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## **Chapter 1**

### **Debating the place of knowledge within geography education: reinstatement, reclamation or recovery?**

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#### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the recent debates about knowledge among sociologists in education, subsequently narrowing its focus to consider the response to such debates from within the geography education community. It starts by reflecting on the development of ideas about both the place and function of knowledge in schools towards the end of the last century, drawing in turn on the social constructivist and social realist positions adopted by Michael Young, and others. After considering Young and Muller's concepts of Future 1, 2 and 3 curricula the chapter concludes by pursuing the connection between the theoretical conceptions of powerful knowledge, different models of curricular futures and geography education. It is apparent that for many geography educationists the importance of the connection between powerful knowledge and 'everyday' knowledge in the school curriculum is not yet successfully articulated in the geography curriculum.

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Roger Firth (2011), in considering the implications for geography education of recent debates about knowledge and curriculum, starts his analysis by citing the work of Ron Barnett (2009). Barnett asserts the necessity for educationists to debate whether knowledge should be 'reinstated, reclaimed or recovered' in the subject-led curriculum. On the face of it Barnett's suggestion appears to be rather odd - for if education is about anything it is surely about the attainment of knowledge, something primarily achieved by students facing the challenges of engaging with subject disciplines. Although Barnett mainly refers to students' acquisition of knowledge in the context of higher education, the principles of gaining knowledge apply equally strongly to education in schools.

Debates about the place of knowledge in geography education have recently become more animated - encouraged by consideration of the work of Michael Young and Johan Muller

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(among others), both of whom have helped to provide the intellectual stimulus for geography educationists to (re) consider the importance of knowledge in the geography curriculum (Muller 2000, 2009, Muller and Young 2008, Young 2008 a,b, Young and Muller 2007, 2010). Roberts (2011) and Lambert (2011) have arguably foregrounded concerns in the geography education community about the retreat from subject knowledge, both in schools and initial teacher education, highlighting how the conceptualisation of teachers merely as skilled technicians has led to impoverished thinking about the role of knowledge in education. The educational contribution of the traditional subject disciplines has been widely debated, not least by sociologists of education who identify the consequences of teaching and learning on students' social mobility and equality of opportunity. Discussion about conceptions of knowledge take us back to the philosophers of ancient Greece, who distinguished between 'pure' (theoretical, conceptual, scientific, context independent) and 'applied' (crafts, skills, 'everyday', context-dependent) knowledge forms. From here arises the distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic value of knowledge; the difference between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'. We must not lose sight of such divisions. Additionally, alongside considerations of substantive subject knowledge (which are those mainly pursued in this chapter), there is also a necessity to consider forms of syntactic subject knowledge that give young people epistemic access to geography.

My intention in this chapter is to start by exploring recent debates about knowledge among sociologists in education, then to narrow the focus to explore the response from within the geography education community. I begin by looking at the development of ideas about both the place and function of knowledge towards the end of the last century.

## **1.2 The new sociology of education**

Michael Young's work on knowledge goes back to the early 1970s. In *Knowledge and Control* (Young 1971) he recognises the social origins of knowledge in a book that became central to the 'new sociology of education'. Significantly this work included essays by Bernstein and Bourdieu, whose contributions on social justice and education meshed closely with the thrust of ideas being promoted by the 'new sociology'. Here the process of cultural transmission of knowledge and control was highlighted –facilitating an analysis of the transfer of both power and status afforded by particular forms of education and curricula which lay at the heart of education in modern societies (Firth 2011). *Knowledge and Control* essentially explores the relationship between knowledge, curriculum and power – offering evidence that the post war educational project in English state schools had largely failed. The curriculum that most state school students studied was based on elite, or middle class, values and views which (it was argued) proved inaccessible to working class children and ensured the maintenance of a distinct social and cultural elite (see also Willis 1977). Deeply concerned with the promotion of social justice through education, the supporters of the new sociology of education questioned the dominance of traditional subjects in state school curricula believing that they promoted neo liberal and cultural restorationist values (Rawling 2001).

