooks include extracts that are ostensibly meant to stimulate students' critical and analytical skills, they might have in fact been selected to support the official interpretation of the Singapore Story (Goh & Gopinathan, 2005). If part of the goals of the Singapore education system is to nurture 'good' Singaporean citizens who "ask questions... and who are willing to think in new ways, solve new problems and create new opportunities for the future" (MOE, 2010), then without a doubt we need to distinguish the difference between a 'good' citizen and an 'active' one. Unsurprisingly in Singapore, the two terms are often conflated as one is often mistaken for the other.

The ethos of good citizenry stresses habitual loyalty, and instinctive obedience and respect to rules and laws, rather than critical thought and democratic practices (Crick, 2000). Good citizens pay their taxes, know their place in society and are ever grateful to be governed well. Certainly, seeing how supportive Singapore has been in the direction that the PAP government has chosen for her, it is quite sensible to assume that the majority of Singaporeans may be considered good citizens. It is not often that Singaporeans think of themselves as citizens with rights to be exercised as well as agreed responsibilities. Citizenship in Singapore tends to be perceived as passive with much deferment to the government. In truth, we need both good and active citizens. Hoggart (1999) argues that not educating our young for the modern world through citizenship and critical thought is akin to hurling them into "shark infested waters unprepared" (as cited in Crick, 2000, p. 2).

So what does 'active citizenship' look like then? An active citizen is not one who has simply accumulated a wealth of knowledge about social and political institutions, or about parliamentary government. Although it is absolutely essential to have a firm understanding of how the socio-political systems work, equally if not more important is the motivation and ability to put that knowledge to good use (Gilbert, 1993). Gilbert rightly insists "Active citizenship is a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active participation is the right of all citizens" (p. 89).

A sound citizenship education should provide a broad agenda that includes helping students develop the capacity to manage their own lives, providing the opportunities for them to develop the confidence and the social skills to express themselves well, and giving them the practical experience to exercise responsibilities. With the introduction of the Community Involvement Programmes (CIP), a move that promotes voluntarism and service learning within the NE framework across all curricula and levels, MOE appears to be trying to inculcate civic responsibility in our young, as well as promote social cohesion. Part of the CIP is Service Learning, an educational method that "involves students in challenging tasks that meet genuine community needs and requires the application of knowledge, skills and systematic reflection on the experience" (MOE, 2007). Voluntarism has been hailed as the mark of moral citizenship (Crick, 2000). Despite the well-intended move, the degree of CIP's success remains an open question. If past experience is any basis to judge, it is likely that there is more lip service paid to CIP than actual meaningful CIP activities, since students actually have little say in deciding what they can contribute in. Schools are given the autonomy to select the appropriate activities for pupils in accordance with their levels, but just as the PAP has cast a hegemonic influence over schools, schools in turn exercise a form of tacit power over students by dictating what activities students should partake.

Anecdotal evidence suggests students have to be enticed with rewards such as having their 'good works' recorded in their school records. If one has to dangle a carrot in front of the students, where is the spirit of 'voluntarism'? One can hardly expect students to be passionate and committed to serving a cause that they have had little say in. It is, and should not be the job of government (or schools) to tell students what they should do or where they should serve. This approach is both negative and anti-democratic. Indeed, in a free country, a citizenship education must not be centrally directed in details, only in broad but clear principles (Crick, 2000). Hence, students should be given opportunities to express their views and concerns, to discuss and analyse real issues across the curriculum, as well as encouraged to listen actively to others. When children and young people feel a sense of ownership towards their learning and service in the CIP, moral citizenship will be taken to a deeper level. Students cannot be expected to become active citizens overnight if they have not had the opportunities in schools to practice engaged and active citizenry. If young Singaporeans have been criticised as ignorant and apathetic, it is because we have helped create an environment that seems to perpetuate such attitudes. For instance, Nichol (2006) asserts that too often pedagogy in the Singapore classrooms is didactic and narrow, with a high focus on knowledge and cultural transmission. If students are to be nurtured into responsible active citizens,

then social studies educators need to develop an approach that is more responsive, relevant, and inquiry-based.

A recurrent theme in Singapore's citizenship education is that of racial cohesion. NE has almost become a code for social cohesion especially with memories of past riots, bombings¹ and religious intolerance. Flanked on both sides by Indonesia and Malaysia, the Islamist, terrorist spectre is omnipresent. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the call for social cohesion is also a direct response to the fact that the national community is increasingly diverse.

Although the primary social studies course has been paradoxically called 'Singapore studies', the mandatory secondary social studies course introduced in 2001 has a curriculum that is more global-focused. Multicultural issues are considered essential because the government views social cohesion as a necessary precondition to economic development and ultimately, for the survival of Singapore. Throughout the course, students are taught the values of respect, empathy and appreciation of differences; the benefits of a harmonious society; and the importance of integrating ethnic groups in society and forging a national identity. Students are also constantly reminded of the dire consequences of racial and religious conflicts to a country, including foreign intervention and economic disaster. With a strong focus on forging a national identity and building a common space, the curriculum has perhaps overlooked the huge diversity of cultural and religious values apparent in Singapore. The 'Singaporean Singapore' melting pot and the 'return to roots' emphasis on Asian cultures can be articulated as a 'multiculturalism versus nationalism' binary (George, 2000). This promotion on the common citizen identity and building a national community is arguably emphasised at the expense of cultural and religious identities. Although the term 'assimilation' is not to be found in the recent documents, the issue is that the high levels of social integration often hint at and border on exactly that. It should be recognised there is value to be found in pluralism and looser forms of multiculturalism. In fact, the 'return to roots' movement driven by the PAP has made minority groups feel disquietedly that it is an attempt to make the country more Chinese, no doubt signalled by the high profile 'Speak Mandarin' campaigns. Such sentiments are not without their justification.

