Knowledge in History Education:
History Teachers as Curriculum Makers

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Abstract

Knowledge in education matters. In this thesis I argue that the role and importance of knowledge in history education in New Zealand has been marginalised in policy and practice leading to a significant reduction and narrowing of the knowledge taught to senior secondary history students. The discourse about teaching and learning for the 21st century 'knowledge society' emphasises the development of transferrable skills and competencies, which place the focus on learning to learn and process, while substantive knowledge has retreated to a position where it is largely accounted for in terms of its functionality in relation to assessment.

My research examines a new era in history education in New Zealand with the abandonment of prescribed history topics and the introduction of autonomy for teachers over knowledge selection from 2011. Based upon interviews of teachers who are the leaders of their history departments, my research examined the principles upon which teachers select historical knowledge. Alongside analysis of policy documents and national surveys of history teachers, my findings are conceptualised in relation to social realist theories concerning the low priority given to knowledge in contemporary curricula, the importance of knowledge for equity in education, the objectivity of knowledge despite its social origins, and the emergent nature of knowledge. My explanations of history education are then considered in terms of the potential for history to offer 'powerful knowledge' to history students, as theorised by Young and Muller. Bernstein's theories of recontextualization, the pedagogic device and differentiated epistemological structures, also underpin my analysis of the phenomenological effects observed in practice and voiced by my research participants.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear brother Brian who died unexpectedly in 2016.
His infectious smile, humour and enthusiasm for life is greatly missed.

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I am grateful for the direction, inspiration, and wisdom of my two doctoral supervisors Professor Elizabeth Rata and Professor John Morgan. Their enthusiasm for intellectual debate, kindness and encouragement has been greatly appreciated throughout this journey. I would also like to thank my Knowledge and Education Research Unit (KERU) colleagues, Dr. Graham McPhail, Dr. Alexis Siteine, Dr. Tauwehe Tamati and Dr. Megan Lourie, along with Elizabeth Rata and John Morgan, for their engaging and enlightening conversations about knowledge in education which have helped shaped my understandings over many years.

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Special thanks to my husband Bill and son James who have patiently endured my many years of being busy. Their love and support have enabled me to write and follow my passion for education.

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Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Authorship of the chapter from page 97 - from 'The New Zealand case' onwards
Extent of contribution by PhD candidate (%)	74%

CO-AUTHORS

Name	Nature of Contribution
John Morgan	Authorship of the introductory two sections of chapter

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- that the candidate wrote all or the majority of the text.

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Nature of contribution by PhD candidate	Author of all discussion of the New Zealand context. Collaboration in writing the introduction; the different policy contexts; curriculum changes, methodology, findings. Main author of the discussion section and conclusion. Some contribution to the literature section.
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Richard Harris	Collaboration in designing and writing the paper. Collaboration in writing the introduction; the different policy contexts; curriculum changes, methodology, findings. Major contribution to the literature section. Submitted the paper to the journal.

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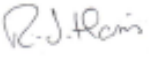
Associate Professor Richard Harris		12/06/19

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This thesis seeks to explain how shifts in practice in history education in New Zealand have led to a progressive narrowing and reduction of the propositional knowledge taught to students since 2011. Through the altered relations and emphases given to different types of knowledge for history, within an environment of accountability for grades for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), the capacity for history to be taught in a manner which enables students to make connections between micro and macro bodies of knowledge, has been affected. The shifts in the nature of historical knowledge taught to students is visible in the historical content teachers select for study, in teachers' stated focus upon knowledge to 'best fit' the purposes of assessment, and in the reduced opportunities students have to engage with both breadth and depth of substantive knowledge. These phenomenological effects are conceptualised using an epistemological theory of change to argue that substantive knowledge has been devalued in the shift to generic competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007 and to segmented outcomes for assessment.

At the heart of these developments is a broadly framed *Curriculum* for New Zealand with prioritisation given to 'learning to learn' through its *key competencies* such as 'thinking' and 'managing self'. Transferrable skills are given prominence for the purposes of developing a future focused 'knowledge society' to serve a 'knowledge economy' (OECD, 1996; Gilbert, 2005) which is perceived as being in a continual state of flux requiring intelligent and flexible responses. In positioning critical thinking and skills-based forms of knowledge in the ascendance, the episteme itself has drawn little attention. While the knowledge economy 'places a premium on advances in knowledge' (Young & Muller, 2010a, p. 23) the nature of that knowledge has rarely been theorised. I argue that the effects of a diminished focus upon substantive knowledge has been to reduce the potential for 'powerful knowledge' (Young & Muller, 2013) to be realised in New Zealand history classrooms. It is only through a careful balancing in the relations between different forms of knowledge that the discipline of history, or any other discipline, can be practiced effectively in the interests of students developing a rich understanding.

Research rationale

The circumstances which initiated my desire to research the ways teachers selected and viewed knowledge for history was a profound change in the level of responsibility teachers gained over determining the historical content of their history programmes. At a national level, prescribed historical topics and themes were phased out between 2011 and 2013 ushering in a new mode of practice for history teachers as school-based curriculum developers. Teachers gained the autonomy to develop programmes based upon their own choices of historical content. This provided a unique opportunity to investigate what knowledge teachers felt was important and the rationale for their decisions. Through analysing responses to the research question *What are the principles upon which teachers select knowledge components in secondary history programmes?* I have been able to theorise teachers' conceptions of knowledge (see Chapter 7), gain insight into the challenges facing teachers in their new-found responsibility (see Chapter 8), closely examine the role assessment has played in influencing history programmes (see Chapter 9), and give consideration to wider matters concerning the significance of knowledge in contemporary curricula and education.

Contexts for change

This thesis locates changes in the value of substantive knowledge in relation to educational policies in both national and international contexts. Policies which cross national boundaries and are prevalent globally have, for example, been critiqued, reported on and influenced by, international bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Robertson & Sorenson, 2017). For the many educational authorities influenced by these global education trends however, there is no direct and straightforward translation of such policies into action (Dale, 2007; Ball, Goodson & Maguire, 2007). Each nation or educational jurisdiction applies such policies in ways believed to be appropriate for their circumstances.

> It is important to stress the idea that frequently the global and the local dimensions and levels of action are articulated by a set of political and technical instruments for monitoring the development of the central guidelines of supranational bodies, regulating the local action (Antunes, 2012, p. 447).

Therefore, while the impetus for the development of New Zealand educational policy derives from ideas and practices circulating internationally, it is the individual characteristics of policy

and practice in relation to history which have been examined in this thesis. In turn the findings of this study have been disseminated through my body of writing which has the potential to be of value in illustrating how particular enactment of broader policies may play out.

The importance placed on generic skills in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and educational concepts such as 'future focused learning' show a commonality with curricula goals in many jurisdictions across the world, Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* 2010 being a clearly comparable example. At this input level of the curriculum there is scope for teacher agency but this is commonly counterbalanced by heavily regulated systems in operation at the output level of evaluation and assessment (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). The delivery of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in senior secondary education is monitored through student assessments for the NCEA, while school performance is evaluated through audits and data on student achievement, which is gathered and compared at national level (Priestley, 2017; NZQA, Annual Reports on NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship Data and Statistics). Through analysis and the theorising emerging from the research, I am able to illustrate the ways in which these deeper processes of accountability act upon the types of knowledge taught and the impacts upon the episteme. The imposition of increasingly high levels of accountability (Biesta, 2004; 2009) and the development of a culture of performativity among both students and teachers, has eroded some of the agency offered to teachers through the flexible open curriculum (Sahlberg, 2011) and, as a consequence, impacted upon the knowledge taught to students.

Policy direction in New Zealand and elsewhere is also influenced by international comparative benchmarking of educational outcomes in tests such as the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) and the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). The citing of PISA results as a basis for a Treasury paper entitled *'Treasury's Advice on Lifting Student Achievement in New Zealand: Evidence Brief'* (March 2012) is one such example. To improve international rankings in these evaluations governments seek ways to raise student achievement through curricula reform and through imposing greater accountability for student outcomes.

The focus upon measuring outcomes and steering the types of educational achievement which are regarded as beneficial, is also associated with neo-liberalist governance and new managerialism (Lynch, 2014, Robertson & Sorenson, 2017). With education increasingly being moulded to serve the perceived needs of the economic well-being of countries, and

marketisation of education developed out of the neo-liberal belief that competition maximises the performance of schools, each school board seeks to attain or exceed government targets and outperform their neighbouring school; for example the Ministry of Education's 85% target rate for NCEA Level 2 to be achieved by 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2014c, *Statement of Intent*) . While the long-held belief in the desirability of equity in education for all New Zealand children advanced since the first Education Act in 1877 is being upheld in the discourse of raising achievement for all, this discourse is challenged by competitive forces. League tables which publicise the NCEA results and compare schools, influence consumer choice of schools leading to some schools becoming 'over-subscribed and 'sink' schools struggle to maintain their numbers' (Lynch, 2014, p. 7). Schools are encouraged to place a premium on results in national assessment, but this is sometimes at the expense of equitable access to valuable knowledge and at the expense of viable epistemically organised knowledge (Rata & Taylor, 2015). In New Zealand 'credits' for the NCEA can be made up of any combination of academic, vocational or alternative courses so the competitive agenda can persuade schools and students to select pathways which, while providing sufficient credits, may be a 'disruption to an epistemically coherent curriculum' (Rata & Taylor, 2015, p. 225) and hence reduce access to 'powerful knowledge'.

The link between the marketability of schools and success in national qualifications can therefore have a significant influence over what is offered and taught. As Crawshaw (2000) notes:

> As is the case with secondary schools, it is a natural tendency of schools … to structure teaching more directly to improve the students' success in examinations, rather than teaching in order to meet their real needs. Assessment of learning through quantifiable forms of examination not only approximates the analysis of real knowledge, it also changes and abstracts the focus of teaching. In order for schools to attract students, they will, by necessity, have to devise strategies that ensure that students have their chances of exam success maximised (p. 12).

While the form of assessment has changed since the time this view was advanced to more than just external examinations for the NCEA, the high priority placed on assessment results as a means of measuring school performance and ensuring the viability of the future of schools, has become more pronounced and is a significant factor contributing to the changes in the way knowledge is conceived by teachers and experienced by students. I argue that history teachers

in New Zealand have responded to these accountability drivers in ways which have fundamentally altered the design of history programmes and the way in which knowledge is regarded and delivered.

Social Realism

The research draws upon social realist theories within the field of the sociology of knowledge. Social realist literature has refocused attention on the importance of knowledge in education and the need for re-asserting the place of knowledge in contemporary curriculum debates. Social realism derives its name from the way in which its principles recognise the social basis of knowledge while asserting that the knowledge is real and reliable despite its social origins. 'The social character of knowledge', Young and Muller (2016) argue, 'is not a reason for doubting its truth and objectivity' (p. 19). Social realism recognises 'that knowledge is emergent from and not reducible to the contexts in which it is produced and acquired' (Young & Muller, 2010a, p. 14). The social realist position has therefore attempted to shift the dominant relativist and post-modernist perspectives on knowledge where, in theoretical terms, the former denies the possibility of truth and objectivity of knowledge while the latter accepts all viewpoints as having an equivalent power and validity. Social realist principles are highly relevant to the discipline of history since historians recognise that the writing of history is based upon the robust collation of socially derived pieces of evidence and that interpretations of the past are both contestable and emergent, changing either as new evidence emerges, or as a new reading of the evidence is put forward for critique. The principles of social realism are therefore able to shed light on the epistemological grounds for evaluating knowledge in history education.

Social realists are concerned with exploring different forms of knowledge in the interests of recognising what knowledge may best advantage students' in their present and future lives. Young, Muller, Moore, Rata, Wheelahan and others have given consideration to the pertinent questions of how disciplinary knowledge functions in our multi-faceted world and how relevant it is with such increasingly diversified knowledge streams. The rapid rate at which knowledge is being generated and its wide availability makes it increasingly important that such knowledge is not taken for granted (Young, 2009a, p. 194), but instead theorised and considered in relation to student's access to it and its purposes. Social realism has altered the lens on considering knowledge from 'the focus from "whose" knowledge to "what"

knowledge' (Barrett, Hoadley & Morgan, 2018, p. 1) to give consideration to the type(s) of knowledge which have explanatory potential and should be taught in schools.

