# **Equity through Curriculum**

*This session will build upon our understanding of curriculum design and the choices we have made. We will consider ideas about the importance of concept building, the development of narrative and the multiple meanings of the term knowledge. We will also remember the importance of helical planning and learning and what we really by gaps.*

**Key Slides:**

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**Defining Curriculum**

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| **Personal reflection and note taking** * Defining ‘curriculum’
* What do you think it is?
* What do you think it isn’t?
* What does curriculum mean if you are a learner experiencing disadvantage?
* 3 minutes
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**Multiple Meanings and Limitations**

**Reading 2**

**Charles Dickens *Hard Times***

**Reading 1**

*“They who are too ragged, wretched, filthy, and forlorn, to enter any other place: who could gain admission into no charity school, and who would be driven from any church door; are invited to come in here, and find some people not depraved, willing to teach them something, and show them some sympathy, and stretch a hand out, which is not the iron hand of Law, for their correction”*

**Charles Dickens**

**Letter to The Daily News (on the Field Lane Ragged School) published on 4 February 1846**

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|  **Personal reflection, reading and note taking*** Readings 1 and 2
* What do we mean by knowledge?
* How has it become a loaded and disputed term?
* Thinking about disadvantage, what are the limitations of knowledge?
* 5 minutes
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**Subject gaze, proxies for curriculum and powerful knowledge**

**Reading 3**

“Each subject has its own lens or set of lenses to turn on the world, its own “gaze” to use the sociologists’ terminology. Noticing the light, noticing composition, seeking explanations, seeing wholes, seeing parts, seeking the right answer, accommodating multiple interpretations, relating to other works in the field such as writers in the same genre are all ways of looking and there are many many more. These gazes are often tacit for practitioners but they are worth making explicit in curriculum thinking. In fact, it is crucial that we do. If we fail to make the implicit explicit we will guarantee that many students will fail to understand how to make meaning in our subjects and will not be fully inducted into the ongoing cultural discourse. Although some students may come to experience a particular “gaze” through incidental osmotic process, this cannot be left to chance. There are certainly some experiential elements of gaze and living – in a subject which must remain impossible to fully articulate, emergent and not amenable to explicit verbalisations – but these should be what remains after a concerted effort, and not an oversized mass created by a deficit in thinking. The gaze of the subject, once explicated in curriculum thinking, can be reflected in the stories, narrative, examples, and tasks built into the working curriculum, and indeed in the intentional exclusion of anachronisms that would weaken the disciplinary gaze: in fidelity to the discipline, the gaze of the specialist is both modelled and developed. Thus, we might avoid cartoons, contemporary icons, and ethical questions in history curricula for example, since these things are ahistorical and are enemies of the historians gaze.”

**Ruth Ashbee Curriculum: Theory, Culture and the Subject Specialisms Routledge 2021**

**Reading 4**

“How proxies conceal the curriculum, and therefore everything else.

First the proxy of results. What do exam results tell us about the quality of the curriculum? A qualification may have been scraped by rehearsal of formulae… What have these students not experienced, earlier in their curriculum, which might have changed them in more substantial and sustainable ways?

A second proxy is the use of assessment and data en route. This can stand in for discussion about what has been learned and its role in making future progress possible… It fails to treat the curriculum itself as the progression model… how these content choices enable pupils to grasp new content or tackle the next challenge of thinking,.

A third proxy occurs when application of cognitive science is called ‘curriculum’. I often hear teachers claiming an evidenced-based approach to curriculum with reference to the science of memory such as cognitive load theory (Kirschner) or resulting practical precepts (e.g. Rosenshine). Retrieval, deliberate practice, spaced practice and overlearning can certainly be built into curriculum flow in support of efficient learning but they do not get us close to subject curriculum matters such as the infinite, contested content of literature, history or music and its infinite configurations. Moreover, if (we) look for application of cognitive science in classrooms without attention to what is singled out for recall or rehearsal, then, at best, curriculum itself is concealed from view. At worst, the entity being recalled may be poorly chosen, privileging the wrong detail, interrupting narrative flow or destroying the shaping of content that makes it memorable.

In the crowded territory of a subject’s complex content, the question of what is recalled is not a given. Well-spaced retrieval is not curricular thinking. Its presence tells us little about rigour and scope of component choice, how pupils come to see those accounts as authored and purposeful.”

**Clare Sealy The Curriculum Research Ed Series, 2020**

**Chapter 8 Christine Counsell**

**Reading 5**

“From powerful knowledge to the powers of knowledge.

My starting point is that schools in a democracy should all be working towards access to powerful knowledge for all their pupils. What does powerful knowledge mean?

* There is better knowledge in different fields that we refer to as ‘powerful knowledge’. It acquires its authority from the specialist communities of researchers in each discipline.
* All students, not just those identified as having ‘academic ability’, have the right to acquire this knowledge during their schooling.
* The ‘better’ or ‘powerful’ knowledge is specialised and takes the form of the academic subjects.
* It is the basis of a curriculum that aims to be consistent with the disciplines where new knowledge is produced in the universities and research institutes…

Curriculum subjects are not only sets of concepts and methods of enquiry; they are ‘communities of specialists’ who share ideas and values with specialists in other schools, with disciplinary specialists I universities and increasingly, internationally. They meet at conferences and publish in journals as ways of collectively evaluating ideas and improving what their subject can offer. This means that learning a subject successfully is not unlike joining a community initially as a beginner or neophyte and gradually developing new relationships and acquiring new knowledge. It means that teachers need to have not only a reliable store of subject knowledge, but also an understanding of their role as members of a virtual community of specialists which guarantees the knowledge they have.”

**Clare Sealy The Curriculum Research Ed Series, 2020**

**Chapter 1 Professor Michael Young**

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| **Personal reading, reflection and note taking in preparation for discussion*** What do Ruth Ashbee, Christine Counsell and Michael Young have to say about our curriculum choices?
* What do they tell us about concept building, narrative and knowledge?
* What should we be mindful of as teachers and leaders?
* How does this impact upon our planning?
* 5 minutes
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**Final thoughts**

Ever onward…

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**Further Reading**

Ashbee, Ruth Curriculum: Theory, Culture and the Subject Specialisms, Routledge 2021

Lock, Stuart The Research Ed Guide to Leadership, John Catt 2020

Myatt, Mary The Curriculum: Gallimaufry to Coherence, John Catt 2018

Myatt, Mary and Tomsett, John Huh: curriculum conversations between subject and senior leaders

Robbins, Adam Middle Leadership Mastery, Crownhouse 2021

Sealy Clare The Research Ed Guide to the Curriculum, John Catt 2020

Steward, Richard A Curriculum Guide for Middle Leaders, Routledge 2021

**In addition, a selection of blogs, Tweeters and extensive writers with a variety of perspectives:**

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| * Chartered College https://impact.chartered.college/
* Counsell, Christine <https://thedignityofthethingblog.wordpress.com/>
* Myatt, Mary <https://www.marymyatt.com/>
* The Curriculum Journal
* Michael Young
* David Hughes
* Mark Priestley
* Mark Enser
* Sam Freedman
 | * Tom Middlehurst
* Josh Goodrich
* Ben Newmark
* Adam Boxer
* Sam Strickland
* Steve Rollett
* Peter Hyman
* Mick Walker
* Tom Sherrington
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