Conclusion

Clearly while citizenship has become a fashionable and popular concept, it is not widely understood since it is a complex and rather flexible concept. Additionally, it is not so much a tangible entity as it is an ideology and a construct in the minds of individuals (Sim, 2008). As such, it can mean all things to all people. Citizens in the same nation-state will invariably understand citizenship differently, as we saw in the Singapore case study. Moreover globalisation has problematised the common notions of citizenship. Within the educational system, two dichotomies have been highlighted: nationalism versus cosmopolitanism, and nationalism versus multiculturalism. At first glance, these opposing models may present contradictions, but they are more likely to be in tension (Parker, 2010). Educational reforms like TSLN and NE represent attempts by the PAP government to recalibrate schooling in order to accommodate both global and national imperatives and the consequences of globalisation (Baildon & Sim, 2010).

Nonetheless, whether they actually reform remains to be seen. Official rhetoric calls for greater critical and creative thinking, innovation and openness but the problem of Singapore's highly prescriptive and centralised educational system has resulted in one that cherishes stability, order and conservatism. True innovation, creativity and experimentation cannot flourish in such an environment. With respect to national identity, the notion of being a global citizen means that people can have multiple affiliations and commitments based on racial, cultural, religious and national ties, and these affiliations and commitments need not be surrendered to achieve a national identity. Pride in one's heritage can co-exist with loyalty to other traditions and global families. In fact, in today's interdependent world, such a balanced cosmopolitan outlook is valued and vital. As Green (1997, as cited in Baildon & Sim, 2010) argues, "the modern education project is to form new, more democratic societies and the citizens which sustain them – not to transmit and reproduce historic cultures and identities" (p. 93). Perhaps this is one way in which social studies educators can help students confront the interplay between nationalism, multiculturalism and globalisation in a rapidly changing global world.

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Endnotes

- 1 During Indonesia's confrontation with the 'new', greater Malaysia, Indonesian saboteurs exploded some small bombs in Singapore (Nichol, 2006, p. 43).

Environmental care in education outside the classroom

Chris North

University of Canterbury College of Education

Abstract

This article considers the responsibilities of education outside the classroom to environmental care education (ECE). Despite the wide range of factors promoting ECE in New Zealand, various barriers, including cultural attitudes and the nature of teacher training are impeding effective implementation and development of ECE. The implications of failing to provide ECE are examined with the theory of planned behaviour introduced as a means to turn around this situation. The article concludes with a consideration of how teachers can be more effective in educating for behaviour change.

“The links that students are able to make, between the classroom and real-world experiences can be critical to their long-term learning”
(Ministry of Education, 2009 p. 4).

Introduction

Barely a week goes by in New Zealand without us hearing about yet another environmental crime: freedom campers, inconsiderate behaviour and toilet waste (Dangerfield, 2010; Edens, 2010; Gilbert, 2010; Johnson, 2004; Kennedy, 2009), harm to native animals (Mosen, 2009; Robinson, 2009), invasive species (Biosecurity New Zealand, n.d.; Rilkoﬀ, 2009); all receive their share of coverage in the media. Clearly, there are some problems with how we behave in the outdoors in New Zealand.

The great majority of New Zealanders have outdoor experiences during their schooling, either through outdoor education camps, or more commonly, through field trips. Over 90% of secondary and primary schools use education outside the classroom (EOTC) to support teaching and learning in science (only slightly behind health and physical education; Haddock, 2007a, 2007b). Field trips, such as those run for science education, are being used frequently, indicating teachers understand the benefits of learning outside the classroom. There is currently no information on science field trips by venue; however, it is likely that the great majority of these field trips are in the outdoors. There seems an opportunity to reciprocate these teaching and learning benefits, with benefits to those environments we use. EOTC is an avenue for addressing both environmental impact and to foster appreciation and respect for their long term sustainability.

Teachers involved in EOTC, however, rank environmental learning outcomes low,

reflecting limited training of teachers and their confidence in teaching in these areas (Zink & Boyes, 2006). While the survey by Zink and Boyes suffered from a low response rate, it nevertheless provides indicative data. Compounding this, Martin (2008) points out the extent to which teachers understand concepts such as ecological literacy: the ability to understand natural systems and how we interact with them (Orr, 2004) is rarely optimal, yet such understanding is important because it determines what teachers actually teach and emphasise. Teachers are apparently aware of this deficit as secondary teachers' most frequent request was for environmental sustainability training. It was the third most common request of primary teachers (Haddock, 2007a, 2007b).

This article considers one aspect of environmentally responsible behaviour that teachers involved with EOTC can readily bring into their programmes for students. The aspect is environmental care: the set of practices and ethics that enable people to minimise the impact of their activities when outdoors. Environmental care education (ECE) is fundamental to good citizenship in contemporary New Zealand. In exploring this matter, the article considers how and why ECE tends to be sidelined in our schools and teacher education institutions despite curricula provision for ECE. It looks at some ways that educators can remedy the sidelining of ECE. Models of human behaviour are then used to indicate the factors that influence humans to act sustainably or otherwise in relation to the outdoor environment and to show how educators can help embed the values, principles and practices underlying ECE-related activities.

The sidelining of ECE

I am well aware that every time those of us responsible for EOTC neglect to teach our students environmental care, we are contributing to the maintenance of a group who have no idea of the potentially adverse impacts of their presence in the outdoors and how to mitigate them. This level of ecological illiteracy can leave a legacy of unnecessary damage to the environment and generations of New Zealanders inadvertently damaging the places they love (Hendee & Dawson, 2002). Orr (2004) declares "The truth is ... education can simply equip people to be more efficient vandals of the Earth" (p.5). Although Orr directed his comment at university graduates entering the workforce, the same could be said of educators who fail to teach the basics of ECE to their students.