Powerful knowledge

The recent scholarship on what is termed *powerful knowledge* by Young and Muller (2013), provides a significant foundation for this research. Within this theoretical field, this thesis enters into the increasingly influential discussions over the inherent 'power' of the episteme. The concept of *powerful knowledge* is an assertion that some forms of knowledge have greater potential than others to enable abstracted, extended and meaningful thinking. Powerful knowledge is, I argue, knowledge which is examined in sufficient depth and breadth for students to be able to understand its significance and relevance. The value of p*owerful knowledge* is its concerted focus 'on the knowledge itself, its structure, what it can do and how it is organised for both the production of new knowledge and the acquisition of existing knowledge which is new to the student' (Young, 2010b). Features of *powerful knowledge* which distinguish it from a more general use of the term 'knowledge' is that is reliable knowledge, while still fallible and subject to change; it is largely generated within specialist communities so that the knowledge itself has been produced and tested through the systems and practices of robust critique practiced in the relevant discipline; and it is realist in that the knowledge is acknowledged as deriving from socially situated circumstances.

Critics of a social realist view of knowledge sometimes equate such knowledge with the pedagogical transmission model where knowledge is regarded as something to be 'handed over' to students and learned. However, engagement with knowledge is more fruitful when explanatory concepts and the credentials under which the knowledge was determined, are critically examined and not merely received. A deeper understanding of how knowledge was arrived at enables students to engage with its central ideas to acquire understandings which are transferrable to other contexts. Therefore, the combination of different dimensions of knowledge – conceptual, factual, evidential, macro, micro – offer the greatest possibilities for engaging in understandings which could be considered 'powerful' (see Chapter 5 for a fuller explanation of 'powerful knowledge').

I argue that history as an academic discipline has strong potential to produce knowledge which meets the criteria suggested by Young. It is specialist and the knowledge is generated according

to conventions of practice which normally produce well-founded interpretations of the past based on the evidence at hand. The numerous histories written outside academic communities may be more variable in their reliability however.

Bernstein's (2000) theories on recontextualization are relevant to the discussion of powerful knowledge too since any evaluation of whether particular knowledge is powerful, is impacted by the ways in which specialist knowledge, deriving from an environment of robust testing and critique, is then recontextualised for use in school classrooms. Bernstein's *pedagogic device* explores the way knowledge is transformed into pedagogic communication including the ways in which knowledge is altered in order for it to be relayed to students. He theorised that this occurs within both the pedagogic recontextualising field (PRF) where teachers make decisions, and the official recontextualising field (ORF) where agents of the state, such as the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, influence the transfer of knowledge. Given the circumstances in New Zealand where teachers select the knowledge, in the first instance it is the PRF which has the greater presence in the knowledge transferred to students. Within the PRF some of the complexity and detail which has served to validate the academic knowledge will necessarily be selectively disregarded in the interests of making the material manageable and understandable for students. However as has been indicated with respect to assessment and accountability, the ORF has the power to influence the ways teachers recontextualise academically founded knowledge of history to a more narrowed form for the classroom. This narrowing of knowledge places the attainment of *powerful knowledge* in a precarious position.

Forms of Knowledge

Propositional knowledge [substantive knowledge]

An understanding of different forms of knowledge, and the way knowledge is structured, is central to any debate on what students should learn and how school programmes should be conceived and designed. Winch (2013) suggests that there are three commonly recognised forms of knowledge – propositional (or *know that* knowledge), know-how and knowledge by acquaintance. Propositional knowledge is the knowledge that is known either in theoretical terms, or known through its existence in the past or present. It is often knowledge which is recognised by academic communities and verified through robust systems of critique. While subject to change as new knowledge or theories come to hand, it is commonly held to be reliable

knowledge and therefore differentiated from opinion or belief. It is also normally specialised knowledge and associated with disciplines which are bounded by convention, such as history.

Propositional knowledge also carries with it an inferential capacity meaning that one cannot independently know a concept or some content. It is the inferences which are embodied in the knowledge which gives it meaning. To enable comprehension of the inferences of such propositions therefore requires understanding of the relationships between various propositions. (Winch, 2013; Brandom, 2000). As Winch notes '*knowledge that* does not and, indeed, cannot consist solely in identification of true but isolated propositions, but is embedded within a conceptual structure which is itself embodied in further related propositions' (Winch, 2013, p.130). This is relevant to evaluating the way knowledge is selected, structured (see Chapter 10) and delivered in history classrooms and counters arguments that acquiring knowledge is merely the acquisition of facts, which can be *googled*. This thesis gives consideration to the possibility that the power of knowledge can be impeded if propositional knowledge becomes too narrow or disconnected from epistemic structures which map a body of knowledge and enable students to understand and use the inferences within it.

Also relevant to considering different forms of knowledge is Young's (2009a) distinction between specialised knowledge and everyday knowledge, or esoteric and mundane, to use Bernstein's terms (2000, p. 29). Young draws upon Durkheim's (1912) categories of the *sacred* and the *profane* and while Durkheim initially developed these terms in his theory on religion, distinguishing between sacred matters associated with transcendence and spirituality and the more profane utilitarian everyday concerns, the distinction between knowledge and experience (Young, 2009a p. 199) has been widely adopted as applicable in a range of fields. Contained within Durkheim's value-laden term 'sacred', is the suggestion that, when applied to debates over knowledge, knowledge of this type is important to learn. It has a power which goes beyond mere recall to deep understanding of its capacity to explain the world.

Bernstein's (2000) theories on knowledge structures also provide a valuable basis for considering the nature of differentiated forms of knowledge. He divided knowledge into either *hierarchical or horizontal* knowledge structures. In *hierarchical* knowledge structures new knowledge integrates with earlier knowledge to produce more advanced understandings. A *horizontal* knowledge structure on the other hand, is made of different knowledge segments (which he called *specialised languages*) which sit alongside each other and do not normally

obviate the formerly produced segments. Bernstein contended that the social sciences and humanities disciplines have horizontal knowledge structures. This is pertinent to our understanding of history education because it infers that to progress in one's knowledge of history is not a linear process and that to make it understandable, teachers will need to piece together suitable combinations of knowledge to make effective sense of the 'story' of history, which will be contestable and have many variables.

History educators refer to propositional knowledge as *substantive knowledge*, hence my preference for the term and its use throughout this thesis. Substantive knowledge in history refers to knowledge of events, people, and places and an understanding of the ideas, motivations, beliefs and actions of people in the past. Substantive concepts which have transference in multiple circumstances, such as nationalism, communism, and kingship, are also an important component of knowledge enabling connections to be made across times and places. Such knowledge is normally specialised knowledge produced by academic historians.

Procedural knowledge

The other main form of knowledge applicable to history education is *procedural knowledge* (sometimes referred to as *historical literacy*) which involves understanding how historians investigate the past, including how they analyse and utilise primary and secondary sources, and how different interpretations of history are considered and critiqued. Procedural knowledge develops students' abilities to act like historians through 'doing history' (Barton, 2005). The *Schools Council History Project*, introduced in 1972, in the United Kingdom is an early example of this approach to history education where students were taught the methodologies of historians and asked to engage in historical inquiry and to use evidence. As such, understandings of procedural knowledge can be conveyed to students through pedagogies which develop the skills of analysis, interpretation and communication. Procedural knowledge of this type is accommodated in New Zealand when students undertake research of an historical event or place and interpret historical sources.

Winch's second category, *knowledge how*, identifies closely with the procedural knowledge in history. It involves learning procedures and actions to gain expertise. This form of knowledge is also commonly identified with skills or competencies in contemporary curricula. Winch (2013) suggests that *knowledge how* provides the tools 'to make and understand inferences' (p.

132). It is this connection between *knowledge how* and the understanding which emerges from making inferences, which may distinguish certain forms of *knowledge that* from their practical origins, so therefore distinguishes it from 'everyday' knowledge in Young's terms or 'knowledge by acquaintance' (Winch).

In order to make meaning of history, educators also place emphasis on *second-order concepts,* a term which has been attributed to Lee (see Seixas, 2004; Bertram, 2012). Metahistorical ideas such as *change and continuity*, *causes and consequences*, and *historical significance* are concepts which give shape to the discipline of history (Lee & Shemilt, 2003). They can be viewed as ways in which history is thought about and ordered. Lee (2005) also identified an understanding of *time, evidence, accounts,* and *historical empathy,* as critical. Similarly such concepts were central in *The Historical Thinking Project (*active 2006-2014) in Ontario, Canada where six historical thinking concepts were identified. They differ a little from Lee's conception in adding 'take a historical perspective' and 'the ethical dimension' while leaving out the concepts of *time* and *empathy*.

1. Establish *historical significance*
2. Use *primary source evidence*
3. Identify *continuity and change*
4. Analyse *cause and consequence*
5. Take a *historical perspective*, and
6. Understand the *ethical dimension* of historical interpretations.

The National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA (University of California) also places some importance on procedural knowledge in their *Historical Thinking Standards* and New Zealand has followed these examples in including some of these second-order concepts in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the NCEA. The *achievement standards* address causes and consequences, perspectives, significance to New Zealanders and trends through time.

As a means of structuring our thinking about history they have the potential to provide students with ways of making sense of history. However I argue that while procedural knowledge is required to successfully engage cognitively in thinking about history, it requires substantive knowledge to be realised. The concepts cannot, independent of a context, convey meaning (Rata, 2016). So it is the ingredient of historical content, and its interrelationships with these

history concepts and methodologies, which is the subject of this research. This connection was recognised by the authors of *The Historical Thinking Project* in Canada when they recorded on their website that '"historical thinking" only becomes possible in relation to substantive content' (The Historical Thinking Project, n.d., para. 5) notable that at the January 2013 annual meeting and conference for the Canadian Project, Peter Seixas, the Project Director, challenged participants to consider missing pieces in the model of historical thinking and it was the place of knowledge that was highlighted as a missing item and a central concern. They concluded that 'clearly redefining and restating the meaning and purpose of historical content is an important step to assist teachers in making the transition to historical thinking' (The Historical Thinking Project, 2013, p. 11). This recognition is also stated clearly in relation to the *Historical Thinking Standards* (UCLA) with the comment that 'Historical thinking skills cannot be divorced from content' (National Center for History in the Schools, n.d., para. 1). A group calling themselves the *Better History Group* went further and wrote a submission to the British Government arguing that 'many of history's most urgent problems are … rooted in the long-established belief that the subject is better defined through its skills and processes than through its subject matter' (2010, p. 13).

While 'historical thinking' facilitates 'how' to grapple with knowledge, it also does not assist in determining 'what knowledge' should be taught. In New Zealand the focus on historical thinking concepts and procedural knowledge in the *Curriculum* and *achievement standards* has seen substantive knowledge taking a backseat in official documents leaving it to the teachers to successfully negotiate the balance between different forms of knowledge. As one interviewee noted when discussing the focus on procedural skills

> 'I think it is ideally maybe 60% skills, 40% knowledge or 50/50 you know. … So I would say it is for them (the students) to have a knowledge of the past as much as it is to develop the skills of a historian. So it is a real balance' (Linda, Interview 2).

While acknowledging that *know-how* knowledge contributes to robust history education, there is the possibility that it will displace substantive knowledge as the priority in learning history and in teachers' conceptions of the discipline. Through an understanding of differentiation in knowledge and the qualities which embody specialised knowledge in disciplines such as history, the importance of enabling students to access higher order knowledge, or 'powerful knowledge is used as a benchmark to explain and draw conclusions about the nature of the

knowledge that is being taught for history in secondary classrooms and the shifts which have occurred. Such powerful knowledge has the potential to enable students to both gain insight into the ways communities have responded in the past but also to contextualise those understandings in their considerations of the present.

Therefore, this thesis takes as its starting point the view that substantive knowledge is of critical importance while recognising that procedural knowledge also has a significant role to play in history education. Through learners' acquaintance with substantive knowledge, students can develop understanding of how societies of the past have lived, addressed complex issues, developed new ideas, made mistakes and arrived at the point we are at today. Through gaining understandings of how history is constructed, interpreted and contested students' intellectual capacities for 'scrutiny, doubt, criticism' and 'judgement' are developed (McPhail & Rata, 2016, pp. 58–59).

