Powerful Knowledge

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Knowledge and Control
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION
edited by Michael F.D. Young

Bringing Knowledge Back In
From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education

Knowledge and the Future School

Curriculum and the Specialisation of Knowledge
Studies in the sociology of education

### 3 models of curriculum:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum model</th>
<th>Approach to knowledge</th>
<th>Who it’s for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future 1</td>
<td>Knowledge is fixed; there is best knowledge: traditional subjects</td>
<td>Elite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future 2</td>
<td>Knowledge is constructed; there is no best knowledge; knowledge isn’t important</td>
<td>All the children who were “shut out” of Future 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future 3</td>
<td>Knowledge is constructed; there is best knowledge as agreed by the subject community</td>
<td>All children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Powerful Knowledge:

1. The substantive knowledge that holds the most power: opens the most doors, takes the learner furthest from themselves

2. The disciplinary knowledge that is the origin of the truth-claims of a subject – an awareness of the rules and procedures by which new knowledge is generated and approved
10 points about powerful knowledge:

1. Knowledge is worthwhile in itself.
2. Schools transmit shared and powerful knowledge on behalf of society.
3. Shared and powerful knowledge is verified through learned communities.
4. Children need powerful knowledge to understand and interpret the world.
5. Powerful knowledge transcends and liberates children from their daily experience.
6. Shared and powerful knowledge enables children to grow into useful citizens.
7. Shared knowledge is a foundation for a just and sustainable democracy.
8. It is fair and just that all children should have access to this knowledge.
9. Accepted adult authority is required for shared knowledge transmission.
Leading powerful knowledge in a school

1. Get behaviour right

2. Share the vision and intellectualise your staff

3. Treat it as a grand project and project-manage
Key points:
There is best knowledge – it is defined by our subject communities.
Subject communities are extremely important for powerful knowledge and future.
For the social justice agenda it is imperative that all students are taught this powerful knowledge.

What are we going to do about it?
Build curricula of this best knowledge – the given and the up-for-grabs, the substantive and the disciplinary.
Participate in subject communities – both formal and grassroots – take the conversation to them if they are not having it already.
Fight for a powerful knowledge curriculum for all.