While some educators are undoubtedly teaching ECE effectively through EOTC, other educators are probably avoiding or paying lip service to ECE. Anecdotal evidence, and my personal experience, indicates that most teachers do not cover ECE, even though their personal ethics may be strongly pro-care of the environment (Vagias, 2009). People who take groups outdoors have a responsibility to care for the places they visit, as damage is incremental: "a little here and there, which over time adds up to the destruction of the values of beauty and solitude, naturalness and mystery that make such places useful to educators" (Miles, 1999, p. 323).

In her examination of environmental education in central and eastern North Island secondary schools, Brown (2003) concluded that education for the environment is often sidelined in schools. Education for the environment deals with people's choices that help maintain and improve the quality of the environment (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 14) and includes concepts such as environmental care. The lack of education for the

environment occurs despite the considerable emphasis accorded to ECE in the national curriculum, other curriculum-related documents, and given the reported attitudes of teachers themselves. The scarcity of literature nationally on the nature of EOTC also provides no opportunity to doubt Brown's conclusion.

The sidelining of ECE is not due to a lack of promotion in official documents. New Zealand's national curriculum contains a number of directives that both require and encourage educators to cover ECE in their programmes. The values section of the national curriculum document, for example, calls for a focus on environmental care (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20), while the EOTC guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2009) emphasise the need for those responsible for coordinating such programmes to take account of environmental care when planning their EOTC sessions.

New Zealand has an environmental care code that is distributed extensively. Through consultation, the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for the Environment developed a robust and comprehensive care code, which is displayed prominently at huts and on track signs. The responses of the 210 school teachers to a survey conducted by Zink and Boyes (2006) suggest that these educators are aware of the code and recognise their obligation to consider care of the environment when conducting their programmes. The teachers who responded accorded a high degree of agreement to this statement: 'Outdoor education [defined as EOTC in this study] is the best medium for environmental education.' The answer as to why, despite all this emphasis, environmental care has only a minimal presence in New Zealand's education system seems to be the product of a number of factors.

Factors inhibiting ECE in EOTC programmes

Teacher's baseline knowledge of the research underlying and practices associated with environmental care is important. Yet, in New Zealand, there is a lack of understanding of and basic competence in effective environmental education (Brown, 2003; Law, 2003). As Grossman (1995) found, teachers with weaker conceptual understanding of a subject area or discipline are likely to present information as arbitrary and rule-bound. Grossman also states that extent of knowledge influences teachers' abilities to construct explanations and/or new activities for students. Thus, a teacher with a weak knowledge of environmental care may present the environmental care code as a list of rules that leave little scope for individual judgement about the best course of action or for the development of an environmental ethic.

If ECE comprises a set of displayed rules only, then it will be largely ineffective in changing people's behaviour in the outdoors (Manning, 2003). This is because, as Manning (2003) points out, simply presenting students with information such as the environmental care code, does not constitute effective teaching and learning. I know from my own experience how easy it is for teachers to point out to students that they can access and read the environmental care code on websites, brochures and signs (for example, in national parks) and then to take the matter no further, possibly, in part, because of the teacher's own lack of knowledge about environmental care.

The skills and knowledge that come from sound environmental care education fall outside the domains of standard subject content. Rather, it is a personal choice of

behaviours that may affect an ecosystem over a longer period. These consequences are far more intangible and may be unobserved (Roggenbuck, 1992; Watson & Cronn, 1994). This environmental care skill set depends on the development of ethics in conjunction with skill teaching, which is something that educators generally are not comfortable with (Simmons, 1991).

There has been lack of advocacy for ECE in New Zealand. Before the introduction of the *Leave No Trace* programme in 2009, no organisations in New Zealand targeted ECE, a situation that has greatly limited opportunities to develop courses specifically on environmental care. Trends within teacher qualifications reinforce this lack of attention. The effect of a sinking lid on funding continues to force efficiencies and cut backs that invariably affect quality (Boyes, 2004). As a consequence, initial teacher education is becoming increasingly lecture based and often provides little practical outdoor education training. Anecdotal evidence suggests where outdoor training is provided, it focuses largely on the fundamentals of student safety and organisation and this, in turn, has marginalised the principles and practice of environmental care education.

The limited focus on training of teachers, teaching resources, and the subject specific knowledge reflect the priority (or lack of) given to ECE in EOTC. Matters relating to the environmental care code should not dominate all other aspects of EOTC. However, ECE does need a specific, acknowledged focus in EOTC so that it receives the attention it deserves. But does it really deserve a more prominent place in EOTC programmes?

The importance of ECE

At the extreme end of human impacts on the environment in New Zealand are wildfires that burn entire forests or the introduction of foreign species, such as didymo (an invasive algae), where the consequences are enduring, extensive and cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars (Biosecurity New Zealand, n.d.). At the more common end of human impacts are a wide range of poor practices such as littering, inadequate human waste disposal, feeding wildlife, and generally inconsiderate behaviour. The costs of these impacts are difficult to measure, as they can cause ecological damage and/or cultural and social insults. Which impacts are the worst is highly subjective.

Because of cost-cutting, the Department of Conservation (DOC) no longer monitors the impact of humans on our natural environment. We, consequently, no longer have robust evidence to support a national trend of increasing adverse environmental impacts. However, before DOC ended its monitoring, Sutton (2002) observed “increased use of some popular destinations has already led to unacceptable impacts” (p. 268). Human waste and rubbish continues to be left in large quantities in New Zealand’s ‘beauty spots’, which has led Basham (2008), amongst others, to advocate the need for a national protection policy. In order to maintain the quality of outdoor experiences, various advocates have called for legislation that would restrict freedom of movement and punish offenders (Basham, 2008; Kennedy, 2009).

