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On the politics and ambition of the ‘turn’: unpacking the relations between Future 1 and Future 3

Abstract

This paper suggests that advocates of the ‘knowledge turn’ have been united in their opposition to Young and Muller’s (2010) Future 2, but that this ‘union’ has masked very different views of the relations between Young and Muller’s Future 1 and Future 3. Whereas some who subscribe to the ‘turn’ see a ‘weak boundary’ between Futures 1 and 3 (and therefore consider them similar), others construe these Futures as very different and strongly bounded. We argue that these positions are often underpinned by irreconcilable political persuasions and conceptions of education, society and the curriculum. In order to illustrate the argument, we discuss the political project of the UK-based Academy of Ideas, many of whose members have been involved in advocating implicitly or explicitly for a weak boundary between Futures 1 and 3. This position is then contrasted with those in the UK who are more strongly committed to exploring a distinctive Future 3, and the situation in South Africa, where the tensions between different educational Futures are acutely visible due to the social, cultural and political context and academic and policy debates around the curriculum. We conclude with some implications of our arguments for the Future 3 principles of disciplinarity and sociality.

1. Introduction

Since its initial publication in 2010, Michael Young and Johan Muller's schematic device of describing three educational futures (often short-handed as Futures 1, 2 and 3) has proved both productive and popular. However, whilst much of the work that has followed focuses on identifying the problems associated with Future 2, less attention had been directed on the possible relations between Young and Muller's 'Future 1' and 'Future 3'.

In this paper we explore possible ways in which the relationship between Future 1 and Future 3 can be conceptualised, and suggest how these reflect distinct and potentially irreconcilable political persuasions and conceptions of society, education, and curriculum. Thus, while those who hold these various views may agree that Young and Muller's Future 2 is inherently problematic as a model for curriculum knowledge, they differ in the extent to which they seek to differentiate the 'powerful knowledge' of Future 3 from a Future 1 curriculum that emphasises forms of 'core knowledge', often for political reasons or to assert a form of cultural dominance.

To clarify: whilst agreement on the 'villainous' nature of Future 2 with its 'outcomes-led approaches' (Guile et al. (2017) has served to unite a range of academics and professional educators, we suggest that this has the unfortunate effect of obscuring some *radically different visions* about the what, how and why of curriculum and the aims of education. This reflects the fact that those who argue for the importance of a knowledge turn or 'bringing knowledge back in' are sympathetic to different political projects and orientations. As is often the case, the better organised and resourced political projects may become more clearly associated with the 'knowledge turn' over time in the public and academic mind, potentially re-orientating and reinventing the 'turn' to better meet specific political objectives.

The paper is organised as follows: first, we rehearse Young and Muller's (2010) three educational futures in order to identify three differing stances on the strength of boundaries between 'Future 1' and 'Future 3'. We suggest that these stances lead to distinctive conceptions of powerful knowledge and the forms of sociality that underpin that knowledge. In turn, this implies distinctive approaches to the curriculum. As indicated above, we argue that despite implicitly holding different stances on the relations between Futures 1 and 3, various authors have coalesced around opposition to Young and Muller's (2010) Future 2. The effect is to avoid tackling the tensions in the relationship between Future 1 and 3. We go on to illustrate the point through a discussion of the political projects associated with some of those agreed in their opposition to Future 2. In particular, we discuss the role of the Academy of Ideas (formerly known as the Institute of Ideas), a UK-based organisation which has influenced the thinking of many of those subscribing to the knowledge turn. We argue that the Academy of Ideas' educational position is allied with a reactionary form of 'cultural restorationism', a version of Future 1 thinking. Their position can only be understood with reference to the wider ideological project to which they subscribe – a form of reactionary libertarianism which defines itself in opposition to the 'mainstream' left. The Academy of Ideas' position is contrasted briefly with (i) alternative visions of educational reform in England and (ii) the South African context, which has been particularly influential on the social realist movement. Both of these latter positions have a tendency to strengthen boundaries against both Future 1 and Future 2, thus leaving open the question of what a Future 3 knowledge might entail.

To conclude, we return specifically to guiding principles for the Future 3 curriculum, identifying what might characterise a Future 3 curriculum that posits a strong boundary with Future 1. We suggest that it is notions of disciplinarity and sociality that underpin Future 3. This leads to understandings of the curriculum that recognise that knowledge is always

dynamic and ‘in process’, and that debates and discussions within disciplines often exemplify this dynamism and provide a template for the curriculum. The focus on sociality also posits a relation between knowledge and society that is radically different from both Future 1 and Future 2. Importantly, Future 3 suggests that knowledge and society are mutually constitutive, and foregrounds ever-changing symbolic forms of knowledge as a means of societal communication and understanding. Thus, inclusive engagement of all citizens within our changing societies in the ongoing iteration of that symbolic knowledge is necessary to ensure that knowledge is truly powerful.

2. Unpacking the futures

In Young and Muller’s (2010) Future 1 the ‘boundaries are given and fixed’ and an ‘under-socialised’ concept of knowledge prevails. The boundaries of disciplines are ‘taken for granted’ (ibid. 14) and the social relations that lead to particular forms of knowledge are downplayed or ignored. Future 2, on the other hand, sees the ‘end of boundaries’ and an ‘over-socialised’ concept of knowledge. Knowledge is simply equated with power and ‘questions of epistemology’ are reduced to ‘who knows?’ and the ‘identification of knowers’ (14). Future 1 is seen as a recipe for the preservation of elite structures and an elite curriculum: ‘overt, strictly stipulated and paced’ (17), defended against contestation by those whose interests it represents. It is a ‘recipe for social divisiveness, inequality, unhappiness and conflict’ (17), where boundaries are rigid and impermeable, a ‘basis for maintaining and legitimising existing power relations and restricting sources of debate’ (18). Future 2, on the other hand, ‘is born in ‘progressive’ opposition to Future 1’ and aware of the injustices exemplified by the boundaries of an elite curriculum. Future 2 prioritises ‘generic outcomes’ and the weakening of ‘boundaries between experts and neophyte learners’ (18). However,

rather than reducing the injustices of ‘stratification’ between learners, Future 2 simply hides them, by making the irreducibly differentiated aspects of knowledge less immediately perceptible in the curriculum (i.e. Bernstein’s ‘invisible pedagogy’). By denying ‘the special worth of expert knowledge’ advocates for Future 2 thus ‘feed a disintegrating public culture’ (19), advocating for curricula that offer learners few resources for engaging meaningfully in society.

