



Libraries and Learning Services

University of Auckland Research Repository, ResearchSpace

Version

This is the Accepted Manuscript version. This version is defined in the NISO recommended practice RP-8-2008 <http://www.niso.org/publications/rp/>

Suggested Reference

Ormond, B. M. (2018). Conceptions of knowledge in history teaching. In J. Morgan, B. Barrett, & U. Hoadley (Eds.), *Knowledge, curriculum and equity: Social realist perspectives* (pp. 102-116). New York: Routledge.

Copyright

Items in ResearchSpace are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated. Previously published items are made available in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a chapter published in *Knowledge, curriculum and equity: Social realist perspectives* in July 2017 available online: <http://www.tandfebooks.com/isbn/9781315111360>

For more information, see [General copyright](#), [Publisher copyright](#).

Conceptions of knowledge in history teaching

Barbara Ormond

Introduction

Teachers' conceptions of what constitutes critical knowledge in history education have been transformed over recent years in response to discourses and practices which give pre-eminence to disciplinary skills and broad concepts. History teachers in New Zealand have recently acquired the autonomy to determine the historical content they teach but the strong forces of accountability for student grades constrain and shape their choices. An examination of teachers' explanations of the reasons for their programme designs suggests that the question of *what* knowledge is important to learn is rarely foremost in their considerations. Teachers' selections of historical content are primarily based on perceptions of student interest and of how the chosen history best serves the purposes of assessment.

As in many nations, knowledge has lost its central place in debates over educational policy (Young, Lambert, Roberts and Roberts 2014) in New Zealand. The implication for curricula is that there is 'a reduction or even an evacuation of content' (Young 2010, p. 21). Where knowledge components are stated in curricula, they are commonly framed as broad concepts, ideas or core characteristics of the discipline, leaving the teacher to determine the detail of *what* knowledge should be selected and applied. Instead, contemporary curricula appear more concerned with developing students' learning dispositions and critical thinking skills. Through identifying learning competencies and stating learning outcomes the focus of curricula has shifted to an emphasis on developing students' understanding of *how* to learn. There is an underlying assumption that knowledge will follow, or that knowledge can be accessed when needed via the internet.

In history education two forms of knowledge are recognised. Disciplinary knowledge which involves understanding how history is investigated and critiqued, and propositional, or substantive, knowledge of the actions and ideas of people living in past times. It is the place of substantive knowledge in teachers' priorities which is uncertain. Substantive knowledge is specialist knowledge normally produced and debated within academic communities. The best of this knowledge has been referred to as 'powerful knowledge' by Young and Muller (2013) (also see Ormond 2014) since it can enable students to understand critical central concepts

and, due to its ‘generalising capacities’ (Young 2013, p. 108), facilitate understanding of connections between bodies of knowledge. Allais (2014), however, suggests that propositional knowledge is not prioritised in contemporary curriculum design. Knowledge is often selected on the premise that

if a particular ‘piece’ of knowledge is essential to a particular competence or outcome, that piece of knowledge is implied when the competence or learning outcome is invoked, and therefore does not need to be specified. Thus, when designing a curriculum, instead of starting from bodies of knowledge, one starts from the competence or outcome, and brings in bits of knowledge as and when they are required (p. 143).

Curricula provide little certainty over knowledge coherence in these circumstances, particularly when the structures which enable students to draw connections between inter-related concepts are not signalled.

The discussion which follows draws on Bernstein’s theory of the pedagogic device to explain how teachers’ epistemological views have emerged in the wake of a changing context of curriculum and assessment. Deriving from an analysis of empirical evidence, the concepts of ‘knowledge critical’, ‘knowledge fit’ and ‘knowledge engagement’ have been developed to explain the fundamental basis upon which teachers make their decisions about content coverage.

History in New Zealand

In New Zealand, teachers’ views on history education and the purposes of knowledge have shifted incrementally over the past fifteen years of standards-based assessment (Ormond 2011), with the most significant changes occurring in response to an *open* curriculum implemented from 2011. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 2007) applies to all sectors of compulsory schooling (primary, intermediate and secondary), with history taught as a discrete and optional subject only in the final three years of secondary school. The *Curriculum* is a single document encompassing all learning areas where the statements specific to history comprise a mere 108 words made up of two learning outcomes for each of the levels (Curriculum levels 6 to 8 - see Table 1). In the foreword to the *Curriculum*, the then Secretary for Education Karen Sewell noted that ‘*The New Zealand Curriculum* states

succinctly what each learning area is about and how its learning is structured' (Ministry of Education 2007, p. 4).