While legislation has its place, it does allow us to nimbly shift the responsibility for these impacts on to government departments. According to Wallace (1990), the effectiveness of government authority (legal and punitive threats) in changing behaviour

is far inferior to the authority of the resource (explaining the consequences of actions in terms of the impacts to the ecosystem). Laws only work effectively when there is a chance of offenders being caught and punished. Enforcement is difficult or impossible at remote locations. In addition, regulations tend to antagonise people rather than to win their support (Marion & Reid, 2007; Sutton, 2002).

So, what can we do?

Clearly, there are limitations to a top-down, legislative approach. The inclusion of environmental care education is needed to address the knowledge deficit in New Zealand. Effective ECE programmes throughout the schooling system and in teacher pre-service and in-service education would act as a complement to, and a reinforcement of, the messages underlying the regulations and also reduce the requirement for further regulations. While posters, signs, and brochures are useful as reminders of the need to exercise care for the environment, employing a greater variety of methods will be more effective in bringing about deeper learning and behaviour change (Manning, 2003).

This signals the need for a whole range of professional development opportunities and accessible resources for the many teachers who may not have specific training in EOTC (Haddock, 2007a, 2007b; Zink & Boyes, 2006). Short courses for outdoor leaders are available on a variety of topics, including risk management and outdoor first aid. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) consider training effective when it enhances the leaders' knowledge of their curriculum and how to teach it. Many of these courses provide more than information; they also include practical exercises in the form of scenarios and teaching resources. While a review of literature revealed no research into improved student learning as a result of teachers attending outdoor training courses, according to the general findings of Timperley et al., these types of courses can be effective in changing teacher practices. The addition of short courses on environmental care could similarly lead to more environmentally skilled and knowledgeable educators. But while a leader's knowledge and skills may result in an increased focus on environmental care, these attributes may not bring about changes in people's behaviours when outdoors. Effective courses are those that facilitate enduring behaviour change (Marion & Reid, 2007).

The purpose of ECE is to provide people with information, skills and practices in order to make educated decisions about how they can reduce their impacts on the outdoor environment. But the steps between gaining information and changing behaviour are not simple. In order to minimise impacts, educators need to educate for behaviour change. How can we do this?

Changing behaviours

If providing information about what to do resulted in behaviour change, marketing would not be a career path. Increased knowledge and awareness do not automatically lead to behaviour change (Jucker, 2002). Understanding the reasons for inappropriate behaviours is helpful. Manning (2003, p. 2) posited that there are 5 types of action that cause environmental impacts. These actions are set out in the following table:

Table 1: Five actions causing impacts

Actions	Example or description
1. Careless	Often done without consideration of its effect, such as littering.
2. Uninformed	Inadequate information to make appropriate choices.
3. Unskilled	People know what they should do, but lack the skills (e.g. building a low impact campfire).
4. Unavoidable	Some activities will have an impact regardless of how careful people are.
5. Illegal	Deliberate violations of laws or regulations, such as graffiti on a historic site.

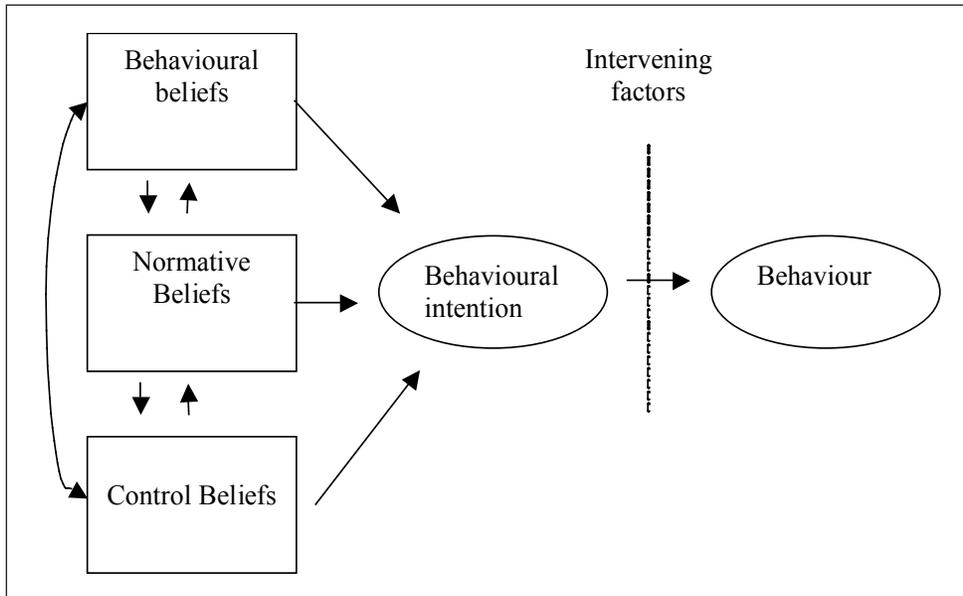
Careless, unskilled and uninformed behaviours are those most likely to be addressed through an education programme because they are unintentional. By contrast, illegal behaviour is unlikely to be changed by education as it is deliberate (Manning, 2003). Marion and Reid (2007) suggest that the vast majority of impacts are caused by the first four actions. While the illegal cases get media coverage, they are relatively rare.

Recourse to theoretical models of behaviour can be useful in helping us understand what influences behaviour. Simple linear models show knowledge leading to awareness/attitudes and then to behaviour. However, these models do not reflect the complexity of educating for behaviour change. Further information needs to be added to this linear model to identify the most influential factors in changing behaviour. Human behaviour is, of course, complex, and the factors that influence behaviour are diverse. The theory of planned behaviour, originally conceived by Ajzen (1991) has been tested repeatedly and shown to be a good predictor of behaviour (Manfredo, 2008). Under this model (see Figure 1), behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs all influence behavioural intention.

