RICHARD BUSTIN

WHAT ARE WE TEACHING?

POWERFUL KNOWLEDGE AND A CAPABILITIES CURRICULUM

Praise for *What are we Teaching?*

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

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

What are we Teaching? offers school leaders and teachers a profound opportunity to reflect on the crucial role of subject specialist teachers and their contributions to a subject-based curriculum. Drawing upon research with educators across various subjects, the book captures the authentic voices of teachers in art, design and technology, drama, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education, and science. Alongside the teachers' insights, explorations of knowledge within these subject areas illuminate the potential for each subject to contribute distinctively to young people's education.

Dr Grace Healy, Education Director (Secondary), David Ross Education Trust

Richard Bustin's book is a much-needed addition to the academic discussion on the meaning and role of subjects in school education. Much has previously been written about the concept of powerful knowledge and its potential to highlight the importance of specialised knowledge in education: scholars in several discipline-based subject groups – for example, in geography and history – have studied it, but most of this work has been done in the context of these individual subjects. In this book, Richard looks at different subjects and gives voice to teachers themselves. In the theoretical part of the book, he makes a clear introduction to the concepts of powerful knowledge and the capability approach to help teachers explore what kind of contribution their subjects can have for their students. Even though the book is mainly targeted at readers in the UK, it also works well for the international audience interested in the role of subject-based education. I highly recommend this book to all teachers, teacher educators and student teachers.

Sirpa Tani, Professor of Geography and Environmental Education, University of Helsinki, Finland

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. It is well informed, showing up some of the snake oil solutions of recent years, and through its conceptual framing provides a way to avoid the familiar swing of the educational pendulum. And Richard Bustin makes no bones about it: we need to trust teachers and support them properly in the 'knowledge work' which I fervently believe underpins great teaching at all levels.

It is not a 'practical' handbook, but it is written mainly for teachers and the voices of teachers are loud. The book advocates for the rich and enriching intellectual component of teaching, summed up in the idea of curriculum making. Over half the book explores how over 200 teachers of various subjects (across three schools) respond to the simple yet radical idea that what we teach young people should *empower* them. Obviously, the book in no sense offers a final word. But it does open up this question and provides productive ways to work with it.

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

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Foreword by Mary Myatt

The development of the curriculum is an ongoing professional endeavour, a never-ending story. *What are we Teaching?* is an important contribution to the professional conversations about what counts as a thoughtful curriculum, worthy of all the young people we teach.

Creating a curriculum is a source of endless fascination. It is crucial work; it is what schools 'do' and the debates about what is worth teaching and why are important. For these reasons, Richard Bustin's question – 'How can the nature of powerful knowledge in different school subjects be characterised?' – provides us with a fresh lens to consider the value and impact of curriculum development. *What are we Teaching?* offers some original research to help address that question. It is both robust and accessible in equal measure, quite a feat!

The inclusion and critique of narratives about the curriculum from across different, and sometimes opposing, positions is illuminating. As a result, Richard has provided us with an opportunity to scope the landscape and to consider alternative points of view. This is helpful for the reader as it sets out the background into which the fresh perspectives can be inserted. As Christine Counsell has argued, background knowledge is essential for pupils when learning new material: similarly, providing the reader with an overview is helpful for us as professionals, if we are to get to grips with the sometimes contested, yet fascinating, landscape of curricular models.

Drawing on wide-ranging research, including that of David Lambert and Michael Young, Richard argues that it is essential to honour the rigour of the individual subject domains, whilst at the same time foregrounding the subjects' potential for human development. In the analysis and critique of the Future curriculum scenarios, *What are we Teaching?* helps our own insights grow on two counts: we are reminded of the ways in which 'powerful knowledge' might be framed and we are also invited to distil meaning from each the elements that are likely to make most difference in teaching the individual subjects.

Richard shows us that the ways in which school subjects come to be framed and articulated are not the same for all disciplines. Whilst science and mathematics might bear a close relationship to the 'parent' academic field, this is less clear cut in some of the arts and humanities.

In presenting us with the alternative arguments, the terrain becomes very interesting. The elements that are currently thought to be most fruitful in terms of being worthy of inclusion in the curriculum are contested, quite rightly, over time. This is seen in the debates about the merits of texts selected in English, and the emerging calls for a wider range of diverse voices to be included in history and geography, for example.