Distinct from the *Curriculum* are the achievement standards for history for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, see Table 2). Achievement criteria and explanatory notes included within the standards define what is required to be assessed. While the achievement standards in operation for a decade from 2002 identified themes and topics to be assessed through examinations, the current standards do not specify substantive knowledge and reflect the Ministry of Education's preference for teachers to have the freedom to create programmes relevant to their school communities (Ministry of Education 2009). Although teachers have selected the historical contexts for internal assessment for over twenty years, these new circumstances led to the decision that the questions for the examinations would now be generic and thereby provide the capacity to fit all topics. Questions are, therefore, fairly predictable and do not change significantly from year to year.

Despite the generic questions, however, the freedom to teach 'any history' is constrained through requirements that students frame their responses in very specific ways. For example, a standard at each year level requires a focus on the causes and consequences of an event. Teachers need to be highly attuned to the balanced manner in which students are required to incorporate both these causes and consequences into their discussion. To give their students the best chance to gain high grades, teachers also need to select a narrow or containable historical event: an event that is neither too big, such as World War II, nor too small, such as an 'incident' within a bigger war. When the field of knowledge is narrowed to a single event, the power of teaching historical concepts and ideas which show connectivity between historical situations can be lost. The brevity of requirements for history in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, coupled with the specificity of the achievement standards, therefore provide the conditions under which teachers can limit the knowledge they are teaching in the narrowed interests of meeting the requirements of assessment.

Research Methodology

The results presented in this chapter are drawn primarily from semi-structured interviews conducted with a small sample of teachers in New Zealand. Heads of Departments or Teachers-in-Charge of history from six secondary schools were interviewed. The teachers ranged from those with over twenty years' experience to teachers who had recently gained

positions leading history departments. The sample comprised both single sex and co-educational schools; two were low decile¹, two were mid decile and two were higher decile schools.

The interviews aimed to gain an understanding of teachers' reasoning and professional judgements in selecting historical content for inclusion in their school programmes. To investigate teachers' conceptions of the significance of their content selections, teachers were asked 'What were the most important factors in making the decisions [on what history to teach]?' The question was written in a manner which enabled the participants to explain why they made their selections without leading them directly to justify the *particular* knowledge they chose. The study also asked teachers about their decision-making processes and the extent to which their selections changed from the former prescribed topics. Their understanding of the relative importance of teaching historical skills and historical content was also investigated.

Nationwide surveys undertaken by the New Zealand History Teachers' Association (NZHTA) also provide valuable statistical data and teacher comments on current practices, with a particular focus upon their views of the history examinations. Evidence is drawn in particular from two surveys which were conducted in relation to the 2014 examination. The first, conducted immediately after the examination, received 148 responses and the second, conducted after the results became available, received 132 responses. Concerns among history teachers about the standards have also led to two further surveys in 2015 and 2016 (drawing 106 and 87 respondents respectively) inquiring into which topics teachers select, what their concerns about the achievement standards are, and whether or not they would like the NZHTA to pursue a request to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for revisions to the standards. Collectively these surveys comprise 190 pages. The collation and triangulation of data from the interviews, surveys and official documents of the NZQA gives validity to the findings reported below.

Explanatory Concepts

In order to explain teachers' conceptions of both the importance and uses of knowledge in the context detailed above, three explanatory concepts have been devised. The first concept derives from an expectation that particular knowledge will be selected on the basis of its perceived intrinsic worth, while the second and third concepts arise from an analysis of

empirical data on teachers' reasons for their knowledge selections. I refer to these concepts as 'knowledge critical', 'knowledge fit' and 'knowledge engagement'.