The way out of the binary trap between Future 1 and Future 2, Young and Muller suggest, is Future 3, which is based on the ‘assumptions that there are specific kinds of social conditions under which powerful knowledge is acquired and produced’ (Young and Muller 2010, 19). In Future 3, knowledge is seen as ‘emergent, non-reducible and socially differentiated’, and socio-historically constructed through the disciplinarity of ‘communities of enquirers’ (14). This position arises ‘out of the critique and analysis ... of Futures 1 and 2’, and therefore is aware of the problems of both an ‘under-socialised’ approach and an ‘over-socialised’ approach. Future 3 recognises that what counts as ‘powerful knowledge’ must change over time as ‘specialist knowledge grows apace’ (2010, 21), and disciplines ‘morph and adapt’ (20) as new problems emerge. As Young and Muller note, such knowledge is ‘systematically revisable’, ‘emergent’, ‘real’, ‘material’, ‘social’, and produced in ‘particular socio-epistemic formations’ (2013, pp. 236-8). It should also not be seen simply as just propositional knowledge, as bodies of knowledge are not sets of isolated propositions but integrated and ever-iterating structures of concepts and claims, and (in some cases) bodies of empirical evidence in support of such claims. As Muller (2014) suggests, drawing on Winch (2010), propositions gain meaning in relation to other propositions, and therefore knowing how to infer meaning from a specific proposition in the context of the wider relationship between propositions is a central element of knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, as Winch (2010) also asserts, knowing how to apply appropriate procedures to test claims to knowledge is

fundamental to the acquisition of propositional knowledge. This subtle view of knowledge, which emphasizes the necessity of its unceasing iteration and the importance of contestation and disciplinarity, seems distinctly different from the ideas that sit behind Future 1, where ‘outmoded’ (Young and Muller 2010, 17) knowledge is represented in the curriculum in order to *reinforce the priorities of the powerful*, whether they be an established elite or (potentially) a new form of reactionary elite.

With this brief rehearsal of Young and Muller’s schema in mind, we reiterate that in this paper we are concerned with the nature of the boundaries between these educational futures, especially the question of how to conceptualise the boundaries between Future 1 and Future 3. In order to do this it is helpful to draw upon recent discussions Guile et al. (2017) and Oates (2017), who reach rather different conclusions. Guile et al. have drawn attention to the tension in relations between the ‘futures’ thus:

‘If Hirschian core knowledge is roughly aligned with Future 1 curriculum thinking, and powerful knowledge (by definition) underpins Future 3 curriculum thinking, we have a useful heuristic that enables the role of specialist knowledge in education to be distinguished from the narrow concerns of cultural restorationists.’ (2017, 6).

Oates, on the other hand, suggests that the differences between Future 1 and Future 3 are not so great, at least in terms of the resulting curriculum. He states that, ‘ If Future 1 and Future 3 appear to have a ‘space’ between them, then this could appear like the distance between the Earth and Moon’; however this distance is ‘ nothing compared to the difference between these and Future 2 – which in epistemological terms is in a galaxy far, far away’ (2017, 159). Oates optimistically suggests that ‘Future 1 and Future 3 may require a short and intensive debate to resolve the practicalities of translation into legitimate curriculum policy’ but that

‘Future 2 was embedded in an entirely different and outdated conception of ‘knowledge’ (2017, 159).

Taking Guile and Oates’s reflections as a starting point, it is possible to discern some distinct perspectives on the strength of differentiation between Future 1 and Future 3. These can range through:

- a *largely undifferentiated vision* that sees the arguments for Future 3 as virtually indistinguishable from those that argue for Future 1;
- a vision that sees a *weak differentiation* between the two in terms of curriculum, certainly in terms of the contrast with Future 2 (Oates 2017); and
- a *strongly differentiated version* that sees the boundary between Future 1 and Future 3 as almost or perhaps just as important as the division between Future 2 and Future 3.

These different ways of conceptualising the relationship between Future 1 and Future 3 may lead to variable emphases on the character of powerful knowledge: while some may focus on how powerful knowledge is specifically represented in the school curriculum (e.g. Oates 2017), others may focus on the extent to which the curriculum reflects the processes by which powerful knowledge becomes powerful (i.e. processes of disciplinarity). The focus on disciplinarity is inevitably more nuanced, as it suggests scrutiny of the relationship between knowledge production (in higher education) and the school or college curriculum, and the ‘recontextualisation’ processes (Bernstein 2000) between them (see Hordern 2019). Young and Muller (2010), in highlighting the vastly differing forms of sociality and assumptions about knowledge than underpin Future 1 and Future 3, arguably arrive at a *strongly differentiated* vision of the relations between them.

The question remains as to why the relations between Future 1 and Future 3 can be confused, especially since Young and Muller (2010) are clear that these are very different visions, suggesting a strong boundary between the two. Indeed the route towards the development of Future 3 appears to involve first a rigorous critique of Future 1 (which leads in part to Future 2), followed by a rigorous critique of Future 2, which *only then* leads to Future 3, and therefore Future 3 curriculum thinking would appear to need to be cognisant of both the criticisms of Future 1 and the criticisms of Future 2. This would suggest that Oates's (2017) space analogy is misguided, and that Future 3 is at some distance from Future 1, and is only found *via an engagement with Future 2*. However, the attempted co-option of some of Young's thinking and arguments by policy makers advocating for a subject-based curriculum (i.e. Gibb 2015) suggests that Oates is correct in arguing that, in practice there may be only marginal differences between two positions, at least on the curriculum. Indeed, some commentators may (and have, see Wilby, 2018) interpret Young's position as simply amounting to a defence of 'traditional' subjects, or a subject hierarchy that may marginalise other curriculum 'vehicles' (White 2012).