Disciplinary Knowledge

The term 'disciplinary knowledge' is knowledge of the discipline of history. This can include both *substantive* and *procedural* forms of knowledge and includes engagement with *second-order concepts*. As the term encompasses the different forms of knowledge associated with the academic discipline it is used in this thesis in various ways. Dependent on the context, 'disciplinary knowledge' sometimes refers primarily to substantive knowledge while on other occasions the particular procedures historians use in relation to argumentation or evidence, or the ways historians think about history, is referred to as 'disciplinary knowledge'. History educators often use the term 'disciplinary knowledge' when discussing an historian's craft and use it to make a distinction between this form of knowledge and generic skills and competencies applicable to a wide range of school subjects (see Chapter 11). As the thesis comprises articles and chapters written over an extended time period with differing foci, this particular term was used in multiple ways to denote acquiring knowledge and understanding of the subject of history. The context in which it is used provides the means to interpret it. For example, in Chapter 5 'disciplinary knowledge' is largely discussed in relation to the importance of substantive knowledge when evaluating what 'powerful knowledge' may comprise while Chapter 11 places emphasis on a disciplinary approach to teaching history through historical thinking concepts and students engaging in historian's methods.

The New Zealand Context

During the past seventeen years secondary education in New Zealand has undergone fundamental change through the adoption of an outcomes form of curriculum. The requirements for what students should be taught are encapsulated in curriculum statements for each learning area, known as *achievement objectives,* which fall within a broader generic framework of principles, vision and key competency statements in *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007. The *Curriculum* applies to all sectors of compulsory schooling – primary, intermediate and secondary while history as a discrete subject is only available as an option during the final three years of senior school (Years 11 to 13 – *Curriculum* levels 6 to 8).

The New Zealand Curriculum replaced earlier curriculum documents, produced during the 1990s, for seven learning areas and replaced prescribed content for many of the senior secondary subjects, including history. Between 2002 and 2004 achievement standards for the NCEA were introduced to assess each of the senior levels of secondary education while the lists of history topics and themes available for teachers to select from, remained in place until new achievement standards were written and implemented between 2011 and 2013. Some aspects of the conceptual basis of the standards e.g. understanding *perspectives,* dated from 2002 (refer to Table 3, History Matrix 2004, in Chapter 2) but the adoption of second-order concepts as a basis for assessment became more pronounced with the implementation of the new curriculum and achievement standards in use from 2011.

History is minimally stated through two achievement objectives for each year level in *The New Zealand Curriculum,* for example 'Understand how peoples' perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealand differ' so in total history education is guided by six such objectives. The achievement standards were aligned with these objectives, with each achievement objective forming one of the achievement standards. Further standards were added to create five or six standards at each level (refer to Table 1 and Appendix F, History Matrix 2014). The three levels of history have in common standards which assess

1. carrying out historical research and communicating understanding
2. interpretation of sources
3. understanding perspectives
4. examining causes and consequences

while at Levels 1 and 2 students may also look at the effects of a New Zealand event on society and at Level 3 students may look at a trend and the force which influenced it. Not all standards need to be assessed so it usual for some to be left out of programmes (for further explanation see Chapter 9).

Table 1

Alignment of The New Zealand Curriculum and Achievement Standards

Achievement Objectives ***The New Zealand Curriculum*** **Level 6**	**Achievement Standards** ***For the NCEA*** **Level 1**
	AS91001 Carry out an investigation of an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders.
	AS91002 Demonstrate understanding of an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders.
	AS91003 Interpret sources of an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.
• Understand how people's **perspectives** on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ. ⟶	AS91004 Demonstrate understanding of different **perspectives** of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.
• Understand how the **causes and consequences** of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society. ⟶	AS91005 Describe the **causes and consequences** of an historical event.
	AS91006 Describe how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society.

Alignment of Level 6 *achievement objectives* (The New Zealand Curriculum) and Level 1 *achievement standards* (NCEA), from 2011.

Therefore, subjects for senior secondary students are regulated through both the curriculum achievement objectives and the achievement standards. However, while both are well aligned and have a symbiotic relationship, curriculum and assessment have different purposes. *The New Zealand Curriculum* is broadly framed with the intent that schools will develop programmes suitable for their local communities, while assessment is regulated at the national level. This then presents as contradictions in educational aims. The possibilities of high levels of freedom for teachers to deliver what they consider best for their students is constrained by an accountability imperative which involves extensive measuring and monitoring of student outcomes. The resulting tensions are visible in the effects of narrowed and fragmented history programmes and are a significant factor in reducing the potential to deliver 'powerful knowledge' to students of history.

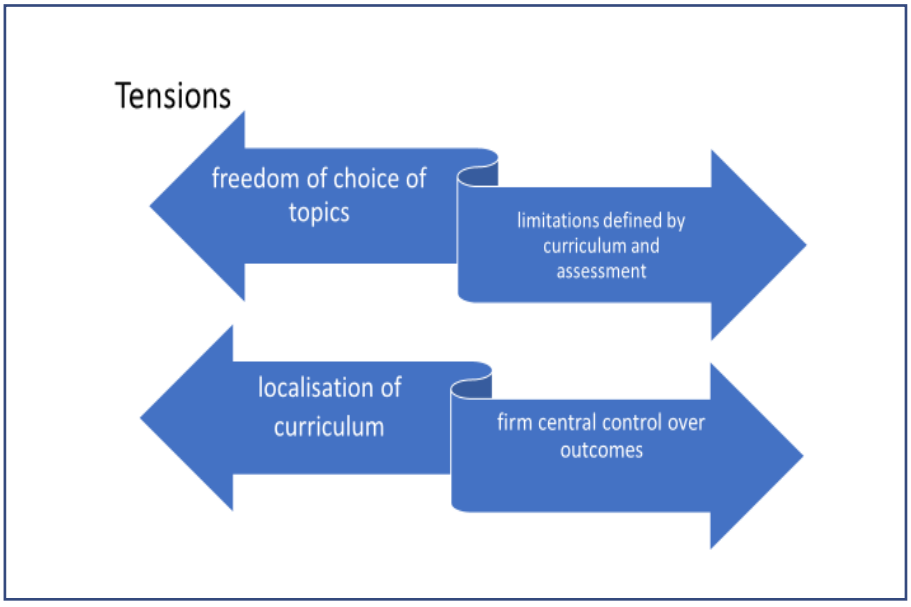

Figure 1 Tensions arising from competing curricula and accountability policies.

Furthermore, while seeking a desirable balance between different forms of knowledge is critical to the delivery of powerful knowledge, knowledge in the New Zealand context is commonly taught as discrete components based upon the generic *historical thinking* concepts. This approach has benefits in highlighting important considerations and processes when interpreting the past but the atomisation into components can act as a disincentive to scaffolding knowledge within a viable framework of interrelated concepts and ideas. If a particular concept, which is the focus for a specified assessment, is separated from knowledge

which might normally be expected to contextualise, surround and interconnect with the specifics of the knowledge being taught, it may detract from students' abilities to develop abstract thoughts and acquire deep understanding. For history the phrase *frameworks of knowledge* has been used (for example, Shemilt & Howson, 2017) to describe the need for any given piece of knowledge to be located within broader schema (see Chapter 11).

New Zealand in Relation to International Contexts

Three key trends in the way history curricula are commonly formulated across the globe have been identified by Symcox and Wilschut (2009) and these provide a measure against which history education in New Zealand can be gauged.

Trend 1 - 'the traditional or conservative trend which tries to present an uncomplicated uniform national narrative of the past to inculcate citizenship and patriotism' (p. 5).

Symcox and Wilschut suggest that this approach to curricula began in Western countries in the nineteenth century in the belief that a shared understanding of a nation's history would help unify the people. Typically the knowledge shared through this form of curriculum is singular in its narrative and presents a progressive view of nations forging ahead to an enlightened future.

Trend 2 - 'the progressive' modern world' trend, which strives for a pluralistic curriculum from a global point of view, offering space for a multicultural approach of the past' (p. 5).

In the face of 'globalisation, migration and multiculturalism' (Symcox & Wilschut, p. 4) from the 1980s history educators shifted their focus away from nationalist approaches to curricula to accommodate greater diversity and promote understanding of the modern world. Symcox and Wilschut contend that the previous two decades had seen a move away from political interest in what history was being taught in schools, which facilitated two developments – first a move to a Trend 3 model (see below) and secondly a move to this Trend 2 wider world view. They argue, however, that in some countries 'politicians reverted to a well-known old recipe of nation building' at various points. For example in 1994 the United States senate opposed new history standards which they viewed as being insufficiently patriotic (see Chapter 6) and when the effects of the European Economic Union and 'the creation of a European Islam' (Symcox & Wilschut, p. 5) seemed to threaten to disintegrate European societies, some nations

try to shore up students' knowledge of national history. For example in the Netherlands a 'national canon' of important facts was formulated in 2006.

Trend 3 – 'the educationalist 'teaching of history' trend, which is not so much concerned with the desired factual content of the curriculum, but stresses the value of the historical discipline as such, implying a key role for historical thinking and disciplinary concepts' (p. 5).

The emphasis on developing students' understanding of historians' methodologies and historical thinking has been in place in some countries (e.g. England) for at least four decades but has increasingly taken hold on a more global footing. It has received some criticism for emptying out knowledge and for losing sight of the larger historical context.

> The new approach to history teaching resulted in an emphasis on historical skills and thinking, often at the expense of factual and chronological historical knowledge…Teachers were sometimes asked to teach arcane subjects in depth, divorced from their larger historical context. This led to uneasiness and concern' (Symcox & Wilschut, p. 4).

Such concerns sometimes resulted in renewed demands for a Trend 1 or Trend 2 approach which Symcox and Wilschut contend is a 'traditional' position 'in the sense that both want history education to serve a political purpose, whether conservative or progressive' (p. 6).

Where History Education in New Zealand Fits

History in New Zealand aligns most closely with Trend 3, the 'educationalist teaching of history' trend where procedural knowledge is at the forefront. While Trend 3 has the potential benefit of providing students with the means to investigate and scrutinise society's actions, in the past and present, for the purposes of serving the future, where content is viewed as less critical than process there is also the potential for substantive knowledge to be marginalised.

The openness of curriculum content in New Zealand does facilitate choices made along the lines of Trends 1 and 2. In teachers' selections of content, the type of history teachers believe is important and its fundamental purposes in developing students' understandings of the past, could lie in those possibilities. In Chapter Seven I refer to a *knowledge critical* approach by which I suggest that the substantive knowledge selected is chosen because of its ability to

facilitate students understanding of critical issues in the past which enable students to make connections with other important knowledge both in the past and in the present. However, with reduced visibility for substantive knowledge in national policy, there is the likelihood that there will be both widely different experiences of history education nationally and limitations on opportunities for some students. Such limitations are compounded by accountability mechanisms which encourage teachers to prioritise measurable outcomes over the intrinsic, yet contestable, values of learning history.

My Research Journey

My interest in this research stemmed from my role as a history teacher at a co-educational school in Auckland, New Zealand at the time when the achievement standards for the NCEA were first implemented from 2002. I observed a gradual reduction in the knowledge taught to students (see Chapter 2). From 2011 autonomy over selection came into play and I became interested in what teachers might choose to teach when they were no longer constrained by prescriptions. I was intrigued to find out the reasons for teachers' choice of different histories. The potential for reduced knowledge, which had been raised as a concern during the review of the achievement standards 2008-2010, soon became evident and by 2012 when I began my research, the effects of knowledge reduction were clearly being seen.

Nevertheless, while a reflective approach is often favoured in educational theses, this thesis is not an account of my development as a researcher. This thesis concerns the ideas and evidence being presented on the place of knowledge in history teaching in New Zealand, and in education more broadly, and theorises the conceptions teachers have as curriculum makers.

Research Description

This thesis draws upon an empirical study into teachers' views on curriculum choices. Evidence from interviews of heads of history departments in New Zealand secondary schools about the reasons for their curriculum decisions, is used to explain the phenomenon of the retreat from knowledge. This is supported by documentary evidence from curricula and policy documents and teachers' views reported in teachers' association minutes, publications and national surveys.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter Two – The Place of Knowledge in New Zealand History Education 1989-2012

This chapter explains the nature of history education in the period prior to the introduction of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection. To explain the changes, the discussion begins in 1989 when a new history syllabus was enacted. It then traces the shifts in knowledge between 2002 when standards-based assessment was introduced, and 2012, which marks the final year for using those standards. The chapter therefore covers the period prior to the implementation of new achievement standards and autonomy over choice of history topics which was introduced into Level 1 history from 2011.

Chapter Three - Aligning Curriculum and Assessment

The ways in which autonomy over knowledge came about during a process to align *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the *achievement standards* for the NCEA is examined. To explain the approach taken in history, comparisons are drawn with other similar knowledge rich subjects – art history, senior level social studies and classical studies. This chapter reveals teachers' views of the proposal to have no prescribed content ahead of the implementation of new achievement standards for history.

> Ormond, B. M. (2012). Aligning curriculum and assessment - divergent approaches in the framing of knowledge. *Curriculum Matters, 8*, 9-32.

