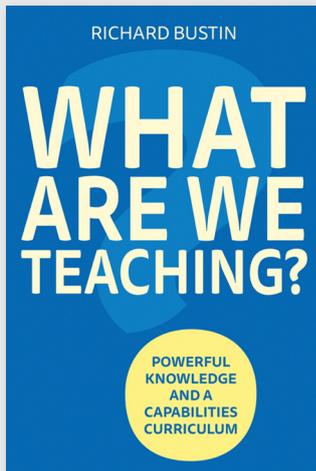


P R E S S R E L E A S E

"This is a remarkable book and the timing of it is impeccable. The 2024 Labour Government is strongly committed to social justice and is looking to restore the promise of education. This book should inform that work."

- David Lambert, Emeritus Professor of Geography Education, UCL Institute of Education,
and co-author of *Race, Racism and the Geography Curriculum*



What are we Teaching?

Powerful knowledge and a capabilities curriculum

By Richard Bustin

ISBN: 9781785837180

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Discusses the importance of having a subject-based curriculum in schools and explores the responsibility that teachers, through their subject specialisms, have to help ensure this is achieved.

Why we need to pursue a subject-based, whole-school capabilities curriculum

The new government's launch of the curriculum and assessment review has put debates surrounding the national curriculum into the spotlight. Led by education expert Professor Becky Francis, the initiative promises a radical overhaul, aiming to create a broader, more enriching and cutting-edge curriculum that will set up all young people for life and work.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has highlighted the importance of this potentially pivotal review, stating that: "The launch of this review is an important step in this government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity, deliver better life chances and enable more young people to get on. This government, alongside leading education experts, leaders and staff on the frontline, will breathe new life into our outdated curriculum and assessment system."¹

But the question remains: how can we construct a richer, more inclusive and more accessible curriculum? What specific changes might this entail? Debates surrounding the curriculum are multifaceted and are perhaps now more important than ever.

Richard Bustin is a teacher, researcher and teacher trainer. His new book *What are we Teaching?: Powerful knowledge and a capabilities curriculum* is born out of Richard's conviction that each and every subject can be empowering and inspiring and can contribute distinctively to a young person's education. He believes that every student is entitled to a powerful knowledge-led, subject-based curriculum. The ambitious view of education presented in his book is less about making alterations to the way in which schools operate and more about changing our understanding of what we teach and why. The book presents a fresh perspective on curriculum design, arguing that subjects are key to enabling young people to develop the powerful knowledge needed to flourish in our complex modern world.

Moving ideas beyond the 'traditional vs progressive' debates that have dominated education discourse, Richard challenges the overarching emphasis on exam performance at the expense of the broader benefits of subject knowledge and capabilities such as critical and creative thinking. Ultimately, this book invites teachers to consider why their subject specialisms are important as part of a whole school curriculum vision and throughout, Richard prompts teachers to evaluate their responsibilities as 'curriculum makers'.

¹ Department for Education and The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, 'Government launches Curriculum and Assessment Review', Gov.uk, July 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum-and-assessment-review>

P R E S S R E L E A S E

What are we Teaching? is research-based, using voices of real teachers who engaged with the question 'what makes your subject powerful knowledge for young people'. Richard then examines these testimonies focusing on different subject areas, before offering advice on building a powerful knowledge and capabilities rich curriculum in schools. Each chapter also offers a set of reflective questions which can be used as part of ITE training or staff CPD.

This thought provoking yet accessible book firmly gives teachers the confidence to forge their own path as curriculum makers. It is an important contribution to the professional conversations about what counts as a thoughtful, enriching and fair curriculum and will certainly prove an invaluable resource for those refining and upgrading it.

Essential reading for teachers, senior and subject leaders and curriculum coordinators.

"Richard Bustin has written about one of the things which matters most – what teachers should actually teach. He makes a strong case for powerful knowledge and does something which is unfortunately rare: he looks at each school subject and asks what knowledge matters most. A terrific book."

Professor Barnaby Lenon CBE, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Buckingham

About the author



Richard Bustin is a teacher and leads the geography department at Lancing College, where he is also responsible for staff development and teacher training. Richard's research on curriculum has resulted in multiple publications, as well as invitations to speak at education conferences and work with trainee teachers around the world.

Articles and interviews available

Richard is available for interview, expert comment or by-lined articles on a range of topics, such as:

- Why the curriculum and assessment review should pursue a subject-based curriculum.
- What role should teachers play in shaping the curriculum?
- How can we create a curriculum that is subject-based and knowledge led?
- What is 'powerful knowledge' and why is it important for the curriculum?
- What is the 'capability approach' and why is it important for the curriculum?

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