To date, what has been described as the 'knowledge turn' (e.g. Lambert, 2011) can perhaps best be seen as a reaction primarily against Future 2. Indeed, it is this reaction against Future 2 which is the common position in (for example) the work of diverse authors who could be broadly associated with aspects of this turn to knowledge (see for example Allais (2014); Oates (2017); but also Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert (2017)). Both those who sympathise with a weak boundary position (between Futures 1 and 3) and a strong boundary position, would agree that there is a need to expose the flaws of a Future 2 approach, and the curricula that result from them. However, different perspectives on the differentiation between Future 1 and Future 3 may partially stem from distinctive responses to different aspects of Future 2 (i.e. the progressive tradition on the one hand, and 'outcomes' or 'skills-based' curriculum

frameworks on the other). While the work of Allais (2014) has rigorously exposed the thinking behind internationally-mandated outcomes-based qualification frameworks, it can be argued that the work of Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert (2017) is best seen as part of a politically-motivated assault on progressivism, and on an educational and liberal ‘establishment’ (see below). A shared agreement amongst subscribers to the knowledge turn on the problematic character of Future 2 risks masking fundamental and important differences about curriculum futures implied by Future 3.

More broadly the different positions, and some of the confusions that surround the debate, reflect different emphases amongst many of those involved in the discussion. Young and Muller’s (2010) work must be seen as both an exercise in the sociology of educational knowledge *and* as an important intervention in global curriculum debates (Hordern 2019). While these are strongly related activities, there are nonetheless distinct. It may be easy for some to jump into the curriculum arguments whilst neglecting the nuanced sociology of knowledge arguments underpin them. The social realist approach that Young and Muller (2007, 2010, 2013) have outlined emphasises the relationship between knowledge and society, but neither of these are seen as static, unchanging concepts. It is not only a belief in truth that is important, but also ‘truthfulness’ (Young and Muller 2007), and there needs to be a wariness of those who assert truths about knowledge and the curriculum while neglecting the requirement to truthfulness. This truthfulness is the fruit of thousands of years of philosophy and the social sciences, and prompts and probes the ongoing exposure of bias, power relations, dominance and attempts at cultural hegemony in the production of knowledge and in the curriculum. While those who coalesce around the knowledge turn have been acute in exposing the difficulties of approaching knowledge from an exaggeration of ‘truthfulness’ (i.e. an oversocialised Future 2), they are in danger of forgetting the gains made by the sociological and philosophical thinking that underpinned the criticisms of Future 1. In

so doing, they end up with a static version of the truth which informs their view of the curriculum. While Future 1 assumes a received truth, Future 2 assumes value only in truthfulness, and both approaches are flawed in their understanding of how knowledge develops in society (Young and Muller 2010). Future 3, on the other hand, implies a co-dependence of truth and truthfulness - our understandings of what could be true are transformed by a commitment not only to be truthful, but also to the idea of truth (Williams 2002), and this is underpinned by certain forms of disciplinary social relations that enable truthfulness to be exercised and an (always provisional) truth to be sketched.

Attacking other seemingly entrenched positions may be a particular strength of some commentators, but there are differences in positions on what should replace the discredited outcomes based approaches. While Oates (2017) may be right that the Future 1 and Future 3 curriculum are currently not so far apart, he also acknowledges that the thinking behind Future 1 and Future 3 is *very very different*. In this sense, those involved in the knowledge turn have perhaps still not recognised sufficiently that curriculum questions remain unanswered (Morgan and Lambert 2017) – the curriculum response of those advocating for ‘knowledge’ can too quickly resort to a seemingly conservative defence of current curriculum structures, and this seems also to be married in some quarters with a reactionary political project (see below). However, the radical, democratic and participatory aspect of Future 3 does not sit comfortably with such conservatism. As Young and Muller (2010) note, it is possible to recognise the value of conserving the role of educational institutions in society, and conserving the role of systematic knowledge in society, without subscribing to a Future 1 position. In terms of the curriculum therefore, it may be that continuing to ask the right questions is just (if not more important) than attempting to find an (always impermanent) answer.

3. Political projects: the ideologies driving the weakening of boundaries between Future 1 and 3.

In this section we seek to show, by way of example, how different conceptualisations of the boundaries between Future 1 and Future 3 can lead to different ways of conceptualising curriculum knowledge. We use the case of the Academy of Ideas as an example of how one approach is to draw a weak boundary between Future 1 and Future 3. The effect is to elide any real discussion of Future 3 and, by default, the critique of Future 2 leaves little alternative but to revert to a highly traditional 'Future 1'. This strategy appeals both to practitioners annoyed by progressivism and to those searching for an intellectual hinterland to help advance a political agenda.

The Academy (Institute) of Ideas

In the English educational context at least three distinct groups have raised questions about the diminished role of knowledge in schools (Morgan, 2018). First, there are those sociologists of education who gather under the banner of "Social Realism". Second, there is a small of teacher educators in University departments of education who have questioned the increased genericism of teacher education programs and the prioritisation of pedagogy and assessment over curriculum content. Finally, there is a small but vocal group of intellectuals, academics, and writers associated with the Academy of ideas. Whereas in its academic version Social Realism seeks to downplay the role of politics in the production of knowledge, we will argue that the Academy of Ideas is underpinned by a political project. The rest of this section seeks to explore this project, and asks where it leads in terms of ideas about educational futures.