Chapter Four – Research Methods

This chapter briefly outlines my research methods including selection of research participants, methods of data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and the use of a realist methodology. In Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11 the methods are specifically explained in relation to the pertinent focus of each published chapter or article. Inevitably there is some repetition in outlining the research methods for these publications.

Chapter Five – Powerful Knowledge in History

The concept of powerful knowledge in relation to the discipline of history is defined and discussed in this chapter drawing upon the ideas of Michael Young, Johan Muller and Rob Moore. I argue that there is the potential for history to engage students in powerful knowledge but that the power of such knowledge can be weakened when re-contextualised for the classroom. In response to the 'empty curriculum' and assessment priorities, knowledge can become marginalised.

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

Chapter Six – A History Curriculum for the 21st Century

This chapter gives consideration to the broader purposes of history education in the 21st century. It locates the discussion within curricula debates over what constitutes a future focused curriculum and what historical knowledge is of most worth.

> Ormond, B., & Morgan, J. (2015). A history curriculum for New Zealand in the 21st century. In J. Morgan (Ed.) *The 21st Century Curriculum?* (pp. 152-161). Auckland: Edify Ltd.

Chapter Seven – Conceptions of Knowledge

In this chapter I examine the principles upon which teachers made their selections of history topics. Emerging from the research I developed *theoretical concepts* to explain the fundamental reasons for teachers' choices – *'knowledge critical', 'knowledge fit'* and *'knowledge engagement'*. Through analysis of teachers' responses, I argue that teachers' conceptions of knowledge have shifted in recent years. The selective use and adaptation of academically critiqued historical knowledge is theorised using Bernstein's theory of the *pedagogic device*.

> Ormond, B.M. (2018). Conceptions of knowledge in history teaching. In B. Barrett, U. Hoadley & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Knowledge, Curriculum and Equity - Social Realist Perspectives* (pp.102-116). London: Routledge.

Chapter Eight – Curriculum Decisions

This chapter explores the challenges of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection to explain the causal factors which have led to the profound changes to the epistemic structure and extent of the knowledge being taught. The chapter examines the ways in which teacher's selections of historical knowledge are constrained by the framing of history in the curriculum and by assessment requirements.

> Ormond, B. M. (2017). Curriculum decisions – the challenges of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection for history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 49(5), 599-619.

Chapter Nine – The Impact of Standards-based Assessment on Knowledge

New Zealand's exacting form of standards-based assessment is examined. I illustrate that the manner in which assessment is organised and enacted is a key driver in the narrowing and fragmentation of history. The chapter considers the role played by accountability factors, institutional systemic changes leading to layers of specificity in interpreting the standards, and additional mechanisms which regulate assessment under the NCEA. I argue that such factors have led teachers and students to follow a path of using isolated historical events to the detriment of 'big picture' history.

> Ormond, B. M. (2019). The impact of standards-based assessment on knowledge for history education in New Zealand. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice,* 26(2), 143-165.

Chapter Ten – Epistemic Structure

Curriculum design should be based on a well-considered structure of the episteme. In this chapter I argue that cognisance of epistemic structure is often neglected resulting in fragmentary learning which fails to effectively build substantive knowledge. This chapter is based upon a paper I delivered in 2017.

> *Epistemic progression: The challenge of systematic progression in a complex horizontally structured field*. Paper presented at Knowledge in Education Unit (KERU) 7th Annual International Symposium, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland. 13 November 2017.

Chapter Eleven – Historical Knowledge in a Knowledge Economy

This chapter considers what role history has to play in a globalised knowledge economy and argues that a focus on 'powerful' disciplinary knowledge and 'valuable' frameworks of knowledge has the potential to be of value to a future focused society.

> Harris, R., & Ormond, B. (2018). Historical knowledge in a knowledge economy – what types of knowledge matter? *Educational Review*, 1-17.

Chapter Twelve – Conclusion

The conclusion draws together the key findings from the research and explains the main contributing factors in the downplaying of knowledge in curricula and practice. The coherence of this thesis is explained through illustrating how questions of what knowledge is of most worth, how teachers make curricular decisions, the complexities of programme design and the role that assessment plays in influencing decisions, provide an interrelated discussion of the place of knowledge in contemporary education. The conclusion also refers to a current review of education in New Zealand and looks to the future to consider how 'powerful knowledge' could be accommodated in New Zealand classrooms.

Comment on Publications

The chapters of this thesis can be read as a developing body of work which spans my publications from 2012 to 2019. Therefore, the more recent publications draw upon a greater body of educational literature and a greater body of research than those written early in this process. It is also notable that many of the issues I raise in this thesis were germinating in the early years of this decade, in the period immediately after history teachers gained the autonomy to determine the history they teach and in the climate of new achievement standards, but some issues have become more pronounced and problematic as the decade has progressed. Therefore the conclusions reached in early publications are representative of their time and it is only when the extended time frame is taken into consideration that the overall impacts on knowledge can be comprehensively gauged.

Due to the necessity for readers of my published articles to understand the New Zealand educational context, aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the NCEA, and my research methods, many of the chapters included in this thesis contain elements which repeat this

information. However, they are stated in different forms and with different emphases according to their relevance for the different publications.

The publications included in this thesis are unchanged from their original published book chapters and journal articles, with the exception of very minor formatting changes, replacement of occasional words to create consistency in the use of terms, and minor changes in referencing to create a collated and coherent list of references. Each publication has its own discrete chapter which is introduced through a ***Foreword*** and concluded with a ***Reflection***. These serve to create the links between chapters and between publications.

CHAPTER 2

The Place of Knowledge in New Zealand History Education 1989-2012

Introduction

This chapter examines the place of knowledge in history education in the two decades prior to teachers gaining autonomy over their knowledge selections. It examines the ways historical topics were prescribed and the impacts on knowledge arising from changes in the way senior secondary subjects were assessed with the introduction of a standards-based assessment form of assessment from 2002. It therefore serves to explain the context into which *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007 and new *achievement standards* (from 2011) were introduced. While this thesis concentrates on the period from 2011 when teachers gained the responsibility for decisions on what history would be included in school programmes, the current circumstances should be seen within the context of the earlier period in which there was a gradual shift in the way knowledge was conceived and accommodated.

I argue that substantive knowledge has been under-valued from the time when the NCEA was introduced in 2002 but that knowledge expectations shifted surreptitiously, without deliberate intent and without the changes being formalised in policy. This chapter illustrates how knowledge in history education exhibited fragmentation and a progressive reduction through the practices associated with the first iteration of the achievement standards. It is against this backdrop that I will also illustrate in the following chapter (Chapter 3) that some teachers, as a result of these experiences, gave warnings about the likelihood of problems emerging from a non-prescriptive approach for history during the consultation process when new standards were being written to align with the new curriculum.

History education 1989-2001

An explanation of the period prior to the first iteration of the NCEA is pertinent since it provides the context to understand both the form history took as a school subject and the reasons for difficulties going forward into the new age of standards-based assessment. From 1989 to 2001 history education in New Zealand derived from both a broadly stated *History Form 5 to 7 syllabus for schools* (Ministry of Education, 1989) and prescriptions (Ministry of Education, 1987; 1988a; 1988b). The 1989 history syllabus introduced some skills objectives

– information gathering, information processing and presentation – which were incorporated into history programmes through internally assessed components. Students undertook historical research projects which contributed to their final end of year percentage mark. However, the three levels of senior history cannot be treated as one entity during this time. Form 5 and Form 7 (now called Year 11 and Year 13) comprised a combination of nationally set end-of-year examinations (School Certificate for Form 5 and University Bursary for Form 7) and internal assessment projects designed autonomously by history teachers, whereas assessment for Form 6 (Year 12) was entirely done within schools for the Sixth Form Certificate qualification.

Sixth Form Certificate history programmes at that time provide an interesting comparative context in which to consider the way autonomy over programmes relates to knowledge selection and the manner in which knowledge is dealt with. While topics and themes were prescribed for this year level, there was plentiful choice with 25 topics to choose from. Furthermore, with no national assessments to comply with or constrain the ways topics were dealt with, teachers could determine the depth and breadth of their programmes and have the flexibility to go beyond the topic boundaries. While the schools-based assessment system for Form 6 was not without its problems, such as their grading being dependent on the previous year's grade pool, Gregor Fountain's research into Form 6 history during this period suggests that many teachers developed creative assessments and learning opportunities. The level of autonomy enabled teachers to 'follow interesting tangents, reduce or extend topics to enhance student interest and help students to develop in-depth disciplinary thinking' (2012, p. 41). He did however, find that most teachers avoided topics in Māori, Pasifika and women's history (p. 9) even though the prescriptions supported these and that, with the exception of the Vietnam War, many of the new topics introduced in 1989 were rarely selected. For example, a survey of school programmes undertaken in 2002 by the New Zealand History Teachers' Association comprising 235 schools, indicated that there were no schools teaching the topics 'The Making of Malaysia', 'Rhodesia and Zimbabwe' or 'Case Studies in Industrial Cities' (New Zealand History Teachers' Association, 2002, p. 35). In contrast two of the three most popular topics – the 'Origins of World War I' and 'Revolution in Russia' – had been in the former prescription. Such findings are useful for viewing contemporary choices and considering how autonomy over topic selection may contribute to the ways in which topics, such as a nation's history, are avoided or become popular.

Table 2

Curriculum and Assessment Developments 1983-2013

Year(s)	CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENTS 1983-2013
1983-88	History syllabus and prescriptions reviewed
1989	*History Forms 5 to 7: Syllabus for Schools* introduced *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms introduced
1994	History Unit Standards developed
1995	History Unit Standards trial
1998–2001	Development of Achievement Standards for the NCEA
2002	Level 1 History Achievement Standards (for the NCEA) replace the School Certificate Examination
2003	Level 2 History Achievement Standards (for the NCEA) replace Sixth Form Certificate
2004	Level 3 History Achievement Standards (for the NCEA) replace the University Bursaries Examination
2007	*The New Zealand Curriculum* published
2008–10	Development of new Achievement Standards to align with *The New Zealand Curriculum*
2010	*The New Zealand Curriculum* mandated for use
2011	Level 1: new History Achievement Standards implemented
2012	Level 2: new History Achievement Standards implemented
2013	Level 3: new History Achievement Standards implemented

New curricula, developed during the 1990s under the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework,* positioned history outside the scope of the reforms. The curriculum was defined through seven learning areas and the curriculum for social studies, history's closest disciplinary neighbour, did not encompass senior history. The new curriculum, *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum,* 1997, signalled the policy intention that the ten achievement objectives for each

year level be flexible rather than highly prescriptive to give teachers the freedom to create appropriate, school-based programmes. Meanwhile history continued to be governed by the syllabus, prescriptions and examination requirements as explained in the *National Education Guidelines* (1993) which stated that 'Existing syllabuses are to be regarded as national curriculum statements until they are replaced' (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 110).

In remaining outside the newly documented curricula and continuing within an unchanged assessment structure until 2002, teachers became very familiar with the history topics which had been prescribed since 1989. The prescriptions were not overly detailed and therefore teachers were guided by, rather than constrained by, the prescriptions. Assessment had moulded into a pattern which was fairly secure with a high degree of understanding over what might be expected in examinations and this was coupled with the freedom for teachers to design and assess their own internally assessed components.

During this decade however reforms to assessment, under the umbrella of the *New Zealand Qualifications Framework,* were underway. Initially standards-based assessment reforms took the form of 'unit standards', developed in 1994 and trialled in 1995. For reasons which go beyond the scope of this thesis, these were then followed by the development during 1998 and 1989 of the achievement standards for most school subjects. However, the position of history and other subjects outside the curriculum, meant that the reforms to qualifications under the *New Zealand Qualifications Framework* during the 1990s were being developed separately from consideration of curriculum matters. For history the two components, curriculum and assessment, became disjointed and disassociated from each other. Therefore the question of what knowledge should be taught to students was not addressed in this period, with consideration being given only to the matter of what elements of the discipline should be assessed.

The year 1989 was also a turning point in the governance of schools with *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms placing both educational and financial responsibilities in the hands of school boards of trustees. As Codd (1999); Ball (2003); Lee & Lee (2012); Lauder, Young, Balarin & Lowe, 2012) and others have pointed out however, the autonomy for schools came with contradictory signals since auditing and accountability processes and bodies such as the *Education Review Office* came into being to monitor and control schools. The reforms to curriculum and assessment similarly carried contradictory messages. There is a high degree of autonomy built

into curriculum expectations which encourage schools to develop programmes which are best suited to their local students, yet standards are set nationally and used as the measure by which to assess individual students and school performance.