1. A 'knowledge critical' approach positions knowledge as the first consideration for school programme design. What knowledge of the past is valuable to know and understand? What key concepts and ideas have relevance across periods of history and therefore assist in explaining actions and attitudes in different eras and societies? What history will enable students to engage in more abstract ideas about the past and society today?
2. A 'knowledge fit' approach begins with the learning outcome or achievement standard that requires verification and consideration is first given to what knowledge may be the most suitable to address, apply and illustrate the outcome. The skill, concept or broad domain of learning is placed at the forefront and selective knowledge applied. In applying appropriate knowledge this serves to prove its validity as a worthy outcome within the discipline.
3. A 'knowledge engagement' approach places the motivational needs of learners as the foremost concern. Topics are selected on the basis that they are perceived to be 'high interest' and therefore may engage students more readily in their learning. Topics may be chosen because their content has particular relevance to the learners so students can relate to them, or they may be topics which are considered to be 'exotic' in time or place, drama filled, or intriguing.

In practice, while one of these explanatory concepts may dominate teachers' conceptions, they normally operate in tandem and are interrelated. Teachers may place a high importance on motivation, for example, but practical considerations may dictate the need to select knowledge to meet an outcomes requirement.

Research Findings

An analysis of the factors which contributed to teachers' decisions over knowledge illustrates both the diversity which may be expected in an environment of open choice and commonalities in teachers' approaches. Student interest and suitability for assessment emerged most strongly in the reasons given for teacher choices. Consideration was also given

by some of the research participants to students' abilities, relevance to students' cultural communities, a desire for cohesion of programming, teacher interest and resources. Teachers recognised the challenges and responsibilities of their role as independent programme designers (Ormond 2016) and provided insight into the shifts in their practices, often attributing them to the complex dynamics of accountability.

Knowledge engagement

It is not unexpected that teachers would place a high level of importance on student interest and teachers offered compelling reasons for giving it priority. In selecting topics expected to be popular it is anticipated that students will engage more fully, leading to higher levels of achievement. Stephen (pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the six interviewed teachers) placed student interest first in his prioritised list of three factors. He noted that 'First are [the] students. So what are they interested in? So what do they like? ... So actually understanding what kids want to know'. He continued to explain how student interest related to the place of knowledge, skills and levels of achievement.

I can do as much content or as little content depending on where they are at, depending on what skills I need to teach, depending upon how their interest goes. So it is really skills come first and then you have an interest and you find some content to fit that and *it doesn't really matter* (emphasis added). Like it doesn't matter where I finish. I think our kids do better because it allows them to follow their interest.

Linda noted more pragmatically that teaching topics which engaged students was important for retaining student numbers in History classes.

Engagement, yes - trying to engage the kids because you know it's important that we are able to sell the subjects. There's not much point spending a lot of time developing a really good programme if kids aren't choosing history.

Positioning knowledge engagement as a key driver of selections may also suggest that teachers view all knowledge as of equal validity. A democratic process of selection was employed by Matthew, who noted that his courses are co-constructed through offering a range of topics which his students then, as a cohort, select from. He commented that it was 'quite open slather really'. As a consequence, the programmes delivered to Matthew's

students have changed markedly each year. When Matthew was interviewed in 2014 he commented that his Year 13 class was ‘a girl heavy class’ and they chose to look at ‘the role of women in 16th and 17th century England and, to get a New Zealand link, women winning the vote in 1893 ... the suffrage movement’. However, he noted that the minority group, the boys, later regretted their decision, stating ‘Now some of the boys are like “damn, why did we vote for that? We are blokes”’! The students’ change of mind over the selected topic in 2014 illustrates the difficulties that can arise when they choose topics about which they have little prior knowledge. Matthew notes that, one year later, his 2015 Year 13 class chose ‘punishment and protest in 16th and 17th century England and the Whitechapel murders for the event.... They liked the idea of Jack the Ripper’. While such freedom for students to select may not often be replicated across the nation, it does indicate the level of freedom afforded in this model and that, for some teachers, weighing choices on epistemic grounds is not the primary consideration.

Knowledge fit

In addition to student engagement, teachers consistently spoke in terms of their selections being made according to their suitability for assessment. Stephen positioned this just after student interest in his ranked factors, stating: ‘The second is the achievement standards. So what do they have to produce to get credits? So having very clear events and making sure that the content that you teach relates to the achievement standards’. Suzanne illustrated this point with two examples. She said that for the Level 1 course ‘We don’t go into any depth anymore - it’s the Rainbow Warrior and the Springbok Tour, just to get them ready for the assessment’, and for Level 3 ‘we only look at James I and the gun powder plot because that’s our “perspectives” standard. We don’t look at anything else’.