It is important to understand where ideas come from. The Academy of Ideas has its origins in the fragmented politics of the British left in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For many on the

left, the perceived failures of the reforming Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a fragmented ‘extra-Parliamentary left. For many, the Labour governments of the post-war period (especially the Wilson and Callaghan led governments of the 1960s and 1970s) had reneged on their promises, sided with capital and followed the path of reformism. Among the complex group of non-parliamentary socialist groups that proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s, arguments centred on the question of the nature of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1919 and the subsequent development of the Soviet Union (Medhurst, 2017). A sense of the diversity of the left at this time can be gained from the guide provided in the appendix to *A socialist anatomy of Britain*. One of these groups was the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). According to Coates, Johnston and Bush (1985), the RCP was formed in 1981 and had several hundred members nationwide. In terms of its own position, the RCP insisted that there could be no common interest between workers and employers, and argued that workers’ interests must be pursued unambiguously without regard for the consequences for the capitalist class and the state. As such, reformist leadership in the Labour party and the Trades unions were the main problem facing the left.

At some point in the 1990s the RCP’s newspaper ‘the next steps’, morphed into a glossy (by the standards of the time) monthly magazine called *Living Marxism* which later became simply *LM*. It published articles which took aim at what it saw as some of the lazy assumptions of the liberal left, which was gradually gaining ascendancy and which had been dominated by the New Times analysis (CPGB, 1988; Hall and Jacques, 1989). Indeed, many of the articles in *LM* were a reaction to the bright shiny futures imagined by Tony Blair’s New Labour. In the late 1990s, *Living Marxism* found itself the subject of a damaging lawsuit over a picture and story it printed about a Bosnian prisoner of war camp. *LM* folded, but eventually the magazine re-emerged as *Spiked-online* (Monbiot, 2003; Turner, 2010). We are

not, of course, claiming that those who write under the banner of the Academy of Ideas are necessarily aware of these origins or subscribe to the Academy's politics. However, we *do* suggest that understanding these historical antecedents provides clues to what we call the 'ambition and politics' of the knowledge turn.

A key figure throughout has been the sociologist Frank Furedi, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Canterbury. Furedi is a prolific writer, whose books on education, the politics of fear, reading, parenting, universities, imperialism and history, most clearly articulates the position of the Academy of Ideas (in the interests of brevity, we cite only those directly relevant to the argument here). Furedi (1997, 2005) argues that Western societies are beset by a growing reluctance to embrace progress and technological change, and that in the face of this lowering of ambition, governments have increasingly sought legitimacy by claiming to protect their citizens against perceived harm and risk. The widespread growth of a 'therapy culture' has led to the flourishing of a 'diminished self' (2004).

This culture of fear (a term that Furedi appears to claim to have coined) is reflected in many areas of social life, many of which have been explored by writers associated with the Academy of Ideas. For instance, a major theme is that of 'sustainability', which is regarded as an example of Western societies have come to question the idea of progress and growth that has propelled the project of modernity. Thus, Austin Williams (2008) considers 'sustainists' (i.e. those in favour of sustainability) as the 'enemies of progress', and is part of an architectural group called ManTownHuman which bemoans the tendency to build structures that make few demands on the planet's resources and instead favours buildings that impose themselves on nature (Donald et al., 2008). In a similar vein, Daniel Ben-Ami's (2010) book *Ferraris for all* challenges the wide range of voices that see economic growth as

a problem. The phrase Ferraris for all is intended to represent the notion ‘the whole of humanity should have access to the best that the world can offer’, and appears in the manifesto of an educational charity that is associated with the Academy of Ideas, called Worldwrite, whose manifesto proclaims that it is ‘time to ditch the sustainababble’ and opt instead for serious development (Worldwrite, 2002). This anti-environmentalism is also found in Dick Taverne’s (2005) *The march of unreason*, which argues that green thinking has undermined trust in the authority of science. Taverne is a founding member of the charity Sense about Science, which has been seen by some commentators as a group serving the interests of large science corporations. Once more, we should stress that we are not doubting the quality of much of this writing, and we do not consider ourselves sufficiently qualified to adjudicate White, Rudy and Gilbert’s assessment that writers associated with the Academy of Ideas adopt an ‘ideological position that draws together radical environmental contrarianism...with a Nietzschean celebration of the unencumbered individual and an Ayn Rand style defence of elitism and the unrestricted free market’ (White, Rudy and Gilbert, 2008: 130). However, we do note that there is a good deal of referencing and reviewing of each others’ work, and that there does seem to be a contrarian strand to this writing. (to give just two examples: Ben-Ami’s book acknowledges many associates of the Academy of Ideas and notes that ‘many of the ideas were originally aired on spiked-online; Austin Williams’ book comes with an endorsement from Frank Furedi who recommends it as a ‘humanist alternative to the conformist consensus’.)

Making clear some of these links is in no way to fall into the trap of seeing conspiracy theories. In practice, this might best be seen as a loose network. But networks are not without politics. Indeed, it does seem that Academy of Ideas’ writers are a distinctive and organised voice in education debates. A statement on education from the Academy’s website prepared for the 2015 UK General Election argues that schools have lost faith in their ability to educate