Shifts in knowledge teaching – the first iteration of the NCEA 2002-2012

In the first decade of the NCEA while topics and themes remained in place for the examinable, external, achievement standards there were subtle and incremental changes to the canon of knowledge for history. These shifts in practices were however, uneven across year levels for reasons which will be explained in the forthcoming discussion. Overall what was perceptible was a move away from teaching breadth of historical knowledge in favour of learning in-depth smaller parcels of knowledge and within this, a shift a focus on learning selected historical events, personalities or historical arguments. The reductions occurred as teachers gradually came to understand what knowledge needed to be taught to address assessment requirements and what knowledge could strategically be left out of programmes. While some shifts in approach may have been anticipated due to the need to accord with the skills and concepts identified in the assessment programme (see Table 3, *History Matrix* 2004) such as a narrowing through the need to target historical *perspectives* or to focus upon the concept of *historical identity*, the extent of the modifications to teaching knowledge was a substantially unplanned consequence.

Table 3

Matrix of Achievement Standards for History 2004

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
AS90209 Carry out an historical investigation 4 credits Internal	AS90465 Plan and carry out an historical inquiry 4 credits Internal	AS90654 Plan and carry out independent historical research 5 credits Internal
AS90210 Communicate historical ideas 4 credits Internal	AS90466 Communicate an understanding of historical ideas 4 credits Internal	AS90655 Communicate and present historical ideas clearly to show understanding of an historical context 4 credits Internal
AS90211 Interpret historical sources 4 credits External	AS90467 Examine evidence in historical sources 4 credits External	AS90656 Analyse and evaluate evidence in historical sources 5 credits External
AS90212 Examine the perspectives of people in an historical setting 4 credits External	AS90468 Examine and demonstrate empathy for the perspectives of people in an historical setting 4 credits Internal	AS90657 Examine a significant decision made by people in history, in an essay 5 credits External
AS90213 Describe an historical development in an essay 4 credits External	AS90469 Examine a force or movement that influenced people's lives in an historical setting, in an essay 4 credits External	AS90658 Examine a significant issue in the context of change, in an essay 5 credits External
AS9021 Describe experiences that led to the shaping of the identity of New Zealanders 4 credits External	AS90470 Examine individual or group identity in an historical setting, in an essay 4 credits External	

Ministry of Education, 2004.

The discussion which follows focusses largely on the externally assessed standards as these standards were assessed in end of year examinations in relation to prescribed topics whereas teachers had the autonomy to select the substantive knowledge for the internally assessed standards. As mentioned earlier internal assessment had been a feature of the pre-NCEA system where 35 percent of the grade was generated through internal assessment at Form 5, 40 percent for Form 7 and 100 percent for Form 6 where there were no national examinations. The complexity of, and subtlety with which, shifts in teachers' conceptions and practices arose must therefore be borne in mind when assessing the impacts on knowledge over time. The changes are uneven and difficult is evaluate comprehensively because of their variability across the country, but increasingly over the period of the first iteration of the standards there were signs that approaches to knowledge had undergone significant transformation.

Curriculum and assessment

There was an ambiguous relationship during this time, between the assessment programme and the knowledge it purported to assess. This stemmed in part from the disconnected nature of these components during the development of the NCEA qualification. As Hipkins, Johnston & Sheehan (2016) point out 'Ideally, assessment reform would follow curriculum reform rather than precede it' (p. 22). The primary focus of the writers for the NCEA was to develop achievement standards upon which to assess important skills and features of the discipline. It is not surprising therefore that the first iteration of the achievement standards was structured around processes or concepts which could be applicable to history from across cultures and times such as 'Describe an historical development in an essay' (Level 1, AS90213) or 'Examine a significant decision made by people in history, in an essay' (Level 3, AS90657) (see Table 3 *History Matrix,* 2004). In the absence of a new curriculum, the new assessment structure for history was expected to be able operate seamlessly using the existing topics and themes.

While some tweaks were made to the topic choice with, for example an extra five topics added to the 25 topics for Year 12 (formerly Form 6), there was little opportunity for the writers to revisit an existing framework of historical content so that the substantive knowledge that was to be used as a context for the assessments was to derive from the former prescriptions for senior history. While the prescriptions for history officially became defunct upon the introduction of the new assessment regime, the knowledge requirements, in the form of listed

topics and themes, were included within the explanatory notes for the externally assessed achievement standards (see Table 4, *AS90213, Explanatory Note 5*).

Table 4

Achievement Standard AS90213, 2004, Explanatory Note 5.

AS90213 Describe the impact of a development in an historical setting, in an essay *Explanatory Note 5.* Assessment will be derived from the following topics. Students will be expected to answer one topic question.	
THEMES	**TOPICS**
Social Welfare	• New Zealand 1891–1980 • USA 1929-1970 • Social Welfare in the Māori World 1918–1998
Race Relations	• New Zealand, Māori and Pākehā 1912–1980 • South Africa 1938–1976
International Relations	• New Zealand's Search for Security 1945–1985 • Origins of World War II 1919–1941 • Māori in a Post-Colonial World 1950-1998
Revolutionary Leadership	• China 1921-1949 • USSR 1924-1957
Social Change	• Women's Impact on New Zealand Society: Health 1915–1985 • Black Civil Rights in the USA 1954–1970 • The Place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in New Zealand Society 1975–1998
Conflict	• Ireland 1909–1922 • Palestine-Israel 1935–1967
Tangata and Whenua	• Effect of Population Movement on Māori Society (1946–1998)

The detail of the former prescriptions with their focus questions and listed historical content detail was absent, but there was an expectation that teachers would continue to teach the same

historical knowledge as they had in the past. Instead, across all senior secondary subjects, the writers of the standards attempted to demonstrate how existing content prescriptions aligned with the standards. Furthermore, throughout the process of writing the standards and explaining the standards to teachers during professional development sessions, the NCEA was explained in terms of being a new form of assessment, not a curriculum. Teachers were assured that their programmes did not have to substantially change and that the teaching content remained the same. Questions posed in the 'Frequently asked questions' segment of the *Teacher Handbooks* for history used for professional development and published by the Ministry of Education in 2001, prior to implementation of the NCEA, addressed the issue of the relationship between content knowledge and the achievement standards.

> *Will teaching programmes have to change?*
> Response: No, there should be no need to change programmes to accommodate the new qualifications. Achievement standards describe only what the qualifications designer expects students to get out of their learning programme and what assessors look for in assessment (Ministry of Education, 2001, Workshops 1&2, p. 13).

> *Why has a change in qualifications meant a change in the history curriculum?*
> Response: There has been no change in the history curriculum. The School Certificate prescription and the Level One achievement and unit standards have all been derived from the 1989 syllabus document (Ministry of Education, 2001, Handbook Supplement 2, Workshop 4, p. 16).

Nevertheless, due to a complex interplay of decisions made during the writing of the standards and subsequent examination papers, along with decisions made by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) over the ways the standards were to be implemented, significant and unexpected changes to knowledge were to follow. While in retrospect, it could be argued that the writers of the history standards confined the learning of historical knowledge through assessing the critical components of the discipline in separate standards rather than assessing historical knowledge more cohesively, the impact of such decisions on knowledge would have been difficult to foresee because of the interrelationship between those decisions and decisions which went beyond the writing of the standards.

In the first few years after the NCEA's introduction, teachers did not immediately respond in ways which targeted and narrowed the learning to meet the requirements of the various standards. However, over time the selection of content became tuned to what was needed to succeed in assessments at the expense of broader, more comprehensive approaches. Therefore, the siloed effects of developing one feature at a time - the standards and the examination formats, without curriculum reform - made it difficult to recognise the overall impact of many small changes over the decade of the NCEA's existence. As a consequence of decisions made in implementing the standards teachers increasingly selected appropriate knowledge bites and constructed them from particular angles to best fit the assessment requirements. This created significant shifts in both history programmes and knowledge acquisition by students. However, while this trend was evident, teachers across the country interpreted the knowledge needs of their students in relation to assessment, in different ways. They framed their programmes accordingly, resulting in considerable variability in the breadth, depth and foci of history programmes.

Reduction in knowledge

If we consider the example of a Level 2 standard from that era - *Examine individual or group identity in an historical setting, in an essay* (AS90470) the focus on requiring students to understand 'individual or group identity' would seem to be historically important. Political, revolutionary and ideologically driven leaders and groups have been influential in creating the changes or continuities which comprise history. However, when this standard was put into practice students only needed to have a grasp of one individual or one group in an entire year's learning to achieve at the highest level. Over time this resulted in a move towards investigating a selected individual or group in some depth while relegating other significant individuals or groups relevant to the topic to a greatly reduced overview, or not at all. Teachers, and students, selected their individual or group, well ahead of the examination leading to the unexpected outcome of limiting knowledge acquisition as students pre-prepared their responses.

Narrowing the focus was convenient and undoubtedly allowed for an impressive in-depth knowledge of an area of history but it is significantly far removed from what the writers of the history standards were likely to have anticipated ahead of the introduction of the NCEA. So while the standards are an attempt to explain the key features of the discipline of history through a competencies and concepts approach there was the potential to simultaneously undermine it

by restricting learning to a series of not fully contextualised historical fragments. In striving towards 'measurable learning outcomes and competencies' (Young, 2010a, p. 21), this contraction in knowledge learning can perhaps, be seen as symptomatic of a trend in educational reforms which leads to a reduction of content.

Fragmentation

The potential for a piecemeal approach to knowledge had been identified as a concern ahead of the introduction of standards-based assessment. The term 'atomisation' was used by opponents who expressed the concern that standards 'broke subjects into small learning units' (Haque, 2014, p. 93). However, teachers were given assurance by the Ministry of Education that the cohesion of a subject would not be affected by the organisation of assessment into distinctly assessable components. In answer to a 'frequently asked question' which asked 'Doesn't the division of subjects into achievement standards destroy the holism of a subject?' the response given was

> No. Achievement standards by and large have been written for the natural and familiar parts, or 'topics' of the conventional school subjects. … Traditional examinations have questions, or sets of questions, on these 'separate topics' (Ministry of Education, 2001, Workshops 1&2, p. *7*).

While there is considerable debate, and little clarity on, the relative benefits of an assessment methodology which encourages cohesive approaches in historical learning versus an assessment regime which, through its skills and concepts framework provides a targeted focus on disciplinary practices, it is clear that standards-based assessment created changes which were not fully anticipated or appreciated.

As a writer of the achievement standards myself, for the subject art history during the development period in the late 1990s I, and the group of teachers I worked with, carefully thought through the components which we believed made up the study of art history such as understanding the subject of art works, analysing stylistic features, understanding the context in which art works were produced and viewed, and knowledge of the media and techniques used by artists. We then wrote separate achievement standards to assess these components. However we did not anticipate the policy decision of the NZQA to assess each achievement

standard in separate examination papers or anticipate the ways in which knowledge might be impacted. Students were presented with three different examination papers for art history, one for each of the externally assessed standards, and these papers were assessed by different marking panels. Because this procedural policy was not known when the achievement standards were initially drafted, the standards developers, like myself, wrote the standards having tested our approach through writing 'possible' questions for a single examination paper following the practice of the former national examinations. Therefore, it was imagined that any examination paper would enable the components to be comprehensively assessed. For example, for art history this might mean that a student would demonstrate knowledge of the subject, style and context of an art work in different parts of a single examination question for a specified art work, rather than independently concentrating on just the subject, or the style, or the context of an art work. Prior to the introduction of the standards in 2001, Ministry of Education advice on the nature of examinations was stated clearly for all teachers through documents providing responses to 'frequently asked questions'.

> Frequently Asked Question: *'Will written examinations be the same as they are now?*
> Response: Yes. Examinations will be laid out in sections (as they are now) with different sections pertaining to different achievement standards. This will enable standard by standard marking if this is appropriate (Ministry of Education, 2001, Workshops 1 & 2, 8).

This suggested flexibility for future examiners where they could set questions which could assess individual standards with 'standard by standard marking' but which could also be organised in a more holistic manner. The policy decision to have distinct examination papers for each standard applied across all subjects. For the writers of the history standards it may have appeared as if an examination paper could be designed to assess students' understanding of different aspects of the discipline (knowledge, concepts or skills), assess a body of knowledge, or assess several historical topics creating coverage of essential understandings across the paper.