Teachers have clearly recognised that they have narrowed their selections to micro bites of history with an awareness that the shifts in their practices have implications for learning. Linda, for example, notes that as a result of tailoring content according to its suitability for assessment, students

might know more about one discrete event and therefore that might be considered of benefit to them but I think the risks and what is lost from that is greater than any small benefit they might gain from knowing more about that one event. Instead of them

getting a wider perspective of understanding about change over time or continuity, [it] gets lost in this tunnel visioned [sic] focus.

However, while there is some concern expressed about the loss of 'big picture' history, teachers' conceptions of why this is problematic was discussed more frequently in relation to the extensive detail now required for the generic examination questions. In the NZHTA surveys (2014, 2015, 2016) there are numerous complaints about the ever increasing expectations for detail about the single event that is the focus of many of the standards. Some teachers also point to an apparent contradiction between a *Curriculum* focussed upon competencies and skills and assessments which encourage pre-prepared responses and a shift in focus to extensive detail of content.

We are supposed to be getting away from KNOWLEDGE in 21st century teaching and learning and when we hear of Year 13 students spending a whole term on one essay... the amount of knowledge needed for the students to write, as they do, 12 to 15 pages, is ridiculous (NZHTA *Survey 2014 Externals 1: The Papers*, Comment 16, p. 9).

Karen also suggested that depth over breadth in programmes does not suit all students.

I feel what's happened is that we've reduced our content in order to give more time for internal assessment in order to get the best outcomes for those students. ... I teach less content than I did when I started and I'm very aware of that and it's really tricky. It means that with less topics we go into greater depth and that's great for the, you know, gifted or talented or the more able students... It's perhaps not so great for the less able kids for whom it's just a spiral of too much information.

While the requirement for detail implies that knowledge is not discounted as unimportant, teachers are being encouraged to think primarily of knowledge in terms of its functionality for assessment. By curtailing topics to narrow the focus, teachers believe that they are providing students with a better chance of acquiring depth.

Knowledge critical

The emphasis on catering for student interest and meeting assessment demands means that content can become conceptualised primarily as the medium for delivering the skills and

concepts. Underpinning this may also be a view that *knowing* is straightforward once students have the skills to access, sift and use knowledge. This notion of easily accessible knowledge with today's internet is often cited as a reason for learner-led epistemological positions. Stephen commented that 'the world's not about learning facts, well what are those? Well Google it on your phone which is in your pocket, you know, you can find it out. It's about what you find interesting'. However, while the skills to access sources of information are important, the complexity involved in understanding history cannot easily be replicated through a google search. Historical knowledge is much more than factual knowledge of a time or place. As Wineburg (2001) puts it, interpreting history is 'an unnatural act' and it requires conceptual, contextual and disciplinary knowledge to come together and be made sense of. To enable an understanding of the past, therefore, both substantive and disciplinary knowledge are important.

A 'knowledge critical' approach would mean that teachers recognise the selection of substantive knowledge to be of fundamental importance. Substantive knowledge engages students in the 'what' of history: What happened? What did communities believe and how did they respond? It is knowledge of historical contexts, concepts, ideas, events and actions. In a knowledge critical paradigm, the study of historical personalities, sequences of events and political, social and economic circumstances would be sufficiently interrelated to enable students to make sense of an historical period or idea. Such knowledge is sometimes criticised as a traditional knowledge structure and seen to emphasise fact learning, but the issues more commonly lie in the field of 'traditional' pedagogic practices or the ways in which the knowledge is tested, such as the expectation that students will 'know' particular historical facts such as dates. However teachers rarely justified their choices in 'knowledge critical' terms. Matters such as how the selected knowledge could facilitate understanding of an important issue in the past or present, or arguing for the criticality of their selected events because they changed the direction of a nation, or an ideology which impacted significantly on society, are possibilities that were not mentioned.