all students, and have therefore opted to “embrace fads and fashions involving social engineering and pseudo-science rather than teach the subject knowledge that can genuinely transform young minds” (Institute of Ideas, 2015, n.p.). This assertion is a condensation of the arguments of a series of books and pamphlets published by Academy of Ideas’ authors. An early statement of this position is found in *The RoutledgeFalmer Debates in Education* (Hayes, 2004) which was aimed at the teacher education market and featured a number of essays from Academy of Ideas writers (e.g. Dennis Hayes, Frank Furedi, Claire Fox, Joanna Williams, Shirley Dent, Toby Marshall, David Perks, Jenny Bristow and so on) which sought to challenge ‘the climate and culture of compliance in education’. As Hayes informed student teachers in the introduction, traditionally schools were institutions that existed primarily to provide an education based on subject knowledge, and in addition performed a range of other useful ‘socialisation functions’. Today though, ‘the transmission of knowledge and culture is now secondary to other tasks’. What is more, ‘the response of educationalists to the emptying of education of any meaningful content is silence’ (3). Furedi’s argument that society seemed to have given up on the notion of progress and growth in favour of a therapeutic approach was developed for education in Hayes and Ecclestone’s (2009) *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (indeed Furedi provided the Foreword), and Furedi himself has written a series of books on aspects of education, most notably his 2009 *Wasted*, with its provocative subtitle ‘why education isn’t educating’. In addition to seeking to shape public debate around education, the Academy of Ideas has sought to shape policy debates around the curriculum. Examples include: the Civitas publication *The corruption of the curriculum* (Whelan 2007) featuring essays from Academy of Ideas writers Lawes, Perks and Standish, with an introduction from Furedi; and the Academy of Ideas’ response to the Expert Panel’s review of the *Framework for the National Curriculum* (published in 2011), which noted that although the Framework signalled a ‘nominal shift back to placing subject knowledge at the

heart of education’, this was far from complete. The Expert Panel was ‘misguided in placing personal ‘development’ on a par with the intellectual pursuit of subject knowledge’(Institute of Ideas, 2012:3), and that a ‘real subject-based curriculum strives to teach all children the best that has been thought and said’(3). Most recently, Joanna Williams, the Education editor of Spiked-online and author of a number of books challenging the direction of education policy, has been appointed educational advisor to the pro-market-think-tank Policy Exchange (Policy Exchange, 2018), whose recent publications advocate for subject-based teaching complete with ‘oven-ready’ resources for teachers (Blake, 2018).

The main thrust of the Academy of Ideas’ pronouncements on education is that the content of the school curriculum should be free from political interference and be based on a return to traditional subjects. On one level, statements such as the following are directly in line with the of Social Realists:

“Schools are for education which is achieved by subject-based teaching as the route to intellectual autonomy and freedom“ (Institute of Ideas, 2015, n.p.).

And that:

“Schools today are failing to educate because they are no longer required to develop children so that they learn the best that is known and thought” (Institute of Ideas, 2015, n.p).

Having established that writers associated with the Academy of Ideas have become important voices within educational debate and policy, and that their public pronouncements are concerned to advocate for a return to subject-based teaching, we now want to examine the

extent to which we can find evidence that writers associated with the Academy of Ideas seek to move beyond what appears to be a Future 1 version of the curriculum towards a more ‘forward-focused’ Future 3. We conclude that, to date, the failure of writers associated with the Academy of Ideas to explore the details of a possible Future 3 type curriculum begins to look like an attempt to turn back the educational clock and return teachers and students to a ‘traditional’ subject-based curriculum.. In Young and Muller’s terms, these writers have not yet begun to explore the implications for the type of Future 3 type knowledge that might inform curriculum design, opting instead for the return to ‘traditional’ (or Future 1 type) versions of school subjects.

This inability or unwillingness to go beyond a critique of Future 2 is evident in many statements. Thus, in an essay entitled ‘Seven ways education needs to change in 2017’, Dennis Hayes (2017) argues that we should ‘stop reducing education to skills and learning objectives’, ‘take things back to basics’ and ‘get rid of the obsession with pedagogy’ (no pagination). These are all staples of the critique of Future 2. Hayes’ ‘number one’ priority is to ‘put subjects at the heart of the curriculum’. However, this looks distinctly like Future 1: “In its purest form, education is the simple means of passing knowledge and understanding on to a new generation”. Even Frank Furedi offers few clues. At the end of his long book on ‘why education isn’t educating’, Furedi offers no advice as to what the curriculum might look like, other than it be left to teachers to decide how best to teach. The danger is that in the absence of discussion about Future 3, we revert to the default position of Future 1.

Perhaps the most developed account we have to date of how school subjects might be reconfigured in the Academy of Ideas’ preferred curriculum can be found in Alex Standish and Alka Seghal-Cuthbert (2017) edited collection *What should schools teach?* Their starting point is that:

“Many young people entering the teaching profession are unclear about what subject knowledge is and what it is for, even though they have recently graduated with a disciplinary degree. For those already working in the profession, including experienced teachers and representatives of examination boards, subjects are often not viewed in terms of a framework of theoretical knowledge. Instead, the ‘subject’ is presented through social, economic and environmental issues to be explored, elevating the application and social outcomes over knowledge itself” (N.P. Cover).

Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert’s introduction to the volume sets out their assumptions about the relationship between disciplines and subjects. Disciplines are those structures that produce original knowledge, whilst school subjects are necessary simplifications of the complexities of the disciplines. This hierarchical division has pedagogical implications in that students should be taught the established and accepted ‘facts’ of the discipline, before going on to explore issues and debates within the disciplines. In this way, students are to be inducted into an established culture, rather than as active contributors to that culture. This seems to accord with Muller and Young’s account of Future 1. Thus, Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert state:

“broadly speaking, schools induct children into a society, but also into a culture, introducing them the different realms of human experience” (6).

The phrase ‘realms of human experience’ comes from Phenix’s (1986) work, and is often cited alongside that of the English philosophers Hirst and Peters (1969) because of its affinity with the idea of the ‘areas of experience’ from which disciplines in the school subjects are supposedly derived.

Phenix suggests the complete person should be: (a) skilled in the use of speech, symbol and gesture; (b) factually well-informed; (c) capable of creating and appreciating objects of aesthetic significance; (d) with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others; (e) be able to weigh wise decisions and adjudicate between right and wrong; and (f) possessed of an integral outlook. It is easy to see how the ‘realms of experience’ can be mapped on the existing school subjects, and indeed it is one - perhaps the most dominant of the styles of curriculum thought that has dominated post-war educational thinking (Inglis, 1975).