Behavioural beliefs reflect how important an individual considers the outcomes of a behaviour. For example, a person may consider that littering will have little impact in an area where there is already rubbish. Normative beliefs are an individual's perceptions of her/his social group's expectations of acceptable behaviour (peer pressure). Control beliefs are an individual's belief that he or she has the skills and knowledge necessary to complete the specified behaviour. These three types of belief, acting in concert, determine the strength of intention to behave in a certain way. Finally, as the model shows, behaviour driven by behavioural intention will not occur if intervening factors overwhelm the intention. For example, environmental care intentions can come unstuck due to fatigue, cold, hunger, and/or lack of equipment.

The model is particularly useful for those of us who are educators, because it shows us some of the key aspects that we need to address in order to gather sufficient strength of behavioural intention. While this model adds different dimensions, it is still a simplification and generally explains around 25-30% of behaviour (Kaiser, Huebner,

Figure 1: Representation of the theory of planned behaviour



Source: Ajzen, 1991, p. 182.

& Bogner, 2005). While this does not seem like a high percentage, it is one of the best models available and does provide some guidance. Increasing the array of exposures to a message (for example, reading about a particular environmental practice, discussing it, and performing scenarios) over a period of time and in different settings should result in greater levels of behavioural intention.

For those of us who are involved in EOTC, these models also show how we can more effectively engage with the principles and practice of environmental care and teach these to our students. Throughout our time with students, we need to display positive attitudes to the behaviours we want changed, and to model those behaviours. To achieve this, we need to allow time for ourselves to spend enjoying the outdoors, and testing and learning the behaviours we want our students to acquire. We need to believe—and to convey this belief to our students—that our individual actions do make a difference. Nowhere can we demonstrate this more clearly than when camping. The stream that provides our drinking water needs to be kept separate from where we deposit our toilet waste. We need to ensure our food is positioned so that it cannot be accessed by animals. An opossum that finds a food bag becomes habituated to our food and gains valuable energy for reproduction. Soon we have more opossums eating our native plants and animals and aggressively seeking human food.

Social norms are important. We need to work hard in the outdoors, whether with colleagues, friends or students, to develop a group culture of respect for the environment through appreciation and understanding of the ecosystem. Our friends, co-workers and family will determine, to a large, extent our attitudes and behaviour. We can be powerful in the creation of group culture. Hearing the voices of many different people

helps us in this regard: students, teachers, the people we meet, and guest speakers can all reinforce the message that environmental care is the accepted norm. Behavioural control can be enhanced by practice and repetition over time. We need to learn what to do and how to do it, from digging a cat hole for toilet waste to being considerate of the other people we meet.

We also need to plan ahead and prepare in order to integrate ECE into our programmes. ECE should be a seamless part of the whole EOTC programme. This approach should ensure that when unforeseen situations arise while we are outdoors and when time is squeezed, ECE is not relegated to the sidelines but remains as an essential part of the programme. Those of us who teach pre-service teachers and require them to lead outdoor classes as part of their practicum or Education Outside the Classroom experience, need to provide these students with time to plan, with appropriate resources and with feedback on their planned programme before everyone sets off. We need to emphasise to them the importance of embedding ECE in their planned outdoor programme. Student-led classes are often the highlight of a course and provide an opportunity for students to develop the attitudes and behaviour changes required to bring about environmental care.

Conclusion and recommendations

This article considers that the barriers that hinder the effective delivery of quality ECE in our EOTC programmes can be overcome through the approaches considered in this article. Having students engage, while outdoors, in activities such as waste disposal that exemplify care for the environment is not difficult. Ensuring that the values underlying such activities translate into long-term attitudinal and behavioural changes needs to be a sustained focus of all our education programmes, whether conducted in the classroom or outdoors.

Students need to be given opportunity to read about, practise, and discuss why the environmental care practices we teach them when outdoors are necessary. Again, this provision need not be difficult. We can address the requisite knowledge, attitudinal and behavioural deficits without requiring much extra content in the already crowded curriculum of training and assessment schedules. Research shows, for example, that integrating programmes such as *Leave No Trace* is effective in sustaining behavioural change (Daniels & Marion, 2005; Marion & Reid, 2007; Settina, 2006). In addition, assessment and training opportunities should make genuine effort to incorporate a meaningful and relevant environmental care focus. Although the aim is to move ECE from the sidelines of EOTC, the focus on ECE should not overwhelm other aspects of education but rather complement them.

Direct experience of nature in early life is significant in developing an affection for and connection with the outdoor environment (Ewert, Place, & Sibthorp, 2005). Fostering this feeling is important because we will not fight for what we do not love (Martin, 2008). There is ample opportunity for us to explore ethics related to different wilderness and outdoor settings in contemporary New Zealand. Opportunity for students to enter these environments through EOTC is an important step in helping students recognise the value of the outdoors and to learn behaviours that allow them to protect it. Our success in environmental care education may be measured in the quantity and quality of beauty and solitude, naturalness, and mystery.

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Book Reviews

Young, M. and Gamble, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*. HSRC Press.

(www.hsrcpress.ac.za/product.php?productid=2152&cat=8&page=1&featured&)

Reviewed by Graham McPhail

University of Auckland, New Zealand

For those concerned with the problem of educational knowledge and what Michael Young has termed the ‘educational dilemma’ (Young, 2010), the collection of papers comprising *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education* is an invaluable and attractively accessible resource (available as a free download). In 2004 the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa initiated a four month research project led by Michael Young and centred on post-compulsory further education and training (FET). Papers from six authors involved in that project have been brought together by the editors, Michael Young and Jeanne Gamble. Thematically the book consists of three parts which consider qualifications and curriculum reform, knowledge differentiation, and the relationship between higher educational curricula and the workplace. The strength of the volume lies in the symbiotic presence of theory and its application in the given context; theoretical perspectives concerning the sociology of knowledge are made more powerful and accessible by being directly applied to the problems of curriculum conception and restructuring in South Africa. The underlying concepts, issues, and experiences of curriculum reform resonate across international boundaries. Collectively the case is well made for an approach that puts knowledge firmly in the picture in the development of curriculum and qualifications. Only in this way, the writers argue, is structured access provided for learners to important and powerful knowledge.