From an assessment viewpoint both advantages and disadvantages can be discerned from this practice. One of the benefits of separate papers is that the distinction between the assessable components was made clear and students could be taught to be selective in their response to achieve the required targeting of the achievement criteria. However, from a knowledge

viewpoint, students in this period demonstrated astute awareness that they could prepare a limited range of what they have been taught in a year in the knowledge that they may be able to use the same 'knowledge bite' for each of their external examinations because of the separate marking panels. It was not uncommon for students, by perhaps mid-way through the school year, to limit their learning to fewer topics in the realisation that they had sufficient knowledge to address the examination. Any further topics the teacher taught were therefore redundant. This helps explain why some teachers shifted their practices and taught fewer topics.

An uneven response

The extent to which the teaching of knowledge changed was uneven across the year levels, and across standards, largely as a result of differences in the way in which the standards were assessed. Depending on factors such as the degree to which examination questions were aligned to the precise wording of the standards, or whether choice was given in the examination questions, or whether generic or topic specific essay questions are written, different approaches to determining essential knowledge was adopted by teachers. For some assessments, students may best have been served by drawing knowledge broadly from a topic to convey key ideas, while for other situations, focussing more narrowly upon aspects such as actions and perspectives of an individual or group, or reframing knowledge to give it particular emphasis in service of an historical argument, may have been the most appropriate response. Genres which best suited a particular achievement standard were gradually and increasingly recognised and favoured.

In retrospect we can see that Year 12 history in this period provided the closest model for how examination questions would be written for all year levels in the post 2011 autonomous selection era. The replacement of the internally assessed former Sixth Form Certificate course with a course which required some externally assessed standards produced a unique response by examiners. Because there were now 30 topics available and there had been less commonality about teaching the topics prior to the NCEA, this initiated a more generic approach to question setting where questions were set in a manner which could be answered through wide ranging topic choices. This become a feature of external assessment for the other levels of senior history when the new standards were implemented from 2011.

To illustrate how different responses to the early versions of the standards created inconsistencies in the treatment of knowledge a comparison of examination questions for the standards which assessed essay writing for Level 1 (Year 11) and Level 2 (Year 12), can be made (see Table 5). For the Level 1 achievement standard *Describe an historical development, in an essay* (AS90213), a focus on broad knowledge prevailed since examiners continued the former practice of writing essay questions which were specific to the defined topics and could be drawn from any part of the topic. Such questions usually assessed a substantial portion of a topic and encouraged students to learn the breadth of the topic. In contrast, at Level 2, for achievement standard *Examine individual or group identity in an historical setting, in an essay* (AS90470), essay questions were generic and able to be applied to any topic the students had studied during the year. The nature of the question enabled Level 2 history students to bring a narrow selection of learned content to bear upon the question.

Table 5

Examination Questions for Levels 1 and 2 History, NCEA 2007

NCEA Level 1 **AS90213 -** Describe an historical development, in an essay	**NCEA Level 2** **AS90470 -** Examine individual or group identity in an historical setting, in an essay
What aggressive actions by European and Asian nations threatened world peace between 1930 and 1937? How did nations and organisations respond to these aggressive actions? *2007 Examination. Question for Topic 3 – Origins of World War II 1919-1941.* *9 questions in the examination – one for each topic.*	Describe and explain the characteristics of an individual's or group's identity, and the factors that helped form it. Describe and explain actions taken by the individual or group to express their identity. *2007 Examination. One question only in the examination.*

Furthermore, the wording of the achievement criteria for Level 2 was adhered to quite closely in framing the essay question which contrasted strongly with the treatment of Level 1 where the questions bore little resemblance to the wording of the standard. The examination question

asking students to 'Describe and explain the characteristics of an individual's or group's identity' closely replicates the second criterion in AS90470 'Describe characteristics of the individual or group identity' (see Table 6). This restricted the scope of the questions and resulted in a fair degree of predictability from year to year. Level 1, in comparison, demonstrated a freer and more limited alignment to the wording of the standard. This characterises the variance in implementation practices. It was the Level 2 model of generic questions which prevailed when the new achievement standards and examinations were written and which has contributed significantly to the current marginalisation of knowledge.

Table 6

Achievement Criteria for AS90470, 2007

AS90470 Examine individual or group identity in an historical setting, in an essay Achievement Criteria (Level 2)
• Identify and describe some factors that have contributed to the formation of an individual or group identity, and ways the identity was expressed, in an historical setting • Describe characteristics of the individual or group identity • Structure and organise information and ideas in an appropriate essay format

Another example of an approach which carried through from 2002 to the present and which has undermined the teaching of knowledge was the decision to assess students' analysis of historical sources using historical contexts which are unrelated to the topics students have learned during the year. From a practical viewpoint this was a suitable solution to developing separate examination resource booklets and questions for the large number of topics available (16 topics at Level 1 and 30 topics at Level 2) but it highlighted the difficulties which emerge when an assessment programme is developed without simultaneously reviewing and modifying the prescription or curriculum that students will be taught. Students could prepare for the skills assessed in the source interpretations standards, such as methodologies for interpreting statistical tables, or interpreting historical documents, but inevitably the lack of contextual knowledge which students brought to such interpretations was limited and could lead to fairly simplistic notions, or, more commonly, lead to the examiner to making a very careful selection of resources so that contextual knowledge beyond that given in the resources was not required.

Historical knowledge, as conveyed through political cartoons for example, proved to be problematical in examinations since interpretation of cartoons normally requires quite extensive contextual knowledge of people, actions, viewpoints and events of the given time and place. While this genre of primary source is commonly associated with the study of history, only easily read examples were included in the NCEA examinations. Through this approach and emphasis on analytical skills, knowledge was relegated to a secondary position.

Furthermore, the examination of sources without the opportunity to reference substantial context, brings into question one of the goals of an evidential based approach for learning history – that students have an opportunity to gain meaningful learning about an historian's discipline. Counsell (2011) notes that 'One cannot simply replicate historians' processes in a classroom' (p. 202). Therefore, under examination conditions of these barely contextualized sources, the dangers of distorting both historical 'truths' and historical processes increased.

However, for these first-generation achievement standards, the interpretation of sources for a topic unknown ahead of the exam was not a consistent feature across year levels. For Level 3 source interpretation continued to be based on former topics. This was manageable because there were only two prescribed topics (England 1558-1667 and Nineteenth Century New Zealand) so examinations continued to be written on the basis that students would bring knowledge to their interpretations. This approach was a powerful force for limiting change in knowledge teaching at Year 13. Because the sources were normally drawn from across the breadth of the topic, this has had the effect of encouraging students to learn and understand the topic as a whole, rather than target specific aspects. However, since the introduction of the revised standards coupled with the freedoms over knowledge selection, from 2013 Level 3 followed the same path of having what New Zealand history teachers' term 'de-contextualised sources'.

Overall for Level 3 the shifts in knowledge practices following the introduction of the NCEA, were less marked than for Levels 1 or 2. The experience at Level 3 demonstrates the variability that characterised the response to the implementation of the standards and is an outcome of the complexities of the interrelationships between knowledge, the standards and the way they are examined. Whereas the essay questions were generic at Level 2 enabling substantial pre-learning of answers, at Level 3 these questions were specific. For example in the 2010

examination one of the six choices of question for Level 3, AS90657, *Examine a significant decision made by people in history, in an essay*, was

> Explain the factors underlying James I's decision to tolerate and Charles I's decision to openly favour Arminianism within the English Church. Evaluate the consequences of their decisions on governing class support for the Church up to 1640.

A question such as this requires considerable understanding of religion and State over an extensive period.

Conclusion

Therefore, this chapter illustrates how knowledge in history teaching, although variable across year levels and between schools, had already undergone change in the decade before teachers gained full autonomy to determine the historical content of their school programmes. What had begun to emerge during the first iteration of the standards from 2002, has increasingly become visible in the current climate. The reduction and narrowing of substantive knowledge has now become critical.

CHAPTER 3

Aligning Curriculum and Assessment

Ormond, B. M. (2012). Aligning curriculum and assessment - divergent approaches in the framing of knowledge. *Curriculum Matters*, 8, 9-32.

Foreword

This chapter compares the approaches to knowledge for four senior secondary subjects during the development of new standards for the NCEA between 2008 and 2010. In a process commonly referred to as the *Alignment Project* the intention was to align *The New Zealand Curriculum* and new *achievement standards*. Unlike the previous decade where the first iteration of standards was distanced from developments in curriculum, the *Project* aimed to bring the NCEA in line with the mandated, but relatively new, curriculum document. In this process different subjects adopted different stances on the place and importance of substantive knowledge. It is these different accommodations for knowledge which are intriguing since the decisions made in relation to knowledge exerted a strong influence on how teachers responded to the standards. An examination of the alignment process also helps explain how history teachers gained autonomy over substantive knowledge and helps build a picture of why history presents as a subject with downgraded knowledge.

At the time of writing this article in 2012, the new achievement standards had been in place for just one year for Year 11 (2011) and were in their first year of operation for Year 12. It was also ahead of the introduction of the new standards for Year 13 which came into use in 2013. The article therefore offers a projection for possibilities of what may happen.

During the *Alignment Project* I was President of the New Zealand Art History Teachers' Association and also held the Ministry of Education contract for leading the alignment project for art history. As such I co-ordinated consultation meetings, developed surveys canvassing art history teachers views on the standards and was on the writing group developing the new standards. I was also a consultant for developing the *Art History Guidelines* for external standards for Level 3, which stated the examinable substantive knowledge for the externally assessed standards. It was from this insider knowledge of how the subject of art history developed that I became interested in the very different approaches to knowledge which

emerged in other subjects. As a teacher educator for history, art history, social studies and classical studies I was part of these subjects' teacher associations and was part of communication network during the developments.

The concerns expressed by teachers, as reported on in the following published article, have proven to be a substantially accurate forecast of issues arising from the post 2011 implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the revised achievement standards. These issues are briefly noted in the reflection which follows, and detailed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Aligning Curriculum and Assessment –Divergent Approaches in the Framing of Knowledge

Outline

This article examines the different outcomes that have emerged in the framing of knowledge for senior secondary school subjects through the process of aligning curriculum and assessment. By tracing paths of development in the *Alignment of Standards Project* for history, art history, classical studies and social studies it can be seen that differing approaches to the nature and inclusion of knowledge have created distinctions between those subjects which enable a high degree of teacher autonomy in the selection of knowledge, and those which are more prescriptive. The relationship between curricula and assessment is examined giving consideration to current debates about the 'voice of knowledge' (Young, 2009a) in curricula and the blurring of boundaries between the means of acquiring knowledge and the disciplinary knowledge itself.

Introduction

In the process of aligning a recent New Zealand curriculum document with assessment qualifications, (the *Alignment of Standards Project*), the manner in which disciplinary knowledge for senior secondary subjects has been framed and prescribed, has taken surprisingly divergent paths. Some explanations for the variance can be found through considering differing interpretations of Ministry of Education directives, different developmental processes and differing responses of teachers to proposed changes, but these do not fully explain the different outcomes. This article considers the varied approaches taken during the process of alignment for history, art history, classical studies and social studies to order to explore how this variability may have occurred. While teacher autonomy in selecting knowledge is at the forefront for history and social studies, a prescriptive detailed knowledge framework has been developed for art history, and classical studies occupies the middle-ground. Fundamentally important, and at the heart of the ideas raised here, is that there is no clear understanding of, or debate over, the place of knowledge in curricula. Wood and Sheehan argue, in respect of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) that 'in a curriculum that is designed to contribute to building a "knowledge economy", neither the place of knowledge in *The New*

Zealand Curriculum is clearly defined nor is the question of "what is knowledge?" in the context of the curriculum addressed' (Wood & Sheehan, 2012, p. 17). The following analysis of outcomes for different subjects during the *Alignment Project* suggests a random approach where knowledge may, on the one hand, be nationally 'prescribed' in detail while on the other hand, be so broadly stated that it becomes the domain of individual teacher choice. Leaving the important question of what constitutes knowledge to individual subjects, or to whim, or chance, in the alignment process, has led to variable notions of the role and value of disciplinary knowledge in learning. Young recognises this as a global phenomenon. He comments upon the apparent 'divorce in much contemporary writing where thinking and learning are treated as if they were processes that can be conceptualised as educational goals independently of what the thinking and learning is about' (Young, 2009a p. 202). Lambert argues that at play are 'cultural and economic influences that value skills over knowledge and the acquisition of discrete competencies and "learning how to learn" over understanding' (Lambert, p. 248). 'Content is often held up as a separate concern from skills, even a possible distraction' writes Counsell (2000, p. 61). Therefore, the process of the *Alignment Project*, through its focus upon aligning assessment to a broadly framed curriculum document, reinforces an international trend in favouring procedural knowledge over the disciplinary knowledge that underpins thinking and learning.