There were however occasional justifications on the basis of relevance to school communities and a recognition of the importance of programming to enable students to make connections between topics for study. Bianca commented on her choice of women's topics for her Pasifika female students: 'Because we are a girls' school I like to have more of a focus on women's history'. She noted that 'the girls have made some really interesting links between

the expectations of women in the Victorian period and the expectations of women in the Pacific Islands'. She also explained 'we tried to make it link to our student communities and their history. So the Polynesian Panthers and the Mau Movement in Samoa very much do that. So I wanted to make sure that they still have relevance - so they could see the links to things that are happening internationally as well'. There was also awareness of the importance of selecting carefully. Linda commented that 'it is still a huge challenge to create our own curriculum and justify the choices that we make. That is the heaviest weight on my shoulders. I just don't feel like I can pluck things randomly'.

Disciplinary knowledge is also viewed by teachers as central to the study of history. This involves students learning research procedures and constructing arguments which take into account different historical perspectives. Through 'investigating' history students are expected to learn how interpretations of history are compiled and contested. Symcox and Wilschut (2009) argue that this disciplinary approach to history asserted itself as a new form of knowledge out of a crisis when, in the 1960s and 1970s, social studies was seen to be more valuable than history for understanding human affairs. This led to efforts by history teaching communities to reinvent their subject. The 1976 *Schools Council History Project* in Great Britain is a leading example of this, as the chronologically ordered curriculum concentrating on British history was replaced with a curriculum that focussed upon history 'as a way of thinking and reasoning, a method of inquiry to create images of the past' (Symcox and Wilschut 2009, p. 3). Underlying this shift from concentrating on historical content towards the practices of historians is the avoidance of decisions about what knowledge to teach. VanSledright (2008) argues that through advocating for history disciplinary practices as 'knowledge', it prevented the problems of history education being associated with 'collective memorialising', where events in a nation's history and heroic national figures are taught in the interests of the nation building (p. 135). In many countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, history is a matter of political interest and public debate. However, in recent decades such influences have not featured strongly in developing prescriptions and curricula for New Zealand students of history. Sheehan (2010) notes that 'the history curriculum seldom generates public debate' and therefore 'New Zealand stands apart from international trends' (p. 684).

New Zealand history teachers have a long acquaintance with employing disciplinary procedures. For several decades, examinations have assessed primary source interpretation

while internal assessment has involved students in history research methods. Similarly, since standards-based assessment was introduced in 2002, teachers have experienced assessment of historical thinking concepts such as causes, consequences and perspectives. However, it is the combination of the broad curriculum with its autonomous stance towards content, and the targeting of achievement standards on concepts for historical thinking, which has shifted conceptions further down the continuum line towards the view that history content is not a matter of national concern and that substantive knowledge is viewed as less critical than process.

This shift is evident in some responses to a NZHTA survey in 2015. On being asked about possible future directions for history a teacher suggested that the examinations could be changed to ‘have an essay based on history skills as opposed to content knowledge. This would develop critical thinking i.e. an historian’s perspective, skills and argument’ (Comment 20, p. 43). Another commented, ‘I strongly support the generic questions and using them to teach conceptually around topics of student interest. This appears to be the thrust of 21st century teaching’. However, Linda noted the conundrum saying that she had ‘been pedagogically brain washed into seeing skills as the end result and knowledge as the vehicle, but I suppose I would like the pendulum to shift’.

While placing disciplinary knowledge at the forefront of curriculum making has validity for students’ development of essential historical skills and historical thinking concepts, students need both substantive and procedural knowledge to gain an adequate understanding of history.

Discussion

In a recent study into how teachers viewed the historical topics suggested in a draft national history curriculum in England, Harris and Burn (2016) wrote of teachers’ ‘disinclination to designate any particular content as essential’ (p. 527). Similarly, the interviewed teachers in New Zealand made no claims to the essentiality or the value of the substantive knowledge they selected. On the other hand, teachers are taking advantage of their autonomy to explore new topics. An increasingly wide range of histories are being incorporated into school programmes nationally (NZHTA History Department Survey 2015), which suggests that history teachers do place some importance on considering *what* knowledge is most important to include in the curriculum.