The significance of the relationship between theory and its application is most clearly visible in the chapters by Muller on curriculum differentiation and progression (chapter 4), and Young, on conceptualising vocational knowledge (chapter 6). Muller uses Bernstein’s constructs of vertical and horizontal discourses to delineate the varied knowledge structures that are present within school subject disciplines. He argues that cognisance of varied knowledge structures has direct implications for curriculum structure, content and pedagogy: “the appropriate lesson to be drawn here is that different knowledge structures have different curricular specificatory requirements” (p. 72). This is particularly so for subjects with a strong verticality, or a strong progression of knowledge, where content sequence and coverage are of paramount importance. Muller

argues that, through a process he terms de-differentiation, the reform of the Senior Certificate does not adequately recognise knowledge differentiation and progression, with significant implications for student learning and access to knowledge.

The theoretical heart of the book is chapter six where Michael Young covers important issues in relation to social theories of knowledge and knowledge forms. (Readers familiar with Young's book *Bringing Knowledge Back In*, will recognise much of this chapter). Young argues that most reforms in the area of vocational education and training (VET) have failed to confront fundamental epistemological issues. The core of the chapter outlines a thesis for the adoption of a social realist position in relation to knowledge. While the arguments are clearly applicable to the VET context under examination in the book, the implications are wide reaching. In fact, by invoking concepts from Durkheim and Bernstein, Young makes a powerful case for social realism as essential to the development and progress of all forms of educational knowledge. He argues that while social constructivism can provide an important critical perspective "it is unable to deal with the question of vocational knowledge itself" (p. 105). Enter the social realist approach which deals with "epistemological issues that are involved in the differentiation of knowledge" (p. 115). Durkheim's profane and sacred orders of knowledge embedded in different forms of social order have been further reconceptualised by Bernstein as vertical and horizontal discourses, and Young employs these constructs for their explanatory potential concerning knowledge and its varied forms. Cognisance of these forms (the internal structuring, contents and purpose of knowledge) is pivotal in the arguments and developments concerning the accessibility of knowledge and its form and place in educational institutions worldwide and not only within the context of VET.

In chapter seven Paula Ensor presents a fascinating case study of the decline of the influence of the university over post-compulsory education. She outlines the struggle in South Africa concerning the school leaving certificate, essentially a battle between conceptions of qualification structures as discipline-based or segmented into a unit standard structure. Ensor utilises Bernstein's concepts of recontextualising fields, the official field and the pedagogic field, to assist in clarifying the process of competition over the restructuring of the qualification. Most importantly within the South African context, Ensor suggests that the universities took exception to the development of an educational structure which "saw provision, and expertise, as dispersed rather than concentrated in institutions specialised for the purpose of teaching and learning" (p. 133). The formally hegemonic university influence is significantly reduced and its role as the legitimator of knowledge is no longer accepted by the state as a given. Curriculum structure, content, and gate keeping qualifications must now be negotiated with state agencies.

Readers, whose subject association is with disciplines more towards the horizontal end of the knowledge structure continuum, will find Barnett's chapter (chapter 8) particularly useful. As with many of the writers he invokes Bernstein, in this case extending the concepts of classification, recontextualisation, and framing to the area of vocational curricula. He discusses the challenges of incorporating disciplinary knowledge into vocational programmes which then must necessarily look 'both ways',

towards vocational structures (situated workplace knowledge) and discipline knowledge structures. He places vocational knowledge at a 'boundary' which presents particular challenges for teachers who need familiarity and expertise "with the 'discourses' on either side of the divide" (p. 155).

In chapter five Gamble also considers the relationship between knowledge, pedagogy and workplaces or real-world knowledge. Her aim is "not to play off one curricular dispensation against the other" (p. 88) but to clarify the similarities and differences between the structures and approaches of academic study, vocational study (career-oriented) and occupational study (career-specific). Her analysis considers the underlying structures of context-dependent knowledge (theoretical or conceptual knowledge) and context-independent knowledge (practical knowledge); in Bernstein's terminology, vertical and horizontal discourses. While context-independent and context-dependent knowledges are fundamentally different Gamble argues that vocational curricula need both conceptual and practical content to ensure students are provided not only with access to knowledge that can assist with employability but also with knowledge that can scaffold to further study. In this regard "the vocational curriculum must face in two directions" (p. 94).

The problems that result in reducing curriculum structures and qualifications to an outcomes-based system are the focus of the chapter by Allais (chapter 2). The author shows how fundamental issues concerning knowledge structures were further complicated by the reform process itself in South Africa, which has been marred by contradictions and confusions over responsibilities and roles. One of the key problems has been the extent to which the reforms will be able to restructure academic and vocational education within one national qualifications framework. Allais discusses the way in which a lack of acknowledgment of the varying underlying structures of knowledge types and the general acceptance of the 'design down' idea, where course content is designed from outcome statements rather than bodies of knowledge, has led to over-optimistic assumptions concerning a one size fits all curriculum and qualifications system. Allais convincingly demonstrates how unacceptably varied content is the most likely result of an outcome-based system where qualifications, rather than bodies of knowledge, are the drivers of content.