However, over the course of the last half century, Young developed rather different ideas. The educational arguments he helped to advance through the new sociology of education movement, based as they were on social constructivist assumptions, he now considers to be

unsatisfactory attempts to establish a sociological foundation for debate about the curriculum (Firth 2011). As Young stated recently: 'It took me a long time to recognize that freedom from the existing curriculum without access to knowledge leads nowhere' (Young 2014 p.13). Nonetheless, despite its now recognisable flaws, the new sociology movement did succeed in challenging the mostly uncritical acceptance in England of the ideas of liberal education and the 'passing on' of time-honoured traditions of thinking (see Hirst 1972, Hirst and Peters, 1970; Oakeshott 1972), opening up altered perceptions of the connections between curriculum, knowledge and power (Firth 2011).

### 1.3 Social realism

So how has Young's thinking changed? In '*Bringing Knowledge Back In: from social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*' (Young 2008a) the importance of the contribution of knowledge to the curriculum is seen as paramount. Young argues strongly that the place, role and function of knowledge in education has been largely neglected by politicians, schools and educationists to the detriment of disadvantaged students. Indeed, the secondary school curriculum is characterised as having shifted unhelpfully towards emphasizing the preparation of young people for employment and good citizenship - something curricula have always struggled to achieve - rather than prioritising the gaining of knowledge (see Hartley 2008, Firth 2011). This downplaying of knowledge, at the time Young was writing, was clearly evident in New Labour's project to strengthen the skills-based curriculum in schools, with a concomitant impact on the status of disciplinary knowledge. The focus on 'learning more than teaching', alongside the promotion of 'National Strategies', was part and parcel of other reforms that increasingly positioned schools, and their leadership teams, as businesses that would be subject to increasingly stringent school inspections and improvement measures. Mitchell and Lambert (2015) helpfully reflect on the impact of neo-liberalism on education – which forced teachers to be more accountable (measured against externally set standards and competencies) and consequently shifted our notions of teacher professionalism. Educational policies that would supposedly help to prepare young people to work and compete in a volatile global economy have introduced:

Notions of flexibility and soft, transferable skills (which) supported a view of the subject knowledge of 'traditional' academic subjects as outdated and of questionable 'relevance' to learners. Knowledge, in this view, was equated with *information* which could be readily accessed outside school. The school's role, rather than providing access to subject knowledge, was to facilitate learning (Mitchell and Lambert 2015)

Pondering on how the (Geography) National Curriculum has changed since its inception in 1991, John Morgan (2014a) refers to a 'retreat from knowledge' and the maintenance by politicians of a 'curriculum of the dead'. In essence, Morgan's analysis of the direction of travel of the school curriculum over the last quarter century reveals that 'the 'what' of curriculum (has) seemed less important than the 'how' of learning' (Morgan 2014a). Here knowledge is viewed as a social construction, where subjects are seen as arbitrary collections of content whose boundaries are not that important – in essence, if the curriculum can be shaped to interest and motivate disengaged children into greater participation in learning, but *without* a significant contribution from subjects, then so be it.

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Other geography educators share Morgan's concern. Firth, commenting on the place of subjects in schools, observed that:

(education reform) has involved narrowing the aims of education to economic and social purposes and led to a focus on competencies and skills, and the shift in learning towards personalisation and learning outcomes. In all of this, abstract, formal or disciplinary knowledge is being increasingly marginalised in the curriculum in all sectors of education and in many countries (Firth 2011 p.143).