However, as Inglis recognised, this style of curriculum thought was symptomatic of the ‘end of ideology’ current in the early 1970s which held that school subjects are derived from an actually existing world that has been logically divided up for the convenience of studying by disciplines. It results in a ‘disembodied version of knowledge without history, change, or sociological and ideological roots’. (Inglis, 1975: 58) .

Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert are aware of the criticism of stasis in their schema (here they display a level of reflexivity about the limits of Future 1 that is less evident in other Academy of Ideas’ writers), and in order to overcome this they make use of Bernstein’s (2000) notion of recontextualisation. Here, school subjects are imagined to be principled selections from the disciplines that meet both the education and socialisation functions of schooling. The idea is that constant reflection on these choices, made by teachers who are experts in their disciplines, should serve to ensure that an element of dynamism is injected into school subjects. Here, it may be suggested that Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert are moving towards an embryonic version of Future 3. However, when it comes to specific subjects, the versions of subject knowledge offered turns out to be no less selective in its focus, whilst at the same time ignoring or downplaying the dynamism of contemporary disciplines. For reasons of space, we limit our discussion to Standish’s representation of ‘Geography’.

Standish's chapter on 'Geography' in *What should schools teach?* is based on a selective reading of the history of the discipline which focuses on its integrative nature, and which relies on accounts that were current in the 1980s. The effect is a view of the discipline and school subject that appears strangely disconnected from the 'actually existing discipline' and the experience of many of the students who may become geography teachers. For instance Standish claims (presumably based on his conversations with beginning teachers) that 'most candidates' for geography teaching adopt Future 2-type reasons for teaching the subject 'saving the planet' or 'making a difference'. This, he argues, does not provide the basis for teaching the subject. He goes on to argue that there is indeed such a thing as 'the nature of geographical knowledge and enquiry.' This is a selective reading of the history of the development of geographical thought, and is in contradiction to current historiography about geography as a discipline, which regards it as a complex and evolving field that is closely embedded in wider movements of modernity (for example, Bonnett, 2010; Cox, 2014). It is highly significant that Standish avoids complex discussions about how to define geography and (apparently arbitrarily) opts for a 1963 definition by Ackerman and a 1980s one by Johnston which focus on the integrative or synthetic view of geography as a discipline. He then proceeds to offer an account of the systematic and regional traditions of geographical thought. Significantly, what has been left out of this version of geography as a discipline are the complex developments and 'turns' which have shaped the discipline since the 1980s, and which tend to emphasise fragmentation within the disciplines rather than unity. Beginning teachers following Standish's advice would be forced to jettison or forget much of their own training in the contemporary subject in favour of a cleansed and eviscerated version of the school subject (for instance, the best-selling undergraduate textbook used in most UK geography courses adopts a very different epistemological view and has contents that would presumably be rejected by Standish (Cloke, Crang and Goodwin, 2013)) The result is a

sanitised Future 1 geography (for further evidence of Standish's tendency to return to 'traditional' geography, linked to the Academy of Ideas' wider argument about the orientation towards progress and modernity, see his *Spiked-online* article on 'The Anthropocene' (Standish 2015); contrast this with Morgan (2018; chapter 9) .

One of the unfortunate effects of this tendency to provide a robust critique of Future 2, but to avoid a rigorous analysis of the differences between Future 1 and Future 3 is that the Academy of Ideas' writers appear to align themselves with the positions espoused by quite unreflective commentators such as the former Secretary of Education Michael Gove and those who seem to hark back to a Hirsch-inspired version of Core Knowledge.

These calls for 'core' (i.e. Hirsch) or 'powerful' (i.e. Young) knowledge are thus often are sometimes understood as defending culturally distinct forms of knowledge (i.e. in literature, languages or history) against attack from relativism and unthinking progressivism. In such conceptions, the 'deep educational establishment' itself is often held up simplistically as problematic. This perspective may thus also find succour in the fragmentation of the schooling system (for example in England) and the opportunities it offers for 'innovation' and 'leadership', away from the educational establishment and towards freedom to engage with knowledge (ACSL, 2017). Such political views may ally with both those on the radical right or left, but can also be seen as reactionary, and unexpectedly authoritarian.

4.: Towards a distinctive Future 3?

The previous section argued that in the writing of those associate with the Academy of Ideas, critiques of Future 2 approaches to knowledge and curriculum are not matched by an examination of the differences between Future 1 and Future 3, which leads to a tendency to fall back on a 'traditional' Future 1 approach. This section explores the possibility that there may exist approaches that distinguish more firmly between Future 1 and Future 3 and that

hold out for a view of powerful knowledge that is more wary about overlooking culturally specificities in curricula; and perhaps sees a key characteristic of powerful knowledge as having the potential to emancipate individuals from the social context in which they find themselves, on the principles of ‘sociality’ that underpin powerful knowledge, and on forms of sociality that are inclusive and participative (Bernstein 2000). This is an important point, since Michael Young’s intellectual project has always been ‘political’ in the sense that his work seeks to grapple with the disappointments of social democratic educational policies (see Morgan, 2014; Sharp, 1981; Young, 2009). Future 3, with its insistence on the importance of boundary maintenance as much as boundary crossing, leaves *greater uncertainty and openness to debate as to what the curriculum might be*, but is arguably a more sociologically and politically conscious alternative to the elision or proximity of Future 1 and 3.

The fact that, in the English context, it is hard to find explicit examples of curriculum development that point towards Future 3 is in part a reflection on the continued dominance of conservative thought in educational politics (Jones, 2016). However, it may be possible to discern signs of an emerging ‘progressive’ agenda. Tellingly, these take us back to some arguments and debates that came out of the earlier debates within the new sociology of education.

It is important to note the contexts in which these arguments about knowledge emerged.