What brings this book to life and what will make it so helpful for colleagues grappling with these important themes in schools, is that the work is informed by Richard's own research, both for his doctorate and for the purposes of this book. This is a remarkable bridge between the academic and the practical, 'work in progress' nature of curriculum debates in schools. *What are we Teaching?* considers the contested notion of powerful knowledge across the full range of school subjects and comes to some surprising conclusions. The book involves the voices of teachers from the three case study schools who spent time and energy exploring these ideas for themselves.

I was particularly struck by the inclusion of Amartya Sen's work as a way of framing the subjects as providing the space for developing capabilities. While Sen's work has, for the most part, been influential in geography curriculum development, it has the potential to inform discussions and insights in other subjects as well. The capabilities lens helps to take us beyond the examination specifications, important as these are, to the bigger capacity that each subject has for developing the human alongside the intellectual and academic capabilities of young people.

This book is a highly stimulating, thought-provoking, yet accessible read. Richard carries his scholarship lightly. He is ultimately practical in the way in which he takes us through the landscape, makes his arguments and poses questions for discussion and reflection at the end of each chapter. To articulate what powerful knowledge might be, in its most expansive sense, across each of the subjects is a truly remarkable piece of work. As such it will be immensely helpful to colleagues refining and upgrading their curriculum.

Mary Myatt, education advisor, writer, speaker and author

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Introduction

Have we lost our way?

According to Māori oral tradition, the goddess Hine Hukatere spent her days walking New Zealand's Southern Alps. One day she decided to visit the beach where she met and fell in love with the great warrior, Wawe. She invited Wawe back to her mountain home but as they hiked together, he could not keep up and he stumbled. An avalanche struck, and he disappeared forever. Hine Hukatere was distraught and began crying. She cried so much that Ranginui, the Sky Father, took pity on her and turned her tears into rivers of ice.

This story was told to me by a mountain guide as I stood gazing at the awesome glacial landscape that spread before me. I was on a geography field trip with my fellow undergraduates, and we were there to study the landscapes formed by ice in this spectacular mountain range in New Zealand. We were looking at Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere: the frozen tears of Hine Hukatere. The names Franz Joseph Glacier and Fox Glacier as the two main glaciers in this part of the Southern Alps are more commonly known, came later when Europeans first set eyes on the landscape. Having told us this epic, tragic story, our guide rather dismissively proclaimed that we were there to study the causation of the glacier as we now know it. What followed was a rather more familiar story of snowfall, accumulation, glacier flow, erosional processes and the various scientific rigmarole of glacier function.

What struck me most was that the two stories of glacier formation were explained almost as if they were in conflict with each other and we had to choose which one we believed. We had to decide whether the glacier was formed by the frozen tears of a grief-stricken goddess or from the scientific processes of ice accumulation and flow. It was made clear to me on the day which one I needed to engage with, certainly as far as any

essays were concerned. Yet, to me, pitching them against each other as claims to truth was misguided. Science, by which here (and in this book) I mean the methodological process of seeking reproducible truths, clearly was going to favour one story of glacier formation. Given that glaciers are found all over the world, the same set of processes can be observed, and the rigorous study of them furthers scientific understanding. But the Māori version of events is a different form of truth. It binds the mountains and the glaciers to the people who live there. The environment becomes inextricably linked to their being, through art, stories, music and culture. As such, the people have an in-built responsibility towards, and stewardship of, the environment; the mountains are not something 'othered', to be studied objectively, but are part of their very selves. It tells us more about the Māori people, their culture and their sustainable relationship with their landscape than any scientific mission could. The question is not which knowledge is better, but in what ways the knowledge(s) can help us to understand the world.

Many years later, I became a secondary school geography teacher and had the privilege of teaching glaciation to my own students. I will often start the first lesson by telling the story of Hine Hukatere, usually accompanied by a Google Earth fly-through of the Southern Alps on the interactive whiteboard. I hope this captures the students' imagination, gets them to engage with the landscape and begins to introduce the idea of how people treat the world around them. Given the headlines about retreating glaciers around the world as a result of climate change, understanding how people treat or mistreat the natural world is of contemporary relevance. Yet this is not how glaciation is approached in most textbooks. It is presented as a single story of scientific fact, devoid of human experience and interpretation. Students are required to learn the facts, draw the diagrams and sit the exam.