Mitchell and Lambert (2015) also warn against geography lessons that over prioritize 'social issues' and 'opinion forming' at the expense of gaining geographical knowledge:

If geographical knowledge development is not a core concern of the teacher/curriculum maker the question could be asked: What knowledge is being side-lined by elevating topicality and presumed 'relevance' in the classroom? (Mitchell and Lambert 2015)

But let us not lose sight of Young's contribution. The title of Young's 2008 book is revealing – it states that the author had moved from a position of supporting the notions of 'social constructivism to social realism'. Social constructivism is generally understood to be a theory of knowledge that applies the philosophical principles of constructivism in social settings. Here groups *construct* knowledge, collaboratively creating a culture of shared understandings and meanings. It contains the proposition that knowledge, including so-called 'scientific knowledge', is neither neutral nor independent of its cultural norms and values - but is actually *socially* constructed in support of particular values and understandings; hence the link between knowledge and power. Immersion within different forms of knowledge allows one to function both intellectually and socially - the implications of elite groups defining knowledge/curriculum which may act to reproduce their own inherent advantages are therefore considerable. The objectivity, or truth, of knowledge is seen as being dependent on two dimensions: the *social* dimension, that is, the ability of the knowledge claims to gain support both within and beyond a community of experts/scholars/academics, and the *realist* dimension, that is, the coherence and validity of the ways in which knowledge can explain phenomena<sup>1</sup>.

Social realism describes an increasingly influential school of thought in the study of knowledge and education, which places knowledge at the core. Providing students with access to disciplinary knowledge in schools is regarded as essential – it is an issue of social justice, because people need such knowledge to conduct debates, to address problems and to inform decisions within the societies in which they live. Social realists also believe that theoretical knowledge is being marginalised in the curricula of all sectors of education - particularly through competency-based training, which still provides the dominant curriculum model for vocational education in many countries. An important question for social realists is therefore: What should we teach in our schools (and in higher education institutions)? We can extend and refocus this question by asking: 'Is disciplinary and theoretical knowledge still important in schools?'

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that this representation of social realism underplays ontological realism and promotes epistemological realism. The former recognises that knowledge is about something other than itself; or, put another way, that reality exists independently, beyond the discourses that help us to shape our understanding of the world.

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In principle, social realists support the production of knowledge-based curricula which promote social justice and social mobility. Here knowledge is seen as an 'object' rather than as a 'process'; which leads to the rejection of conceptions of knowledge as 'malleable' and 'arbitrary' (Morgan 2014a). Thus, by adopting a social realist stance, Young chooses to emphasize the conditions and collective practices of knowledge generation that enable communities of experts to construct knowledge. This leads to a number of beliefs about knowledge: that knowledge, truth and objectivity can be recognised as fundamentally social categories - where knowledge is a rational consensus of the best evidence, and the most powerful theories, conceived by experts; that knowledge has 'testable' explanations, which are open to challenge; and that knowledge is best organised into domains with boundaries, these being associated with specialist subject communities (which are often discipline-based). These assertions have significant implications for the positioning of knowledge within the geography curriculum, and indeed within the curricula of all school subjects.

Young's championing of the importance of knowledge in the school curriculum does not distract from his underlying concerns about the connections between knowledge and power. The anxieties expressed about the relationship between education and social mobility in the early 1970s by the 'new sociologists' are still apparent, but with a clearer articulation and distinction between what Young refers to as the 'knowledge of the powerful' and 'powerful knowledge'. The former relates to what Young once termed 'high-status' knowledge, a concept that reverberates with Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) ideas about the accumulation of 'cultural capital' prevalent within the ruling classes. The latter offers epistemic access to the language, traditions, norms and ways of thinking offered by the subject disciplines which enable young people to 'find their way', both intellectually and socially. Formal learning environments (schools, colleges, universities) are considered the most appropriate places for such theoretical concepts to be understood, in contrast to the 'everyday knowledge' gained elsewhere which largely eschews generalisation and abstraction. Concerns about whether social reproduction or social mobility is afforded through education are not far beneath the surface, questions I have briefly explored with others elsewhere (see Collins, Collins and Butt 2013).

Many sociological critiques of school knowledge have focused on the relationships between knowledge and power – particularly the balance achieved between academic disciplines, school subjects and vocational education. By refusing students access to powerful knowledge, Young believes, schools actively reproduce social inequalities. As such, he argues that students are poorly served if schools construct an alternative curriculum around *their* experience:

School may be the only opportunity that they have to acquire powerful knowledge and be able to move, intellectually at least, beyond their local and particular circumstances (Young, 2009a: 15).