Thus, Whitty (1985) recalls attending a lecture by Perry Anderson on an early version of his famous paper ‘Components of the national culture’, and coming away determined to seek to ‘expose the social basis of knowledge’, later to be realised in the ‘new sociology of education’ as highlighting ‘the open human possibilities of creating new knowledge structures and their modes of transmission’. The aim was the challenge the culture of positivism in schools. That this was a ‘progressive’ project was reflected in the aim of the essays in Whitty and Young’s edited book *Explorations in the politics of school knowledge*

which was published in 1976 just as the state was beginning to assert its right to central control over the school curriculum, and the limits of the possibilities of curriculum change were being realised. Although the dominant response of ‘left’ educators was to seek to deconstruct ‘knowledge of the powerful’ (e.g. Apple, 1979; Weis et al. 2006), it is important to acknowledge that some on the educational left, whilst welcoming of the political project, were more convinced of the need to maintain boundaries and the integrity of ‘bourgeois’ knowledge. Revisiting some of this writing might provide the basis for developing a Future 3 curriculum. For example, in a statement that comes close to Young’s latest position, Reynolds and Sullivan argued that:

“a crucial determinant of the transformation from capitalism to socialism is the universalisation of access to a national education system which retains in its curricular content and pedagogy much that is presently associated with the educational processes of capitalist schooling” (184).

They make a strong case that ‘the rational empiricism of the bourgeois mode of thought as well as the retention of the knowledge base of bourgeois culture’ is the best means of achieving working-class advancement. At first sight this sounds like a case for Future one knowledge but we might also interpret it as an argument that seems to suggest that from Future 1 comes the potential for the creative recombination of knowledge for Future 3. Another example can be found in Rachel Sharp’s (1981) argument that “the object of a progressive policy regarding the curriculum should be to create the conditions whereby a recognition of capitalism as a historically specific system with its own inner logic becomes feasible” (166). In direct challenge to the progressive orthodoxy of the time she notes that this *may* be facilitated by the breaking down of arbitrary subject barriers but this does not necessarily follow:

“Both collection and integrated knowledge codes have the potential for generating counter-hegemonic meanings as long as those who teach them have made the break with bourgeois thought” (166).

Both of these positions hold that knowledge is political, but insist on realism, that some knowledge has more worth than others, and that having access to these is the basis for any transformation of knowledge into Future 3 knowledge. This is the position taken by Harold Entwistle (1980) in his discussions of the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. He recognized that many on the educational left cited Gramsci as the inspiration for educational change, but conveniently overlooked the fact that Gramsci himself adopted a conservative view of the role of knowledge, and that he insisted that children learn the content and forms of thinking of the bourgeois curriculum. This becomes the potential for transformation or, in Young and Muller’s nomenclature, a move towards Future 3.

Jones (1989) provides an account of what might now be called a Future 3 version of knowledge, one where the meeting grounds of spontaneous experience and systematized knowledge are explored. Thus Jones notes that the starting point for learning may be experience, but should extend so as to allow experience to be understood as historically and socially situated. The goal must be abstraction, but it is recognised that abstractions can be experienced as alien and therefore prevent learning. The goal must be to move from spontaneous concepts to formal concepts – in Vygotsky’s sense. Jones cites Judith Williamson (1981) who asked, ‘how do you get somebody to understand an abstraction?’ to which she answers, ‘By relating it to the reality of which it is an abstraction of’. More recently, in an extended review of Young and Lambert’s *Knowledge and the Future School*, Jones (2014) has argued for an approach that, whilst rejecting Future 1, attempts to draw less distinct and final lines between Future 2 and Future 3 approaches.

We hope that it is clear that the examples we have cited in this section offer a very different way of conceptualising the Future 1- Future 3 boundary than writers from the Academy of Ideas, and one of the reasons for this is that they are based upon, and imply, a very different political and educational project. These represent very different ‘politics and ambitions’ for the knowledge turn, ones that suggest possible ways to develop the option for a progressive Future 3. Whether or not this will eventuate will depend on the evolution of educational politics.

In order to provide an example from another context, we turn to the example of curriculum reform in South Africa. It is important to recognise the complexities involved here. After all, the work of writers such as Bernstein, Young and Moore was shaped by the particular problematic of the failure of the social democratic educational project in Britain, so the question of how theories ‘travel’ (apart from the relatively fortuitous meeting of minds of scholars from South Africa and the UK) requires reflection. Thus, the interplay, and particularly the tensions, between Future 1, 2 and 3 positions in the South African context have a particular dynamic that is grounded in its apartheid history. Apartheid curricula (for there were many different iterations during the 48-year rule) were for the most part Future 1 curricula - strongly bounded subject-based curricula with strong content specifications. They were explicitly culturally hegemonic – a Christian, national, white cultural bias infused curricula for all ethnic groups. Under a fragile regime requiring constant legitimation, politics and curriculum knowledge were extremely tightly knit. The result was that political conservatism and a knowledge-based curriculum came ready-conflated. After the transition to a democratic state, the means to unravel invidious apartheid curricula was to instigate a radical version of a Future 2 curriculum. This new curriculum - C2005 - fused both aspects of the Future 2 scenario by introducing a framework based on generic learning outcomes

couched in a radical constructivist, learner-centred, progressive pedagogy. In practice, C2005 was utterly foreign to the majority of teachers: its failure was profound and its revision swift. Revising the first post-apartheid curriculum was, however, politically delicate. Any response to the radical, Future 2 C2005 was regarded as conservative and anti-transformative, especially because features such as ‘learner-centred pedagogy’, ‘life-long learning’ and local democratic curriculum-making had positive political resonance. Thus, at the outset, the terms of curriculum debate were cast between a Future 1 and Future 2 position. In the subsequent curriculum policy reviews, a Future 3 position defined itself as distinct from an apartheid-style Future 1 and gained decisive influence in further versions of the national curriculum produced in 2002 and in 2012. The 2002 review had produced a theoretical argument for greater conceptual coherence, knowledge stipulation and attention to disciplinary structure in order to ensure curriculum progression. The social realist position was clearly marked in the report of the Ministerial Review leading to the 2012 curriculum, reflected in the statement that, “What we need to provide is a clear statement of the ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2007) that provides better learning, life and work opportunities for learners (DBE, 2009, p. 61).