Young's chapter on reforming the further education and training curriculum (FET), although titled an international perspective, is very much centred on the reform options in South Africa (chapter 3). Much of this chapter is given over to explaining the historical origins and development of three pathways for further education and training in South Africa, the general academic, the vocational, and the occupational, and to formulating key questions for consideration based on the identified trends. Similarly to Gamble and Barnett, Young identifies challenges concerning the recontextualisation of educational curricula that must encompass the potential for both higher education and employability and reconcile likely tensions between the need for "increased attention to knowledge content and, on the other hand, populist demands for greater diversity and access" (p. 57). The chapter ends with a series of questions for research and policy which successfully shift the focus from the preoccupation with qualifications and standards back to the institutions that must be supported and equipped to deliver

effective programmes. Young's view is that this shift is likely to be achieved through strategies that draw on both systematic procedural knowledge from industries and services and occupationally recontextualised disciplinary knowledge.

The wider contexts that have influenced educational change over the last few decades are outlined in the opening chapter and provide an effective reference point from which to consider the arguments of the other writers both at the outset of the book and again as a coda. Young and Gamble remind us of the political and economic forces beyond education that have changed its structures and practices towards flexibilisation and commodification. The authors suggest that the central concern of the book is to present viable alternatives to the dominant economic and market approaches for conceptualising and realising educational policy, "approaches that might, in the long run, make a more successful contribution both to economic growth and greater equality" (p. 2). The outcomes-driven approach runs the risk of side-lining the very essence of educational endeavours, that of knowledge acquisition and understanding, and the contextualised arguments in the book demonstrate the problems involved when the specification of knowledge content and its pedagogical differentiation is not clearly theorised and understood. The book makes a strong case in support of acknowledging the distinctive features of knowledge production, acquisition and transmission within education as fundamental to progress in the development of meaningful curricula and qualifications.

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Reviewed by Airini

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Every student deserves the chance to succeed through education. This might be through achieving a professional or trade qualification, but it could also be about life-at-large, further choices in higher education, and the ability to contribute to society's dynamics through access to knowledge. Leesa Wheelahan's *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum: A social realist argument* is about how the relationship between knowledge and curriculum might help make greater notions of success happen through education. Fundamentally this is an argument about distributional justice and the ways in which knowledge can enable all students to participate in what Wheelahan calls 'society's conversation'. At a time when 'the knowledge economy', and 'student-centred learning' have such a presence in education thinking, Wheelahan argues for knowledge and equity in the distribution of life chances. This is an important book for both researchers and graduate students because it offers the timely reminders that theoretical knowledge is socially powerful knowledge, and that what we know and how we know are the means through which we all might, as Michael Young (2008, p. 41) says "make connections" to imagine alternative futures.

Knowledge matters because knowledge in relation to curriculum is about "distributional justice", equity, and agency. Wheelahan argues that the principal goal of policies, programmes and practices in schooling and vocational and higher education should be to provide students with access to knowledge. The cut and thrust of her argument is the agency for justice and equity that is offered by theoretical knowledge in curriculum. From her sociological and social realist perspective, unequal outcomes of education could be derived from socially differentiated access to knowledge in education rather than deficits of those who are disadvantaged. With her strong background as a scholar in vocational education and technology (VET), Wheelahan makes the crucial observation that theoretical knowledge is at the core of tradespeople and professionals participating in the debates and controversies within their field. It is in this way they and society therefore can think and 'converse' towards new futures.

Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum can be usefully read alongside Wheelahan's wider scholarship and policy advice on how VET students might be helped to develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet new demands within the sector, and be best prepared for study at a higher level within their field. In a commissioned literature review on the quality of teaching in VET (see <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>) Wheelahan described how competency-based teaching has been critiqued where it undermines a shared sense of purpose and emphasises regulation and compliance. As a counterpoint Wheelahan proposed empowering teachers as professionals so that a new consensus can be built about VET teaching qualifications to meet emerging needs. In *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum* we have the related, in-depth exploration of how this matter of programme and curriculum design relates to

theoretical knowledge as the precondition for VET (and other) teachers' participation in effective democracy.

Wheelahan's argument is intentionally situated in VET in Australia, yet is highly significant in broader spheres. For example, Dominic Boyer's (2010) commentary on *university* reform has suggested a focus on the knowledge economy is leading universities to increasingly aim for industrial competencies. He posits a pathological decline by universities into an "industrial and post-political space" (Boyer, 2010, p. 74). Wheelahan offers both a sociological and critical realist way forward. She modifies Bernstein's analysis of social relations of knowledge by profiling the epistemic relations of knowledge to show how they "co-determine knowledge" (Wheelahan, 2010, p.49). In so doing she provides a means for critiquing knowledge production and its reproduction in curriculum. As Rata has pointed out (2010, p. 79) it at this very point of critical scholarship about knowledge that action, rather than stasis occurs. "Agency," says Rata (2010, p. 79) in support of critical scholarship about university reform, "occurs when people act". Wheelahan's analysis is action.