What appears to be a critical development in New Zealand, however, is a degree of *capture* where teachers are trapped in a cycle of narrowing programmes with fewer topics and greater depth in order to facilitate students' achievement at the higher grade levels of 'Merit' and 'Excellence' for the NCEA. Their conceptions of 'knowledge fit' are therefore understandably framed around the disciplinary skills and concepts specifically stated in the curriculum and standards. The trend towards a reduction in knowledge is not exclusive to the discipline of history. It has been recognised as a concern by teachers across the subjects taught at senior levels in secondary schools. A 2015 national survey comprising one-quarter of all secondary teachers showed that 51 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the NCEA 'had narrowed the curriculum for my students' (Wylie and Bonne 2016, p. 25).

The Pedagogic Device

Bernstein's (2000) 'pedagogic device' and principles of 'recontextualisation' are helpful in explaining how *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the achievement standards have been implemented and shifted teachers' conceptions about knowledge selection. When applied in pedagogic practice, the official documents have been re-interpreted with selective emphasis and adaptation within both the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) and the Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF). In New Zealand the institution within the ORF which is primarily involved in interpreting assessment standards and influencing teacher practices is the NZQA. It does this in its role as verifier of the NCEA. Within this field are individuals who are themselves history teachers and hold positions as examiners, panel leaders and moderators. In the absence of prescribed knowledge to recontextualise, the ORF takes on importance in defining the terms and scope of the assessed concepts and skills. Furthermore, the ORF effectively sanctions the legitimacy of teachers' approaches to knowledge through examination outcomes and processes and through moderator decisions.

For history in New Zealand, the PRF lies essentially within schools as the field of reproduction. Teachers, as graduates of History, would normally select content based on the works of academic historians (the field of *production*), and then have the responsibility for transforming them (the field of *recontextualisation*) for pedagogic purposes (the field of *reproduction*). While the level of independence over curriculum interpretation and enactment appears to be considerable within the PRF, the parallel emphasis on national conformity for assessment presents teachers with dilemmas. Negotiating the space between the ORF, as

mandated in the *Curriculum* and achievement standards, and the ORF as represented in the interpretations of examiners and moderators, is difficult due to fluctuating expectations. The recontextualisation process is inherently unstable, which means that teachers are constantly changing their pedagogic responses and shifting their conceptions of what may be the most appropriate knowledge to teach. Thus, in accordance with Bernstein's *evaluative* rules the interpretations of the ORF, through the definitions and applications of the standards, 'regulate pedagogic practice at the classroom level' (2000, p. 115) and carry the greatest force in influencing knowledge decisions.

Recontextualisation in Practice

When messages from the ORF are put into practice, teachers have followed a path of selecting knowledge and converting that knowledge using pedagogical strategies which they believe will lead to students being thoroughly prepared for the generic examination questions. However, when examiners shift the goal posts teachers have then had to reconceptualise their knowledge selections, going ever further down the path of 'knowledge fit'. Matthew adjusted his programme in 2015 in the hope of anticipating the direction the examiner may go. He refers to the 2014 examination for Level 3 for AS91438, which was widely viewed as problematic because it asked specifically for political and economic causes, and suggested that in 2015 the examiner may have a different emphasis. He explained that 'I've prepared my Level 3 [students] this year to expect the cause and consequences question to take a different tack and maybe focus on significance to New Zealand'. This again illustrates how an overriding need for 'knowledge fit' comes to take precedence over a 'knowledge critical' perspective.

In the ORF interpretations are contained in a range of documents. For internally assessed standards, national moderator interpretations are formally available through reports, clarifications documents and moderator newsletters and, for the externally assessed standards, assessment reports follow each year's examinations. In the assessment report on the 2013 examination for Level 1, the examiner clearly conveyed an expectation that depth of knowledge was sought - 'Some candidates chose an event that was too broad ... it's an approach that limits the opportunity to be specific and demonstrate comprehensive knowledge' (NZQA 2013, p. 11). Some reports for the 2015 examinations, however, contained warnings against unduly long answers - 'Candidates must consider that long responses do not necessarily equate to a higher grade' (NZQA 2015, Level 2, p. 3); 'A

number of scripts were more than 20 pages long. However, writing at such a length did not necessarily add value...' (NZQA 2015, Level 3, p. 3). The assessment reports have also generally steered teachers in the direction of selecting well-defined specific events, although there is ambiguity in the messages which suggest that teachers should select an event which is 'not too broad in scope or narrow' (NZQA 2014, Level 2, p. 7).