The key sources of evidence for this article are Ministry of Education documents relating to the development of the *Alignment Project* and online comments made by teachers through their teacher association networks. The article also draws upon my role as a teacher educator in the relevant four disciplines and upon personal involvement in the development of achievement standards for art history during the *Alignment Project.*

The Alignment of Standards Project

New Zealand secondary educators are midway through an emergent phase of change where *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is being implemented in the senior years of secondary school (Years 11-13). This represents the final phase of development for a curriculum that became mandatory for earlier years of schooling, Years 1-10, in 2010. Through an *Alignment of Standards Project* the intent of the curriculum is being expressed in revised achievement standards for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (the NCEA) qualification. Through aligning and connecting the components of curriculum and assessment,

the new standards will attest to the 'vision', 'principles', 'values', 'key competencies' and 'achievement objectives' prescribed in the curriculum. Stemming from the *Alignment Project*, is a marked variability in the way different disciplines have framed or specified the content or contexts in which skills or concepts are to be assessed. While the Ministry of Education signalled the possibility of different outcomes through their statement that 'the appropriate relationship between content and context varies between subjects' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5), the overriding message to subject working groups (SWGs), during the development phase, was that the new curriculum was 'intended to be enabling so that standards should as far as possible be written in such a way as to provide schools and teachers the opportunity to select contexts which are best suited for the students' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5), that is, non-specific and non-prescriptive. For the internally assessed components of these subjects under the NCEA, it has been the practice that contexts not be specified. Any prescriptive content applies only to the externally assessed standards which are examined in end-of-year nationwide examinations. Therefore, the discussion here, over variability of approach, applies to the externally assessed standards.

What is inexplicable is the manner in which the variance came about with some subjects being led to abandon close prescription of content while other subjects have retained or created new highly detailed requirements for content. It is difficult to explain such differences in terms of the nature of the disciplines, or in terms of teachers' preferences, or in terms of the views of project leaders. Variability also appears in the manner of, and level of, consultation over such critical matters.

The terms content, context, knowledge, and skills are relevant here as they may be interpreted in multiple ways. The Ministry of Education, for the purposes of the *Alignment Project* referred to 'content' as 'defining the concepts, skills and knowledge required to achieve the standard, and context as the vehicle that might be used to deliver the content' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5). Under this definition achievement standards would describe 'content' while 'contexts' would remain outside the standards and, preferably, be a matter for individual teachers in order to allow the flexibility intended by the broad curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 6).

Therefore if 'content' is defined as the assessable 'concepts, skills and knowledge', we need to analyse how this has been interpreted by members of the subject writing groups and to what

extent commonalities or inconsistencies are evident. Given that the terms concepts, skills and knowledge were not separately defined by the Ministry of Education, they had the potential to be interpreted in different ways. Knowledge, for example, may come under the umbrella of conceptual understandings and be framed in broad terms. It may imply genres or bodies of knowledge, or alternatively, it could refer more specifically to knowledge of time, place, people, institutions etcetera – what one might refer to as 'topic knowledge'. Skills may be interpreted in terms of cognitive development through skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving or more procedurally with skills such as essay writing, analysis of sources and drawing conclusions.

Under *The New Zealand Curriculum* 'content' is primarily defined by the *achievement objectives* set for each year level, for example, content is implied at Level Six for social studies through the two objectives

> Understand how individuals, groups, and institutions work to promote social justice and human rights, and
>
> Understand how cultures adapt and change and that this has consequences for society (Ministry of Education, 2007, Level Six Social Sciences - Social Studies).

In this case it is concepts (e.g. social justice, human rights, culture, adaptation) that fall within the definition of 'content' and knowledge of these concepts would be gained in relation to selected contexts, such as a social justice issue in a particular nation state. Such an approach provides wide scope for teacher or student choice of context yet simultaneously promotes the narrowing of the use of any given context through the application of the lenses of 'working to promote social justice' or 'understanding change and consequence'.

For the discipline of history, Hunter noted early on in the *Alignment Project* (2008) that it had 'became apparent that the Levels 6-8 Ministry of Education history *achievement objectives* were going to become ***the*** history curriculum by default in the absence of research or a position paper to support the development' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 5). The *achievement objectives* Hunter is referring to are potentially applicable to a wide selection of contexts and all historical eras. In effect, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, in relation to history, could, therefore, be regarded as the antithesis of a curriculum – where the terms are so broad as to prescribe nothing. The

conception for history, therefore, relies heavily on teacher selection and judgement. The absence of particulars of knowledge that must be taught and learned may reflect concerns about 'the damaging effects of excessive or prescriptive content' (Counsell, 2000, p. 60), or put more positively the desire for flexibility in curriculum and assessment to determine courses relevant to the learners in a particular community.

Counsell notes that 'most history teachers would agree that knowledge is important, that both knowledge and skill matter … Yet whenever "content" is compared with "skills" as a teaching objective it continues to get a bad press' (Counsell, 2000, p. 60). Reflecting a global trend in history teaching, the focus of the achievement objectives is upon engaging students in participating in the procedural skills of 'acting like an historian' and engaging in 'historical thinking'. Students work towards acquiring disciplinary expertise through giving consideration to matters such as historical significance, reliability of sources and understanding different perspectives and interpretations of the past. Unlike social studies, the achievement objectives are not specific in suggesting a particular field of inquiry such as human rights' issues, so there is not quite the same degree of steerage towards a specific knowledge focus.

> Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society, *and*
>
> Understand how people's perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ (Ministry of Education, 2007, Level Six Social Sciences - History).

However, as with social studies, the same narrowing of the assessment focus to meet the specific wording of objectives applies. The two objectives for Level Six for history require that students angle their response to 'cause and consequence' or to looking at 'people's perspectives'. For history, such foci (causes, consequences, historical significance) are often referred to as second order concepts, or procedural concepts (Sheehan, 2011, p. 35) and applicable to diverse historical contexts. First order concepts, or substantive concepts (p. 35), on the other hand, such as colonialism, revolution, nationalism, have a relational location within historical content as they are normally of specific relevance to specific eras or geographical localities, for example the French Revolution, colonising New Zealand. While under the former prescriptions first order concepts had a greater role to play as the cement that linked topics together (e.g. the theme of Nationalism, International Relations and the Search

for Security for Sixth Form Certificate (NZQA, 1988) and as the foundation for topic direction, such concepts are not 'prescribed' within the new framework. Therefore, it is the skills of the historian that are given the position of prominence while the knowledge that may emerge from applying such skills is less certain. 'It therefore seems easy to state that the content is somehow unimportant, and that it is just the 'domain' in which we practise things' (Counsell, 2000, p.61). This concern was raised at a meeting of the Auckland History Teacher's Association, in September 2008, where it was stated that there 'appears to be placing of assessment ahead of the curriculum which is completely UNACCEPTABLE. This makes the achievement standards the *de facto* history curriculum' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 11).

In the process of aligning the curriculum *achievement objectives* with the *achievement standards* the dominance of a history of events has emerged. All six of the standards at both Levels 1 and 2 of the NCEA contain a focus on an historical event, although two of these standards at each level do provide a choice of an event or place. This has the potential to exclude important histories, for example those for which ideas, trends or the agency of individuals or institutions have greater significance than events. History studies which explore gender roles, or investigate local communities, or enhance knowledge of cultural interaction, the workings of government etcetera are excluded except where they serve as a context for a significant event. History teachers from one secondary school wrote that

> too many standards require study of 'an event'. This rules out studies on people or areas, or even multiple events. History should not be about single events in isolation from each other. Also field research (e.g. looking at causes of death in a cemetery…) is much more difficult since these rarely reflect a single event (NZHTA, weblog, p. 8).

Hunter contends that *The New Zealand Curriculum* conception of history is limited. The 'focus on events … embed(s) familiar practice and contextual preferences' while 'international thinking in history education' looks at matters such as interpretations of agency'…, 'historical thinking' … and the 'socially constructed nature of history' (NZHTA, weblog, pp. 5-6). So while not prescriptive, there is an implied constraint and narrowing of historical study through the focus upon events, the rationale for which has not been fully explained.

For both social studies and history, the alignment process has achieved the close alignment between *The New Zealand Curriculum* and assessment that was sought by the Ministry of

Education. However, a further variation influencing the relationship between *The New Zealand Curriculum* and assessment through the achievement standards is that not all senior subjects are directly represented in the curriculum. While history and social studies are framed according to the *achievement objectives* stated in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, art history and classical studies have no subject-specific objectives. Art history falls within the Visual Arts objectives where only some aspects of the objectives can be seen as directly applicable. Objectives such as 'Apply knowledge of a range of conventions from established practice, using appropriate processes and procedures' (Ministry of Education, 2007, Level Six, The Arts) were designed for art practice and, of the seven achievement objectives for visual arts at Level 1 only three were selected as suitable for alignment with the art history standards. Because the visual arts objectives serve a multi-purpose of directing both visual arts and art history the requirement evident in history and social studies for complete alignment between achievement objective and achievement standard was not applied to the revision of the art history standards. For example the Level 1 art history standard *Demonstrate understanding of links between context(s) and art works* (NZQA, 2011a, AS91017) does not mimic the wording of the curriculum achievement objective 'Investigate and analyse the relationship between the production of art works and the contexts in which they are made, viewed and valued'. The differences resulting from the lack of subject-oriented achievement objectives for art history provide some clue about the different approaches to knowledge specification. While the achievement objectives for social studies and history indicated possible content in broad terms, the visual arts achievement objectives were not expected to shape the direction of art history so closely. Alternative means could be sought for clarifying knowledge expectations.

Similarly for classical studies, there are no achievement objectives in the *Curriculum* and the only mention of the discipline lies in the statement that 'the range of possible social sciences disciplines that schools can offer is much broader, including for example, classical studies' (Ministry of Education 2007, p. 30). Therefore alignment for classical studies involved minimal links to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Instead, *Learning Outcomes* have been written in conjunction with, rather than following from, the alignment process. As a conjunctive instrument rather than a driver, the learning outcomes have a similar framing to the achievement objectives in the *Curriculum* but are to be found in a separate document, the *Senior Secondary Teaching and Learning Guide* for Classical Studies (Ministry of Education, 2010). Alignment for classical studies, therefore, had the potential for greater freedom. The project writing group could simultaneously determine the critical features of the discipline for

both curriculum and assessment purposes. While is clear that the wording of the history and social studies achievement objectives (using Level 1 as the example) significantly shaped the wording and form of the revised achievement standards, those subjects without dedicated achievement objectives have been less constrained.

The Framing of Knowledge

So what effect has alignment with the curriculum had upon the framing of knowledge? The answer is complex as it lies beyond this linear relationship between curriculum and assessment. Further considerations of process and input are involved.

Social Studies

Because social studies has many disciplinary roots and has traditionally been, at junior levels, a subject with substantial scope to design autonomous programmes, albeit within broad national curricula, there was an expectation from the outset that teachers would have a high level of freedom to determine content selection. Social studies is a subject which only became nationally available at the senior level and under the umbrella of the NCEA from 2002. While, upon the introduction of the NCEA, the other subjects largely retained their existing knowledge components, social studies was devised after the publication of the *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1997) document. The first versions of the NCEA standards were, therefore, written from the outset with curriculum achievement objectives in mind. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) and process of alignment has, nevertheless, created significant change. The reduction from ten achievement objectives at each level of the 1997 curriculum, to two achievement objectives at each level in the 2007 curriculum suggests a reduction in content coverage to, for example, a dual focus on human rights and cultural change at Level 1. This illustrates a narrowing of the choice of content with, for example, studies of the environment or resources no longer an appropriate preparation for candidates in the NCEA examinations.

History

While freedom to choose content has been the practice of senior social studies for a decade, history is undergoing a more significant transformation from assessment on specific defined topics to complete autonomy to choose any historical focus and any period of history. Such a

shift adopts the spirit of the broader, more flexible *New Zealand Curriculum* and the dictum of the guidelines given to subject writing group members.

> The intention of the new curriculum for Years 11, 12 and 13, is to be 'enabling' and allow schools maximum flexibility in learning programmes within the mandated framework of the principles, values and competencies (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 4).