Young (2009b) therefore raises important concerns for all subject communities (including geographers) when he asks the following :

- In what ways is (subject) knowledge powerful knowledge?
- What aspects of (subject) knowledge do we want young people to acquire?
- How should this knowledge be organised within the school curriculum?
- How should we recognise the historical and social basis of (a subject) as an academic discipline?

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Fortunately, his recent work with Johan Muller goes some way to exploring these questions through the concepts of Future 1, 2 and 3 (F1, 2 and 3) curricula (Young and Muller 2010). In condensed form, given the space afforded for this chapter, these are explained in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Concepts of Future 1, 2 and 3 curricula (after Hammond 2015)

<p><b>Future 1</b> — Boundaries are given and fixed — this ‘Future’ is associated with an <u>‘under-socialised’</u> concept of knowledge:</p> <p>‘traditional knowledge’ - Morgan (2014b) refers to this as the ‘time honoured collection of ideas, theories, ‘Great Books’, and facts ... of value in their own right’, observing that ‘school geography is increasingly ‘empty’ of geographical knowledge’</p> <p>Knowledge as ‘given’, offering a route for high achievers into the academy</p> <p>Education used to introduce select social groups into dominant knowledge traditions</p> <p>Transmission styles of pedagogy, ‘one way’ model of teaching and learning</p> <p>Knowledge is static and socially conservative, continuation of the ‘elite system’</p> <p>‘under socialized’, as it does not sufficiently recognise the social, historical and cultural conditions of its production (Morgan 2014b)</p> <p>origins in a ‘system which transmits elite cultural knowledge to the ‘select few’’ (Young and Muller 2010, p 16)</p> <p>‘treats access to knowledge as the core purpose of the curriculum and assumes that the range of subjects and the boundaries that define that knowledge are largely given. It tends towards being.... a ‘curriculum for compliance’ and in extreme cases encourages little more than memorization and rote learning’ (Young 2011a)</p>
<p><b>Future 2</b> — The end of boundaries — this ‘Future’ is associated with an <u>‘over-socialised’</u> concept of knowledge:</p> <p>Steady weakening of knowledge boundaries</p> <p>Integration of some school subjects (humanities, interdisciplinary studies)</p> <p>Curriculum content understood more in terms of ‘outcomes’ and generic skills</p> <p>‘Knowledge-building’ (facilitative) ways of learning favoured, rather than transmission (directive) teaching</p> <p>Use of the everyday knowledge of students in the curriculum</p> <p>Rise of vocational education</p>

Socially inclusive; higher 'staying on' rates

Curriculum content and teaching methods are 'reflective of the social choices made by those who produce it and might just as easily be produced in other ways' (Morgan 2014a)

Knowledge 'no longer treated as given', but 'seen as constructed in response to particular needs and interests' (Young et al 2014, p. 59)

'In its most extreme form Future 2 argues that because we have no objective way of making knowledge claims, the curriculum should be based on the learner's experiences and interests and that somehow these can be equated with the interests of society' (Young 2011).

**Future 3**—Boundary maintenance observed, prior to boundary crossing. In this 'Future' it is the variable relation between F1 and F2 that is the condition for the creation and acquisition of new knowledge.

Knowledge is viewed as a social product, but sanctioned by scholarly communities (with conventions, traditions, rules, etc) which 'provide limits on what counts as knowledge'

Academic communities safeguard development of disciplines/subjects in accordance with epistemic, rather than arbitrary, rules

Boundary-maintenance occurs ('is this geography?')

Boundary-crossing permitted, but acknowledged (Morgan 2014b)

Knowledge has own status *beyond those who produce it*.

Worthwhile knowledge determined by disciplinary norms (Morgan 2014b)

'objectivity of knowledge' v 'givenness of knowledge'

Curriculum must stipulate subject concepts 'that distinguish them from everyday concepts pupils bring to school' (Young 2011a). This is the starting point for curriculum construction, balancing the conceptions of Futures 1 and 2 into Future 3.