We seem to have lost our way

In the last few years, I have started to work more and more with trainee teachers. When I speak to groups towards the start of their training, they are still full of hope and big dreams. I ask them why they want to be teachers. They will often evoke ideas about wanting to make a difference, to challenge and change students' ideas about the major issues of the day, such as inequality. When I visit in the summer term towards the end of their training year, I often get a different response. By then, they will

usually have had stints working in schools every day and mixing with teachers in real staffrooms. The answer to the same question then is usually about getting students through their exams, with talk of 'successful outcomes', getting them good enough results to go to college or wherever they want to go next. Many seem to have lost the big picture, the big motivation that probably compelled them to be a teacher in the first place.

I remember meeting one trainee teacher who was planning a lesson on migration. Before he went into detail about what he was going to do in the lesson, I asked him why he was teaching it. I was hoping that I might get an answer about the significance of migration in shaping modern society, or something about the migration stories that were in the news at the time. He was slightly flustered by my question and then said, 'Because that is the next lesson in the sequence.' I pushed him further, to really think why a lesson on migration might be significant in some way for the students. He stared at me intently and then said in an impassioned voice, 'Because it is really important the students know the difference between assessment objective 1 and assessment objective 2.'

He had become conditioned by exam speak and had not even finished his training year yet. Whilst this may well be the reality in many schools, a key contention in this book is that the over-tight grip of measurable exam results has stifled curriculum creativity in schools and diminished the student experience.

Choose your team: the traditionalists vs the progressives

When I first joined social media, displaying my job title of 'teacher', I was often asked if I was a traditionalist or a progressive. It was as if I had to choose my (online) team. The traditionalists were keen to maintain rigid subject boundaries and see children learn and recite facts; they would speak of educational ideals such as scholarship and rigour. The progressives, on the other hand, were much more interested in children's holistic development, nurtured through a creative curriculum with lots of interdisciplinary learning, the breakdown of subject boundaries and broad values such as personalised learning.

The problem for me is, at their extremes, both of these versions of education are found lacking. A focus purely on subjects for the sake of learning facts and taking exams never helps young people to develop the broader range of skills and competencies needed in the modern world. Yet remove the subjects completely – or dilute them so they simply become a means to another end – and something of real value is lost. As a geography teacher, the value of my subject is not in whether a young person can label all the world's oceans or know the name of the largest waterfall in the world.[1] There is something much more fundamental about geographical knowledge – and its importance for young people in the modern world, which goes well beyond listing facts to pass an exam – and that is why I became a geography teacher. Whilst I see the need to sit exams, the idea of teaching to the test in silent classrooms is not why I went into the profession. I do not feel that I'm a traditionalist, but do value the role of my subject, so I also feel far away from the most progressive arguments. In that sense, I have never had a team to join.

Making a compelling argument against the role of a subject curriculum, Michael Reiss and John White (2013) argue for an 'aims-based curriculum', placing the needs of the child, rather than subjects, at the centre of a curriculum. For them,

> school education should equip every child:
>
> 1. to lead a life that is personally flourishing
> 2. to help others to do so too. (Reiss and White, 2013: 4)

To achieve this, knowledge is reframed as 'broad background understanding' (Reiss and White, 2013: 9) and there is a focus on interdisciplinary thinking, a breaking down of subject barriers, moral education and citizenship.

Those who argue for progressive education such as this tend not to have much to say about subjects. Often, they are seen as a problem, getting in the way of what is really valuable in education. Subjects become vehicles to achieve other educational goals. There is a lot of interdisciplinary exploration between subjects. Teaching progressively involves more

1 Even this is not straightforward. The highest waterfall in the world is Angel Falls (Kerepakupai Vená) in Venezuela, falling 979m (according to National Geographic). Yet this is nothing compared to the Denmark Strait cataract waterfall, which flows underwater. Cold dense water sinks down through warmer water for over 3,000m.

active styles of learning, such as discovery learning, where children are set free to learn for themselves and are able to follow their own interests. The antithesis is the more traditional view of education, espoused by a subject-based curriculum. Knowledge within the school subjects takes the form of facts to learn. The more facts that can be learnt, the more progress has been made, and students are tested on what they can remember. The work of American educationist E. D. Hirsch is often cited in arguments supporting a traditional curriculum. His famous 1988 book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, is filled with facts that students should be able to remember at each stage of schooling. Traditional pedagogy involves copying from the board or from a textbook, learning passages of text by rote with high levels of discipline and silent working. Traditional education conjures up the image of the Victorian schoolroom, with a large blackboard, and the teacher holding chalk and getting children to repeat and copy down facts.