Changes in interpretation have also lead to additional features expected in answers. Karen pointed out that 'historiography seems to be creeping into Level 2 a little bit as well'. Teachers report being unsure what exactly is required and, in order to give greater surety, they operate within the PRF and reproduction fields to increase depth and constrain breadth of knowledge. According to Linda, there is

a lack of transparency and so of course we have to do everything and those essays get longer and longer in the hope that we are covering the requirements for what is 'comprehensive'. We just feel it is getting ratcheted up. I mean you look at the examiners' report that has come out this year and there is a mention of historiography at Level 2, or Level 1. It is pushing down into those lower levels now so that the Level 1 students are having to establish significance now whereas that was always not until Level 2 or even Level 3.

With neither the *Curriculum* nor the standards framed around substantive knowledge, the process of recontextualisation acts upon 'knowledge' as defined in terms of cognitive and disciplinary skills, and broad historical concepts. These circumstances may not, therefore, lead teachers to intellectually engage in the possibilities of a 'knowledge critical' perspective. Discourses such as *Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the Future of Education* (Gilbert 2005), in which the author, a New Zealand educator, states that 'people are increasingly thinking of knowledge ... as a process' (p. 76), and dialogue concerning the key competencies in the *Curriculum*, are influential. As a result, teachers' conceptions of knowledge for history now appear to embrace both substantive and procedural knowledge. This helps explain why the question of 'what historical knowledge is of most worth?' is not central to teachers' concerns. In the complex process of programme design, justification of the epistemic value of selected histories is competing with other factors which have a stronger force.

Conclusion

The problem of the near invisibility of substantive knowledge as critical in teachers' conceptions can be explained as one where functionality subsumes other features in a hierarchy of educational considerations and priorities. Knowledge primarily serves the purposes of assessment. When teachers talk about and justify their choices of topics they prioritise student interest and the alignment of their programmes with assessment requirements over the worth of particular historical knowledge. Conceptions of what knowledge means in history education also appear to have shifted some way towards positioning disciplinary knowledge and historical thinking concepts at the forefront of teachers' pedagogical considerations. This presents the challenge of renegotiating the balance between substantive and procedural knowledge to enable epistemic considerations to be central to teachers' conceptions of knowledge.

¹ Decile - For funding purposes, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand uses a system of ranking schools according to the socio-economic backgrounds of students. Decile 1 schools contain the highest number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

References:

- Allais, S. (2014) *Selling out education – National qualifications frameworks and the neglect of knowledge*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Bernstein, B. (2000) *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gilbert, J. (2005) *Catching the knowledge wave? The knowledge society and the future of education*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Harris, R. and Burn, K. (2016) English history teachers' views on what substantive content young people should be taught. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48(4): 518-546.
- Ministry of Education. (2007) *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2009) *Standards review guidelines for subject associations*, attached to Memo to Principals of 28 June 2009.

Ministry of Education. (2007) *Matrix of achievement standards – History*. Retrieved 6 August 2014 from <http://ncea.tki.org.nz/Resources-for-Internally-Assessed-Achievement-Standards/Social-sciences/History>.

New Zealand History Teachers Association. (2014) *NZHTA Survey 2014 Externals 1: The Papers*. Retrieved 17 August 2016 from <http://members.nzhta.org.nz/2015/05/11/survey-results/>.

New Zealand History Teachers Association. (2014) *NZHTA Survey 2: 2014 Externals: The Results*. Retrieved 17 August 2016 from <http://members.nzhta.org.nz/2015/05/11/survey-results/>.