Future 3 -'treats subjects as the most reliable tools we have for enabling students to acquire knowledge and make sense of the world... It implies that the curriculum must stipulate the concepts associated with different subjects and how they are related... It is this link between the concepts, contents and activities that distinguishes a Future 3 curriculum from Hirsch's lists of 'what every child should know' (Young 2014, p.67).

'What differentiates F1 from F3 (is) the induction to disciplined knowledge communities in which knowledge is not given and static but dynamic, contested and changing' (Mitchell and Lambert 2015)

Underpinning these conceptions of 'Futures curricula' lie broader questions that Muller and Young (2008) have previously posed. For example, while recognising the crucial importance of subject-specific content in the school curriculum, they have also explored the non-arbitrariness of knowledge domains, and the connections between school and non-school knowledge. These considerations have opened up discussions, not least in the geography education community, about how knowledge is defined and the parameters within which it might be contained.

#### **1.4 Powerful knowledge, geography and geography education**

What is the connection between the theoretical conceptions of powerful knowledge, different models of curricula futures and geography education? Margaret Roberts, who debated<sup>2</sup> such issues with Michael Young in 2013, questions the direct applicability of the concept of powerful knowledge to geography and geography education – arguments she subsequently developed in a paper for the *Curriculum Journal* (Roberts, M 2014). Here she pursues the interface between the theoretical basis for powerful knowledge and the practicalities of how such knowledge might be 'made flesh' in terms of both the geography curriculum and geography pedagogy in schools. Exactly what does geography teaching in schools look like if it follows the principles of promoting powerful knowledge<sup>3</sup>?

Despite Young's insistence that powerful and 'everyday' forms of knowledge should be viewed discretely – under the contention that promoting everyday knowledge is a weak basis for developing the epistemic foundations of subject knowledge – Roberts, M (2014) considers that everyday knowledge is in fact closely related (and important) to some themes studied in both school and academic geography. The need for students to utilise their everyday knowledge is also seen as central to the success of previous curriculum development projects in geography in the 1970s and 1980s.

Roberts, M (2014) acknowledges Young's distinctions between 'everyday' and 'school' knowledge – the latter, in Young's view, enabling students to 'generalise beyond their experience' – and she notes his chosen focus on curriculum, rather than pedagogy. His

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Roberts and Michael Young were keynote speakers at a research seminar which considered the connections between powerful knowledge and geography education, organised by the Geography Education Research Collective (GEReCo) <http://gereco.org/>, at the Institute of Education, University of London in July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the debate about the place of knowledge in the school curriculum is one that has already been partially won. In 2010 the UK Coalition government's White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE 2010) stressed the intention to move towards curricula based on 'essential knowledge'. Mitchell and Lambert (2015) refer to the recent educational policy reforms as providing an opportunity 'to engage a 'knowledge turn' with renewed focus on the role of knowledge in subject teachers' work', while the Experts' Panel (DfE 2011) for the revision of the National Curriculum expressed its support for 'giving all pupils access to powerful knowledge' (p.11). However there is little, if any, evidence that schools have paid serious attention to these directives.



insistence that 'school knowledge can be more abstract, more general, more systematised and go beyond what students experience in their everyday lives', enabling them to 'be more conscious of their own thinking and to have more control over it' (p.191), is largely supported by Roberts. However, she argues that students studying geography need to bring their own knowledge, skills and understandings of the world, acquired through direct and indirect experiences (their 'personal geographies' of place, space and environment) to achieve appropriate understandings of the subject. Indeed, Roberts reminds us that most school geography curricula 'include some concepts that can be easily related to their everyday experience' (p.192). What is also apparent within Roberts' analysis is that the study of geography and its related concepts and theories can take students far beyond such everyday experience – for example, through the introduction of concepts that are more *general* (e.g. settlements), more *abstract* (e.g. urbanization), and *beyond their direct experience* (e.g. volcanoes and earthquakes).