Despite the arguments in favour of a child-centred, aims-based approach to schooling, subjects – and the knowledge they provide for young people – have continued to provide the structure of the school system. This position was emboldened in England through the Conservative government's 'knowledge turn' in education policy (as described in Chapman, 2021a) in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

But not all subjects are equal. The 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science run through all stages of schooling and, in England, are compulsory for young people right up to the age of 16. Other subjects such as history, geography and languages are compulsory up to the age of 14, after which they can be studied if the student chooses to carry on with them. The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) attempted to ensure that students were studying a range of rigorous subjects to GCSE level, which would enable greater access to university courses. To gain the EBacc, students had to achieve passes in English, maths, science, a language and history or geography. Yet this leaves out the importance of creative subjects, such as art and drama, or those aimed at health and fitness, like physical education (PE).

There has been much talk of the prominence of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects in education. Precisely which subjects fit in each of the various categories is debatable; many geographers are keen to claim that geography is a STEM subject. The acronym originated from the work of the National Science Foundation in the USA in 2001, and attempts to identify the subject areas that will lead to the greatest employability and income. The acronym has taken on a life of its

own, with others adding 'A' (for arts) to make STEAM, yet this leaves the languages and humanities subjects out as if they are somehow second class and don't matter any more, despite their inclusion in the EBacc. Add into this talk of more vocational choices post-16, instead of traditional university routes, and you have a busy system with many options which can appear confusing.

If both traditionalist and progressive approaches to curriculum have their merits, then it is time to move on from this simple dualism. Even schools that claim to be progressive will often have passionate subject specialists teaching subject knowledge. Schools that are traditional on the face of it often have a wide-ranging programme of additional activities and extracurricular arts education. Knowledge is a component of both progressive and traditional models of education, although what sort of knowledge, whose knowledge and how it is derived clearly differs.

The work of Guy Claxton has been particularly influential in education, and he too has moved debates beyond the traditionalist–progressive dichotomy in curriculum thinking. In *The Learning Power Approach: Teaching Learners to Teach Themselves* (2018), he discusses a range of techniques derived from cognitive science. His work takes curriculum debates beyond an antagonism between simply learning facts to pass exams (the traditionalist position) or nurturing student wellbeing (a more progressive position) to look at how students learn, and how an understanding of this can help young people to develop and achieve. Yet he writes less about the place of school subjects within this framework. His work seems to suggest that subjects do exist and are part of the structured organisation of schools, but the reasons for this – and the benefits this might bring – are less well discussed. Even if we have a clear understanding of why we went into teaching, and we have found a school where our own ideologies align with the institutional values, there is a further complication when it comes to deciding what we are teaching. As far back as 2007, the independent think tank Civitas produced a report into the school curriculum. In a press release, they argued:

> The traditional subject areas have been hi-jacked to promote fashionable causes such as gender awareness, the environment and anti-racism, while teachers are expected to help to achieve the government's social goals instead of imparting a body of academic knowledge to their students. (Civitas, 2007)

They describe this as the 'corruption of the curriculum' and devoted a full-length book to their concerns in a 2007 publication of the same name (edited by Robert Whelan). In this book, a range of writers describe how pressures have conspired to influence the nature of what is being taught in schools. Much of what they describe foresaw some curricular and cultural battlegrounds in the decades to come. As Frank Furedi (2007: 1) identifies in the introduction, 'Everyone with a fashionable cause wants a piece of the curriculum.' The writers then show how a range of traditional subjects have in some way been subject to corrupting influences. Geography, according to Alex Standish (2007: 28), 'used to be about maps', but now has become a vehicle for environmentalism and multiculturalism, or what could loosely be described as the green left political agenda. Michele Ledda (2007: 18), in her chapter on English literature, argues:

> A British pupil can go through the school system and get the top marks in English and English Literature without knowing that Spenser, Milton or Pope ever existed, but having studied Carol Ann Duffy twice, both at GCSE and A-level. With all due respect to Carol Ann Duffy, she is on the syllabus, not because she is a greater poet than Milton, but because she is more 'relevant', dealing as she does with very contemporary issues such as disaffected learners.