New Zealand History Teachers Association. (2015) *NZHTA History Department Survey, 2015*. (e-mail to NZHTA members)

New Zealand History Teachers Association. (2016) *NZHTA History Matrix Review (NCEA) – initial questionnaire, April 2016*. (e-mail to NZHTA members)

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.) *Achievement standards and Examination papers*. Retrieved 6 August 2014 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/subjects/history/levels/>.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2013) *NCEA, 2013 Assessment Report, History Level 1*. Retrieved 16 August 2016 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/reports/2013/level1/history.pdf>.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2014) *NCEA, 2014 Assessment Report, History Level 2*. Retrieved 16 August 2016 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/reports/2014/level2/history.pdf>.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2015) NCEA, 2015 *Assessment Report, History Level 2*. Retrieved 29 August 2016 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/reports/2015/level2/history.pdf>.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2015) NCEA, 2015 *Assessment Report, History Level 3*. Retrieved 29 August 2016 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/reports/2015/level3/history.pdf>

Ormond, B.M. (2011) Shifts in knowledge teaching: The unexpected consequences of assessment practices on secondary history. *Pacific-Asian Education*, 23(1): 5-22.

Ormond, B.M. (2014) Powerful knowledge in history: Disciplinary strength or weakened episteme? In Barrett, B. and Rata, E. (Eds). *Knowledge and the future of the curriculum: International studies in social realism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 153-166.

Ormond, B.M. (2016) Curriculum decisions: The challenges of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection for history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2016.1149225

Sheehan, M. (2010) The place of 'New Zealand' in the New Zealand history curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 42(5): 671-691.

Symcox, L. and Wilschut, A. (2009) *National history standards – The problem of the canon and the future of teaching history*. North Carolina, USA: Information Age.

VanSledright, B. (2008) Narratives of nation-state, historical knowledge, and school history education. *Review of Research in Education*, 32 (1): 109-146.

Winch, C. (2013) Curriculum design and epistemic ascent. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 47(1): 128-146.

Wineburg, S. (2001) *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Wylie, C. and Bonne, L. (2016) *Secondary schools in 2015. Findings from the NZCER national survey*. NZCER. Retrieved 15 August 2016 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.18296/rep.0001>.

Young, M.F.D. (2010) The future of education in a knowledge society: The radical case for a subject-based curriculum. *Journal of the Pacific Circle Consortium for Education*, 22(1): 21-32.

Young, M.F.D. (2013) Overcoming the crisis in curriculum theory: a knowledge-based approach. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(2), 101-118.

Young, M.F.D., Lambert, D., Roberts, C. and Roberts, M. (2014) *Knowledge and the future school: Curriculum and social justice*. London: Bloomsbury.

Young, M.F.D. and Muller, J. 2013. On the powers of powerful knowledge. *Review of Education*, 1(3): 229-250.

Tables

Achievement Objectives for History - The New Zealand Curriculum		
Level 6 (For Year 11 students aged 15-16 years)	Level 7 (For Year 12 students aged 16-17 years)	Level 8 (For Year 13 students aged 17-18 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society. • Understand how people's perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how historical forces and movements have influenced the causes and consequences of events of significance to New Zealanders. • Understand how people's interpretations of events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that the causes, consequences, and explanations of historical events that are of significance to New Zealanders are complex and how and why they are contested. • Understand how trends over time reflect social, economic, and political forces.

Table 1. History achievement objectives Levels 6-8, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, Ministry of Education, 2007.

History Matrix		
Achievement Standards for The National Certificate of Educational Achievement		
NCEA Level 1	NCEA Level 2	NCEA Level 3
Aligns with Level 6 of The New Zealand Curriculum Year 11 students	Aligns with Level 7 of The New Zealand Curriculum Year 12 students	Aligns with Level 8 of The New Zealand Curriculum Year 13 students
AS91001 Carry out an investigation of an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91229 Carry out an inquiry of an historical event or place that is of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91434 Research an historical event or place of significance to New Zealanders, using primary and secondary sources. Internal
AS91002 Demonstrate understanding of an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91230 Examine an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91435 Analyse an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal
AS91003 Interpret sources of an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. External	AS91231 Examine sources of an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders. External	AS91436 Analyse evidence relating to an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. External
AS91004 Demonstrate understanding of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91232 Interpret different perspectives of people in an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders. Internal	AS91437 Analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders. Internal
AS91005 Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event. External	AS91233 Examine causes and consequences of a significant historical event. External	AS91438 Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event. External
AS91006 Describe how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society. External	AS91234 Examine how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society. External	AS91439 Analyse a significant historical trend and the force(s) that influenced it. External

Table 2: History matrix of achievement standards for the NCEA, Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.