It is pertinent to ask, in defence of Michael Young's position, whether the geography curriculum should actively *exclude* everyday knowledge and whether this would provide a more worthwhile, intellectually fulfilling experience for students? Although Young has stated that its total removal from the school curriculum would represent an extreme reading of his views, he strongly asserts that everyday knowledge can never offer the curriculum a secure foundation. He therefore refutes claims that everyday experience provides a sound basis for curriculum construction - indeed, he states directly that the curriculum 'should not include pupil experiences' (Young 2013). Interestingly, earlier work by Hirst (1972) appears to take a 'middle line' whereby the focus of knowledge can be captured as 'experience, structured under some conceptual scheme' (p.97). A further complication involves finding the right role for the teacher in all this. As Roberts, M (2014) concludes:

He (Young) assumes that teachers would make the links between everyday and school knowledge. I would argue that, on the contrary, teachers are likely to take pupils' knowledge seriously only if they are guided to do so by curriculum documents and projects (p.194)

Essentially Roberts believes that Young raises some important issues about curriculum and pedagogy, but does not resolve them - particularly with respect to the selection of subject content to be taught. This is perhaps understandable given that all school subjects, and the disciplinary roots from which they have grown, present unique cases. The application of generic principles to subject content selection will therefore always be problematic. What concerns Roberts most, I believe, is that even the generic principles are unclear (something White (2012) also considers to be a major issue in Young's work, in his rejoinder to Young's earlier statements on students' entitlement to powerful knowledge (Young 2012)).

Maude (2015), with reference to the geography national curriculum in Australia he helped to construct, opens new avenues for considering how powerful knowledge and geography education might interface. He poses three questions: (i) what might *new ways of thinking* in geography look like?, (ii) what are the ways in which geographers analyse, explain and understand? and (iii) what powers do geographers have over their own knowledge? With reference to (i) he believes that geographical ways of thinking are embedded in the major geographical concepts, such as place, space, and the interconnection between people and

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environment. These he refers to as 'meta concepts', from which encouragement to (political) action makes the knowing 'powerful'. For (ii), analysis, explanation and understanding, he considers the concept of 'spatial distribution' to provide a helpful example - where generalisations can be used to describe processes, and analysis may be predictive. However, Maude is clear that spatial thinking is only one of many forms of geographical thinking - thinking that extends to embrace the selection of subject content, the consideration of methods used to create and test knowledge, and the identification of facts in geography. For (iii), power over our own knowledge he cites independence of thought, supported by engagement in debate and use of factual knowledge. These statements are compelling, but arguably they simply outline ways in which powerful knowledge (geographical knowledge or, in different contexts, other forms of disciplinary knowledge) helps us to think, discuss and analyse geographically.

## 1.5 Conclusions

Whilst acknowledging the considerable contribution to education theory made by Michael Young, and others, with respect to the role and place of powerful knowledge in the school curriculum, we may conclude that for geographers the importance of its link with everyday knowledge in the school curriculum is not yet fully articulated. Indeed, if we consider the curricula, syllabuses and schemes of work used for studying geography in English schools we see that much geographical knowledge does not currently meet Young's characteristics of 'powerful knowledge' (Major 2013, Roberts, M 2014).