I am sure teachers of English literature would have much to say about this, and we pick this story up again in Chapter 6. These disagreements about what we should be teaching in schools will be explored throughout this book.

Don't change the subject!

Curriculum is defined in many ways, but in this book it describes the grand thinking about what we choose to teach in schools and why. 'Curriculum' literally translates to 'race course': the idea being that it is something to be followed. It is different from the notion of 'pedagogy', which describes how a curriculum is enacted, how the teaching takes place to enable learning. The subjects on offer in any one school bear remarkable similarity to any other, and in the UK many follow the national curriculum. It has not always been this way. Which subjects are

on offer to students is not somehow set in stone and is open to debate and discussion.

Educational sociologist David Layton (1972) identified the life cycle of a subject, in which a new subject starts out of a perceived need. The need could be based on student interest, advances in technology or political necessity. Citizenship was introduced in schools in England in 2002 as a means to teach students about democracy and voting, despite these topics being taught in history (and other humanities). Natural history is another new subject designed to teach climate change in a new way, despite climate science being a key part of geography and the science subjects for decades. As coding and artificial intelligence (AI) is proliferating in more areas of society, so the curriculum is responding; computer science is rapidly becoming one of the fastest growing A level options for students in the UK (BCS, 2022).

As new subjects become more established, they attract more scholarly work to develop their key organising principles. This strengthens links to university disciplines and enables teachers to be trained as specialists. Examination courses and teacher continuing professional development (CPD) might be offered. A professional subject association is created which helps unify and regulate the knowledge in the subject, and this body provides further support and training for teachers. Once established, however, subjects can be lost from the curriculum. They can merge with other subjects or see reduced curriculum time as other new subjects appear. Classical languages such as Latin used to be a key feature of curricula of the past but now are only really the preserve of independent schools. This is a story picked up in Chapter 10.

In his book *Trivium 21c: Preparing Young People for the Future with Lessons from the Past*, Martin Robinson (2013) explains how the school curriculum from classical times through to the Middle Ages focused on the trivium of grammar (or essential knowledge), dialectic (questioning and reasoning) and rhetoric (communicating ideas with confidence). He argues that refocusing on these ideals can offer a lot in contemporary curriculum debates.

The relationship between a school subject and the university discipline that shares its name is not straightforward. Ivor Goodson's (2005) work shows that sometimes the school subject predates the university discipline, with the latter being created initially to provide schools with

well-trained specialist teachers.[2] For other school subjects, such as creative subjects, the aims and methods are very different to the academic discipline. Some school subjects do not have a university discipline at all, despite being on the curriculum for decades – such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

Despite subjects being the basis of a school curriculum, and teachers employed as specialists, attempts are often made to break down subject barriers and to teach in a cross-curricular way. Sometimes this is done in a grand scale, off timetable, 'everyone in the hall with large pieces of sugar paper' sort of way, but equally it is often done over the course of a normal school week, with all teachers asked to teach a lesson around a central theme (such as 'the future' or 'togetherness'). There are often informal conversational links made between teachers too, such as English and art finding common ground to look together at the teaching of a particular idea. What is always important in an exercise like this is to understand the aim. Too often, the idea is to show students how unimportant subject boundaries are, and that when we break them down, we see how the world really is. What usually ends up being shown is the complete opposite. Each subject contributes to the central theme in a different way, and students can gain an understanding of exactly how that subject's knowledge is able to offer a particular insight. What science can tell us about a glacier is very different to what art – or English literature or folk knowledge – can tell us.

This book sets out to challenge teachers to explore why their subject is really important in an overcrowded curriculum. It sets out to explore how knowledge is constructed in different subjects and how this can be empowering for young people. This 'disciplined' thinking cannot be gained from progressive, unstructured 'pedagogic adventures' (as Lambert (2011) has described), nor from a reductive curriculum that boils subject knowledge down to a set of predictable exam questions. It builds on the work of Guy Claxton (2018), looking at how students learn within different subjects.