In relation to policy, Future 3 gained significant success at the level of a national curriculum for schooling. However, the academic debates around curriculum are still very much alive and critiques of the current knowledge-based curriculum do not direct themselves at any clear distinction between a Future 1 and a Future 3 position. The enduring cleavage in these debates is the classic Future 2 / Future 1 issue discussed earlier, namely the extent to which the view of curriculum knowledge is undersocialised or oversocialised. Those who adopt a Future 2 position argue that the advocates of a knowledge-based curriculum (whether this is

Future 1 or Future 3) present an undersocialised view of knowledge – a position described by Fataar (2016) as keeping the externals, the ‘social subjective’ and questions of power, race, class and gender, at bay. Future 3 emphasises the social justice imperative of access to powerful knowledge, which they argue is often lost in an oversocialised view (C2005 being an example of that).

The points of contention between Future 2 and Future 3 remain for a number of political reasons. First, as suggested, these positions carry heavy historical political baggage; distinctions between Future 1 and Future 3 have been elided since the end of apartheid, and the Future 3 position has regularly been painted as conservative (see Zipin et al, 2015). The Future 2 position has gained strength from broader, international trends that have equated political progressivism with educational progressivism (Muller & Hoadley, 2018). Second, the purview of curriculum, what a curriculum can be expected to do or should do especially in a context of great economic and social disparities and injustices, is persistently in dispute. Those who favour a Future 2 approach often make claims for the curriculum to solve social problems (such as social integration, inequality, marginality) which, whilst politically desirable, over-estimate the ability to of the curriculum to ‘compensate for society’. At the same time a Future 3 approach has not solved the problem of the majority not being able to access powerful knowledge (Beck, 2013), what (Muller, 2014) refers to as ‘epistemic disaffection’. More recently there have been moves to weaken the boundary between Future 2 and Future 3. Thus, Fataar (2016) acknowledges the need to proceed from an emphasis on “the role of schooling in inducting students into powerful knowledge” (p.18). Drawing on Fraser’s (2009) work, however, he argues for a knowledge orientation that recognises students and is able to “scaffold their life world knowledges and literacies onto the school knowledge code” (ibid.) and treat knowledge as participative and generative, not simply consumed. This suggests similarities with UK writers such as Jones (cited above), but the

pedagogical entailments of these arguments are for now more easily retrieved from Fataar's arguments than what they might mean for curriculum. At the present time, the quest to find some accord between the Future 2 and Future 3 positions persists from both sides, particularly in the light of the renewed impetus from decolonization debates and what this means for curriculum (see Shalem and Allais, this issue, for example).

5. Concluding remarks

Despite the fact that Future 1 is clearly distinct from Future 3 in Young and Muller (2010), we have seen considerable attempts by both critics of and participants in the 'knowledge turn' to reconstruct Future 3 as a form of Future 1 (i.e. see White 2012 as a critic, or Standish and Seghal-Cuthbert 2017 as participants), or at least to suggest that the results of Future 3 are not so different from Future 1 (i.e. Oates 2017). In our view, there are considerable dangers in these positions, as they misinterpret the thinking behind the Future 3 approach, and could misrepresent a concern with a 'knowledge-based' curriculum to the wider educational and policy-making community. Our aim in this paper has been to clarify what is at stake if the boundaries between Future 1 and Future 3 remain unclarified. As discussed above, aspects of the arguments of the knowledge turn have found favour with both policy-makers, but also with political movements (i.e. the Academy of Ideas) who have found that advocacy of 'knowledge' in schooling suits their longstanding assault on what they perceive as a liberal political establishment. The risks of confusing Future 1 and Future 3 could lead to static and culturally conservative curricula which neglect the forms of knowledge and knowledgeability needed for a thriving democratic, participative and inclusive society (Bernstein 2000). A weak boundary between Future 1 and Future 3 could result in curricula that truly *only* suit the powerful, without offering *all* the opportunity for powerful knowledge (Beck 2013).

To finish, we wish to briefly highlight two related aspects that are central to any Future 3 curriculum: disciplinarity and sociality. Firstly, in terms of *disciplinarity*, the subjects of a Future 3 curriculum need to be conscious of their relationship to the disciplines from where they draw their knowledge. These disciplines are ever-iterating while maintaining a consistency around their boundaries. Disciplines continue to exist because of disciplinarity: human relations and interactions that provoke debate and disagreement about the nature of the knowledge and version of the truth that they offer (Muller 2009), a search for truth that is maintained by a commitment to be truthful (Young and Muller 2007). A sense that knowledge is always ‘in process’ and subject to review should therefore be a cornerstone of a Future 3 curriculum, given what we know about knowledge, and this also suggests a close relationship with higher education.

Secondly, in terms of *sociality*, the curriculum needs to recognise that powerful knowledge acquires its special character as a consequence of systematic (and yet ideally inclusive, participatory and democratic) social processes. The symbolic knowledge that we hold up as the means for societal communication and debate is *both representative of our society and constitutive of it*. But it excludes. We need to work hard to ensure that those who are alienated find greater access to disciplines and engagements with curriculum, and that broader and more diverse social groupings contribute to the reshaping of knowledge over time. Such inclusive engagement will only enrich the curriculum and *make it more powerful*. The central importance of meaningful inclusivity for questions of knowledge and the curriculum is recognised by a number of the writers mentioned above (Jones 2014; Whitty 2010; Beck 2013; Shalem and Allais, this issue), and this problematic will continue to stimulate debate amongst those seeking to further explore the potential of Future 3 and its realisation in the curriculum. It is, to a considerable extent, what distinguishes the *pursuit* of Future 3 from the *use* of Future 1 for political ends.

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