The origins of the uneasy division between every-day and disciplinary knowledge may partly lie in the readily identifiable 'gap' observed between academic and school geographies, which many believe hinder students' access to (powerful) knowledge in schools. This division has been debated recently (by, amongst others, Castree, Fuller and Lambert 2007, Butt 2008, Butt and Collins 2013, Hill and Jones 2010) and although the dislocation between academic and school geography creates concerns, it is perhaps unsurprising that the two forms of geographical knowing and learning are largely discrete. School and academic geographies serve different purposes and meet different ends - for the key intentions of the institutions that promote them (predominantly research in the former and teaching in the latter) are different. Nonetheless, it may also be pertinent to reflect that not all the geographical knowledge that students have access to in the academy will be 'powerful'! Roberts (2014) comments on these issues when she states that for many academic geographers 'everyday knowledge is a valuable resource for students, an object of study and a source of data' (p.195) and that 'school geography, if it is to make use of the power of the academic discipline, needs to draw on ways in which academic geography uses everyday knowledge' (p.196). Here she acknowledges Bonnett's (2008) observation that geography's 'ambition is absurdly vast' (p.28), for what we might consider to be legitimate geographical knowledge is far reaching and not solely produced within our own disciplinary boundaries. Geography's collaboration with other disciplines, and the use of a wide range of methodologies, concepts, and theories that do not reside immediately within its academic parameters, should be noted. What is clear is that the discipline of geography must serve as the foundation from which school children understand the subject's intellectual traditions and ways of thinking, and that teachers must realise the implications of having these disciplinary roots for curriculum making and teaching in schools. Roberts (2014) concludes

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that school geography does not always meet the criteria for powerful knowledge, but promotes *powerful ways of looking at the world* through the questions it asks, and the ways it investigates these questions.

Young, and others, have taken seriously recent criticisms by educationists about their narrow focus on theory at the expense of practice. Such criticism has particularly focused on Young's avoidance of models of subject curricula that adhere to his principles. The publication in 2014 of *Knowledge and the Future School: Curriculum and Social Justice* (Young et al 2014) represents an attempt to visualise what the concept of powerful knowledge might look like for teachers and leadership teams in schools, whilst still maintaining at its heart a belief that social justice should be promoted through education. Here the intention is to aid thinking about the curriculum, while also encouraging the growth of teachers as 'knowledge workers' who are trusted for their expertise both in education and subject-related matters. This book was written at a time of political and educational uncertainty – towards the end of a Coalition government in the UK - when the fate of both state schools and the national curriculum in England were unclear. Nonetheless the authors present a strong vision for the future of English schools. Powerful knowledge is seen as 'a necessary component of the education of all pupils', with Lambert (2014) and Roberts, C (2014) championing the concept of the 'knowledge-led school' that would take learners away from the narrow forms of knowledge expected of examination syllabuses, OfSTED inspections and school performance managers.

Consideration of whether geographical knowledge currently needs, to use Barnett's contentions, to be 'reinstated, reclaimed or recovered' in school geography remains open. However, many within the geography education community see an urgent need to address an apparent, widening gap between knowledge and skills. Due to curriculum centralisation school teachers have neither been encouraged to take forward their curriculum thinking, nor to engage closely with their academic disciplines. The searching observation made by Young (2011b) about the geography education community – in his contribution to a book which explored the possible futures for geography and education - is still troubling:

What I find somewhat surprising is that although the authors of this book are as aware of and as concerned about the trends I have pointed to as I am, nowhere in these chapters do I find the powerful concepts that geography offers referred to. Is this a lack of confidence or are they taken for granted by geography educators?  
(p.181)

I would contend that the geography education community must always remain diligent in (re) defining the concepts and knowledge that are appropriate for young learners – for the key curriculum question of 'what to teach?' will always exist, nuanced by educational aims, perceived student needs, political intentions, societal values, educational ideologies and the continued relevance of particular concepts. We may, as some claim, be at the point of a 'knowledge turn' in education – presaged by yet another revision of the English national curriculum – which bring 'questions of subject knowledge development to the fore' (Mitchell and Lambert 2015). There are equally pressing questions about whether schools currently promote old fashioned, or out-moded, forms of knowledge - or whether they largely ignore knowledge, due to urgent concerns about performance, pedagogy and promoting learning 'experiences'. What is apparent is that schools must ensure that they

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achieve the correct balance, whatever that might be, between disciplinary/powerful knowledge and the skills young people need to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Young's concern that schools are currently poorly placed to debate 'knowledge questions' – lacking as they do any theory of knowledge - is an obvious worry; particularly as this seems to point to an inability to deliver the types of knowledge capable of reducing social inequalities and promoting life opportunities.

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