The curricular issues outlined here have occurred against a backdrop of material challenges facing the profession. The first is a recruitment crisis. According to reports in the *TES*, not enough new teachers are entering the profession each year (Martin, 2023) and, of those who do

2 Geography is an example of this. Even though the organised academic discipline is relatively new (e.g. the work of Halford Mackinder from the early twentieth century), the thought process of geography is much older. Geography can trace its intellectual roots back to ancient Greece.

train, a third leave the profession within five years of qualifying (Lough, 2020). There are many reasons for these recruitment issues, and exploring these would take a whole other book, but I cannot help but wonder if this obsession we seem to have with exam results and measurable outputs puts undue pressure on teachers. Instead of educating the young people in their care, they must ensure that students are jumping through a set of predetermined societal hoops. Secondly, teachers are not trusted any more. More and more planning is done centrally and pushed out to teachers in schools who then have to 'deliver' the material uncritically to their students. This takes away the autonomy to decide what they want to teach, how and why. This is a deprofessionalisation that potentially allows for more non-qualified teachers to enter the classroom to deliver set packages.

Schools, and by extension therefore teachers, have far too many expectations placed upon them. Teachers are expected to get students through examinations *and* act as social workers and, increasingly, parents, by taking on roles that were traditionally their preserve. All that as well as trying to ensure that students leave school with confidence and resilience.

A far more ambitious way of thinking about what we teach and why is through the notion of capabilities, from the work of Amartya Sen (1980), Martha Nussbaum (2006) and Melanie Walker (2006). This is explored fully in later chapters. They suggest that rather than judging the success of education on measurable outputs – for example, exam pass rates or inclusion data – we should instead be focusing on what a young person is able to do with the knowledge they have gained: how they think and how they interact with the world in new and creative ways. Expressed in this way it sounds like a classic description of a progressive curriculum, but work done through the GeoCapabilities projects – and that of David Lambert (e.g. Solem et al., 2013) – looked at the role that subject knowledge plays in developing capabilities. Subjects, through what Michael Young (2008) has described as 'powerful knowledge', can empower students to think in new ways. This idea is critiqued by some writers, which is explored further in Chapter 3.

This book has been created in conjunction with teachers, and it challenges teachers to explore what knowledge their subject teaches, and what powerful knowledge might mean for their subject, if anything. Specifically, the entire teaching staff from three UK secondary schools were asked to identify and express the ways in which their subject could be powerful knowledge for young people.

Part I explores the theoretical background to the ideas mentioned so far: types of knowledge, capabilities and the notion of curriculum. The research element, and what teachers had to say, is the focus of Part II.

For discussion

- Think back to when you first started teaching, or first wanted to teach. What was your motivation? Has that changed over time?
- Where would you place yourself within the traditionalist vs progressive debate?
- What role does your subject specialism play in your professional identity?
- Write down a list of qualities with which you think every young person should walk out of compulsory education. Now work backwards. How would you plan a school day for hundreds of children that would enable them to develop these qualities? How might subjects fit into this picture?

What are we Teaching? 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.

Written by Richard Bustin, *What are we Teaching?* offers a fresh perspective on curriculum design, arguing that subjects are key to enabling young people to develop the powerful knowledge needed to flourish in a complex modern world. Moving ideas beyond the 'traditional vs progressive' debates that have dominated education discourse, Richard Bustin 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.

Part One introduces the key theories on which the book is based, including different ways of making sense of knowledge, skills and values in the curriculum, powerful knowledge and educational capabilities. *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?', and Part Two, which focuses on different subject areas, examines these testimonies. The final part offers advice on building a powerful knowledge- and capabilities- rich curriculum in schools.

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

This is a remarkable book and the timing of it is impeccable.

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

I highly recommend this book to all teachers, teacher educators and student teachers.

Sirpa Tani, Professor of Geography and Environmental Education, University of Helsinki

Richard Bustin has written an excellent book about one of the things which matters most – what teachers should actually teach.

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

What Are We Teaching? offers school leaders and teachers a profound opportunity to reflect on the crucial role of subject specialist teachers and their contributions to a subject-based curriculum.

Dr Grace Healy, Education Director (Secondary), David Ross Education Trust

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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. **@RichardBustin**

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