Action has already been underway amongst scholars exploring "a Pacific body of knowledge and wisdom" (Puamau, 2005, p. 25). *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum* has the potential to add to this discussion through Wheelahan's thorough analysis of different dimensions of knowledge, including intransitive and transitive, disciplinary and everyday, spiritual and scientific, conservative and dynamic. Some scholars have identified a need for a holistic approach to thinking about Pacific peoples, education and knowledge (Fua, 2005, p. 112) and an associated need to "create and participate in conversations that advance multi-dimensional references that explain the rich ethnic identities of Pacific children, youth and their families" (Anae, 2010, p. 1). This is an endeavour framed as "careful and critical questioning of colonial assumptions about the Pacific and its educational needs" (Fua, 2005, p. 112). The knowledge that matters in curriculum has cultural references that include "socio-political history, spiritual and/or religious values, mother-tongue language, cultural as well as contemporary traditions, sub-cultures (for example, non-ethnic self identities) and issues within the larger cultural context" (Anae, 2010, p. 1). Knowledge in this sense should be emancipatory and communicated through pedagogic and organisational practices that emphasise the cultural assets of students rather than deficits (Airini et al, 2009). Curriculum is where "generations struggle to define themselves and the world" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 848). In combination this approach to knowledge and curriculum can mean that some of the "conversations" that Wheelahan's has proposed, might take priority over others. His Excellency Tui Atua Tapua Tamasese Ta'isi suggests, "...watch for the clutters of life that can unnecessarily impede our focus on what really matters. What matters in the pursuit of indigenous Pacific knowledges is that it survives-and survives because it gives us meaning and belonging. Everything else is clutter" (Efi, 2004). One of the intellectual challenges ahead in a careful reading of *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum* is to explore the conditions, if any, under which an equity imperative arising from access to theoretical knowledge might justify greater importance being placed upon some voices, and some thinking 'already thought'. Could the most important knowledge for alternative futures ever be knowledge that is

traditional, conservative and ‘eternal’?

However we conceive of a sociology of knowledge, it is clear that in theories and knowledge we have the “raw materials” (Wheelahan, 2010, p. 75) for new conversations about what society in a modern age should be like. Young (2010) presented a challenge based on the central importance of knowledge: “If we are to give the concept of a knowledge society any meaning, we need to take the knowledge question seriously and that this involves a knowledge-led and subject-led, not a learner-led, curriculum.” (2010, p. 1). *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum* is a serious addition to critical scholarship about a meaningful knowledge society. There are no time or scope for a retreat from knowledge in curriculum. The need for greater opportunities for every student to experience success through education requires more talking about what matters, made possible by more access to powerful knowledge. As Wheelahan says, even with the critical platform on which *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum* is built, “[w]e are just at the beginning and the conversation is wide open... There is much to do” (Wheelahan, 2010, p. 162).

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About the Authors

Dr Airini has an adult education and teaching background and is Head of School, Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. Her research focuses on equity in higher education, with a particular interest in how organisations, leaders, and educators can make changes for better outcomes for students and staff. She is a director/ co-director of three national and international projects in adult education, and has been an adviser to the New Zealand and other OECD governments on adult foundation education, adult literacy, minority student achievement in universities, teacher education, national education strategy, national curriculum development, and the establishment of New Zealand's National Centre for Excellence in Tertiary Teaching – Ako Aotearoa.

Kathryn Ecclestone is Professor of Education and Social Inclusion at the University of Birmingham. She has published and spoken widely on the effects of education policy on everyday assessment and teaching activities and attitudes to learning in further, higher and adult education. Her most recent book, with Dennis Hayes, is *The Dangerous Rise of the Therapeutic Education*, a controversial critique of the ways in which education policy and practice focuses increasingly on the emotional vulnerability of children, young people and adults.

Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh taught at the University of Languages and International Studies (Vietnam National University) for two years. She completed her MA in Lifelong Learning as an Erasmus Mundus student at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Graham McPhail is a doctoral student in the School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand. He was for 21 years a secondary school music teacher and is currently the National Assessment Moderator for secondary school music in New Zealand. Recent publications include 'Searching for standards in the NCEA: assessing musical performance' (2008), 'Crossing boundaries: sharing concepts of music teaching from classroom to studio' (2010) and 'Finding the balance: teachers as recontextualising agents in the struggle between classical and popular music in the secondary school curriculum' (2010).

Robert Nola is a Professor of Philosophy at The University of Auckland. He works in philosophy of science, metaphysics, epistemology as well as the sociology of science and science education. His recent books include: with co-author Gurol Irzik, *Philosophy, Science, Education and Culture* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2005); with co-author Howard

Sankey, *Theories of Scientific Method* (Chesham, Acumen Press 2007); and with co-editor David Braddon-Mitchell, *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2009). His current work about religion and philosophy and science is developed in two forthcoming papers, 'Religion is Owed no Respect', and 'Do Naturalistic Explanations of Religious Beliefs Debunk Religion?'

Chris North is a lecturer in Outdoor and Environmental Education at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has worked in science education and outdoor education for 15 years in New Zealand, Switzerland and North America, including secondary and tertiary education, and as a tourist guide. He has a passion for extended journeys and feels strongly that minimum impact education is crucial in order to develop environmentally responsible behaviour.

Rob Strathdee is Professor of Education and the Head of School of the School of Education Policy and Implementation at Victoria University of Wellington. His recent books are *Participatory development in Kenya* (with J. Mwanzia), and *Tertiary education in the 21st century: Economic change and social networks*. His research interests are in education policy/sociology (particularly tertiary level), vocational education and training, the labour market, and social class and inequality.

Theresa Tan spent ten years as a primary school teaching in Singapore. She is currently studying towards a post-graduate qualification in education at Victoria University of Wellington.

Michael Young is Emeritus Professor at the Institute of Education University of London and Visiting Professor at the universities of Bath (UK) Witwatersrand and Pretoria (South Africa), and Capital Normal University (Beijing). In 2009 he was a keynote speaker at the Annual Conference of the European Council of Educational Research in Vienna and at the 75th Anniversary Conference of the New Zealand Council for Education Research. In 2010 he gave a Dean's Lecture in the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Hood Fellow in the Faculty of Education, and Distinguished Fellow in the School of Critical Studies in Education, University of Auckland. His research interests are in the sociology of knowledge and education with special reference to the school curriculum, vocational education and the role of qualifications. He was Lead Researcher on a recently completed 16 country research project for the International Labour Organisation in Geneva on Implementing NQFs. His most recent book is *Bringing Knowledge Back In* (Routledge 2008).

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