The writing group for the history standards adopted the Ministry of Educations' strong recommendation for flexibility of contexts and when presenting options for the matrix of achievement standards noted in their consultation document that

> At present NZHTA have designed four potential matrices…These are the result of hours of discussion and debate in the executive and feedback from the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications officials. Please bear in mind that there (are) **no prescribed topics from 2010** (*emphasis added*) (New Zealand History Teachers Association, 2008a, p. 1).

Therefore the consultation document, in respect of knowledge requirements for history, appeared as a *fait accompli.* The document created considerable debate among teachers. The views of fourteen history teachers (mainly Heads of Departments) along with the record of the summarised comments of circa seventy teachers who attended a meeting of the Auckland History Teachers Association, were posted on a New Zealand History Teachers Association weblog. This amounted to over 8,500 words of comment. While some teachers may have been willing to embrace a future in which they could teach the history of their choice, the weblog postings contain no comments in support for this approach. Instead they express dismay at the loss of specified topics. The inevitability of examinations designed with 'generic' questions and 'decontextualised sources', was seen by many as an unacceptable trade-off for freedom. GB *(teachers names have been abbreviated)* commented that 'so far, in what is supposed to be a consultation we have been given no substantial alternatives to discuss – it is all decontextualisation and resultant generic questions – these are really the two major issues which determine all else. …We have been shown no model allowing for prescribed units or modernised New Zealand content' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 1). DK commented that core content 'is rightly regarded as essential for the creation of informed citizens who have some knowledge

of their own country's history and of the key events of world history'. He urged teachers not to 'blindly accept what the Ministry of Education has laid down' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 9).

MW titled her response 'Caged and Cuckolded' and commented that

> It seems the feedback we really want to give – support for contextualised externally examined standards balanced by 'free range' internally assessed standards – will be dismissed as unacceptable and timid. The 'Battery Hen' analogy fits our current mood nicely. We feel caged in by poorly written achievement objectives and Ministry/NZQA directives. I am not going to peck away at the few kernels, in the form of the matrices, that are being presented to us … when what I want to do is to be able to challenge the whole philosophy. … The restrictions placed on the realignment team have led to a Clayton's choice – no choice (NZHTA, weblog, pp. 12-13).

While there was recognition that the existing topics were out-of-date and narrow in nature (Sheehan, 2011, p. 41), having had their last substantial review in the late 1980s, having no topics at all was clearly regarded as problematic. John Downes, Chair of the NZHTA Executive, noted in September 2008 that 'most of us are still having difficulty coming to terms with' the concept of no prescribed topics (Downes p. 1). Grounds for concern fall into several main categories – concerns over generic questions, concerns over narrowing of topic coverage and concerns about equity.

Since the inception of the NCEA in 2002-3 generic questions had been a feature of the examinations for the standards assessing interpretation of historical sources (Levels 1 and 2) and for the Level 2 essay and perspectives standards. Their success or otherwise had been a matter for debate for a decade and any move toward a freer topic choice would embed this further. Some teachers expressed concerns at the difficulty students have had in accessing and addressing generic questions while MW commented upon the experiences of students dealing with 'unnecessarily contorted questions in an effort to introduce variation from one year to the next' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 13). She also reported on the tendency to address them through 'memorised essays' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 13). NH summarily stated that generic questions have 'been a disaster at Level 2' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 3). He argued that they pose difficulties for consistency in marking and questioned 'how it will be possible for external exams to be marked effectively' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 4). JP reiterates this view saying that 'some students prepare

answers for topics that markers are not qualified to assess' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 4). This raises the issue of equity, if some content has the potential to achieve better results because of its obscurity. JP argues that experience has already shown that students who addressed one of the less commonly taught topics were able to achieve higher grades.

> …to many markers (these) are obscure topics. We have documented evidence that shows that a student's essay on the American Revolution gained an Excellence from very poor history. Huge generalisations unsupported by evidence, errors of fact and, under informed scrutiny, barely reached achieved. If we are allowing all courses to be decontextualized we run the risk of these same gross distortions of history. By de-contextualising you are only encouraging the proliferation of weak and inaccurate history (NZHTA, weblog, p. 4).

The reduction of knowledge was also raised as a concern. GB expressed his view that learning in history was 'becoming more narrow in its topic coverage leading to a decrease in New Zealand content' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 1). While this suggestion appears to contradict the requirement for history, as stated in both the curriculum and standards, that selected content be 'of significance to New Zealanders', GB explains that previous curricula steered selection of topics to include some New Zealand history (NZHTA, weblog, p. 1). JP explains this narrowing in terms of how little knowledge is needed to meet assessment requirements:

> Worse, they are able to focus on one section of the topic for the exam…The Diem Regime in Vietnam is a good example of that. Students can write an extremely high quality essay … by just using the period 1954 to 1963…students can use that narrow context for their preparation (NZHTA, weblog, p. 4).

Therefore, a reading of the extensive correspondence on the New Zealand History Teachers Association's weblog clearly indicates teachers concerns at the direction history was being taken, yet their voices were unable to create change on the primary question of specifying knowledge. DK 'challenged the Ministry of Education to provide us with content. Their reply was to duck and wave, saying they could not prescribe' (NZHTA, weblog, p. 9).

Art History

So if the discipline of History has been led down a path where prescribed content was never a viable alternative, how can the very different path trekked in the process of alignment for art history be explained? While the art history achievement standards conform in having a generic character that enables all art periods, styles and media to be included, in separate documentation, the artists, key ideas, and contexts which will be examinable for the externally assessed standards are prescribed. In the abbreviated example for a new Level 3 topic (see Table 7), it can be seen that a high degree of certainty on the knowledge that may be assessed is provided for both teachers and learners.

Table 7

Art History Guidelines for the assessment of NCEA Level 3 external standards

AREA OF STUDY SIX: CONTEMPORARY DIVERSITY
There are no styles listed for this area, as contemporary practice from postmodernism onwards works across disciplines and styles. Plates will be selected from the following: **Artists:** Sigmar Polke, Christian Boltanski, Andreas Gursky, Jeff Koons, Damian Hirst, Ai Wei Wei, Mariko Mori, Choi Jeong-hwa, L.budd, (et. al, p.mule), Shane Cotton, Michael Parekowhai, Lisa Reihana, John Pule, Francis Upritchard **Architecture:** Frank Gehry – Bilbao Guggenheim Museum; Zaha Hadid – London Olympic Aquatic Centre; IM PEI – Louvre Pyramid, Paris; Daniel Libeskind – Berlin Holocaust Museum. *Note: This is abbreviated. The content for the 'meanings' and 'contexts' externally assessed achievement standards are also prescribed.*

NZQA, (2012b). *Art history guidelines for the assessment of NCEA Level 3 external standards 2013, p. 6.*

Unlike history, where it was signalled early in the *Alignment Project* that defined topics would be going, throughout the alignment process for art history there was silence on the matter of

content. The writers of the achievement standards suspected that the Ministry of Education would at some point confirm the need to abandon prescribed content in accordance with Ministry statements, but the focus of the writing group remained on revisions to the achievement standards. It, therefore, came as a surprise to some members of the writing group and to teachers across New Zealand when content was prescribed for the externally assessed Level 1 achievement standards. The required content was indicated to teachers through the assessment specifications document which outlines the nature of the exam for each subsequent year and so was notified just a few months before implementation in 2011. The confidentiality of the process was complete with no notification of how the decisions were made, or by whom. There are several possible explanations for the late decision to specify content. One possibility is that when the appointed examiner came to design a sample paper he/she was unaware of the Ministry of Education's directives and preferences for flexibility of contexts. This can perhaps be explained in relation to division of responsibilities for development and implementation. The Ministry of Education had responsibility for the alignment process whereas the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has responsibility for implementing the revised externally assessed standards through nation-wide examinations. Another possibility is that the examiner decided that the most suitable way of examining the standards was through prescribing content. However, that would still leave the question of why that was permissible when other subjects had seemingly been expected to abandon such specification. A further possibility is that the existence of *Art History Guidelines* (2006) was sufficient reason to pursue the writing of additional guidelines for Level 1 Art History.

Achievement standards were written for Level 1 of the NCEA for art history for the first time under the *Alignment Project* and the subject writing group designed the standards with the intention that the content remain open for teachers to select and devise their own programmes. This was seen as important as the standards were likely to be taken up by students doing practical art programmes, or by combined Year 11 and 12 classes or by students doing a multidisciplinary programme such as a combined classical studies and art history course. However, the original intention that all Level 1 standards be internally assessed became untenable during the alignment process. Due to the requirement that some standards be externally assessed to enable students to be eligible for *course endorsement* (an endorsement of the NCEA qualification is given to students who gain 14 or more credits at Merit or Excellence level in a subject), two Level 1 standards were modified as externally assessed standards. While this adjunct course endorsement issue may seem insignificant, the decision

to include art history in the national end-of-year examination process due to the externally assessed standards, may explain the consequential decision to prescribe content. It may have led the appointed examiner(s) for Level 1 to manage the externally assessed standards through specifying artists and content in the same way as Levels 2 and 3 had historically been examined.

Teachers made little comment on this unusual event, in all likelihood because Level 1 was new, had no previous prescription and because very few schools offer Level 1 art history. Greater comment, indeed outrage, was voiced when the same unannounced process was followed for Level 2. The newly prescribed content was placed on the NZQA website, without the usual circular from NZQA to alert teachers. It first came to the notice of most teachers on 10 November 2011 when one art history teacher discovered it and notified teachers via *ArtHistorynet* (Ministry of Education, 2011). The following are a sample of the responses in regard to the process in discovering the new *Art History Guidelines*.

> I take huge issue however with the lack of consultation (read none); the last minute nature of their introduction (November … four weeks before term 4 finishes?); the lack of any kind of flagging through NZQA circulars and the fact that the new guidelines are to be implemented in a year when our means of assessment are substantially altering… Someone or some group has put a lot of work in here, but these are far-reaching changes … and I am very – let's put it colloquially – gobsmacked that such changes could have been developed without New Zealand-wide discussion, so late and so - well, surreptitiously really (CC).
>
> I honestly cannot see how people will be ready to use these next year (SC).
>
> Am wondering if anyone has had a chance to take a look at the Level 2 *Guidelines* which seem to have miraculously appeared on the NCEA website. It is going to have some rather large implications in terms of our content at Level 2 (OW).
>
> Is it not absolutely ridiculous that these content changes have occurred without any national consultation or notification to schools or teachers? (TF).
>
> (Comments posted on *Arthistory net*, 10 November 2012).

The online comments made by teachers elicited the following response from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

> *The online publication of the guidelines preceded the circular which should arrive in schools shortly. While the development of the 2006 guidelines for the Level 2 and 3 external standards was funded and facilitated by the Ministry of Education, there is no provision for replacement guidelines or subject-wide consultation for the new external standards.*
>
> *NZQA has worked with contractors to develop guidelines for the new Level 1 and 2 standards to provide teachers with some guidance and to enable the planning of assessment in 2011 and 2012 respectively..."* (Adrienne Waghorn, NZQA, *Arthistorynet*, 14 November 2011).

The NZQA response comments upon the restricted time-line for publishing the information and suggests money constraints as a contributor to the lack of consultation. However, it does not provide much insight into the very notion of prescribing content for art history and there is the suggestion that the former pattern of having *Art History Guidelines* to define content, in the manner of those produced in 2006, has been continued without being questioned.

It also transpired that draft content guidelines had been written for Level 3, and due for implementation in 2013, but the NZQA responded to the outcry about the lack of consultation for Level 2 and, in early 2012, appointed an art history teacher to organise surveys, run meetings nationwide and conduct online discussion over the form the Level 3 guidelines should take. Teachers' responses have clearly shaped the new guidelines. The original draft guidelines have been largely overturned. The process for establishing the future direction of knowledge in art history has therefore been an *ad hoc* process with the development of Levels 1 and 2 falling under the radar of public scrutiny while the more overt development for Level 3 has been a direct consequence of teacher driven demand for greater input and transparency.

Furthermore, it appears that the defining of content has not been considered in the light of expectations for other similar disciplines such as history or classical studies. When contrasted with the seeming inevitability in history that topics and prescribed content would go, and against the backdrop of Ministry of Education guidelines which encouraged flexibility for

teachers in selecting contexts, the continuation of prescriptive guidelines for art history is not totally explained. The Ministry recognised that there would be variability of approach noting that 'the appropriate relationship between content and context varies between subjects' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5) but it seems that highly prescribed content would only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

> As far as possible, teachers should be allowed flexibility in selecting contexts, unless the context is of such importance to a proper understanding of the subject as to warrant prescription, or unless, in the case of externally assessed standards, a lack of restriction on context would be likely to compromise the ability of markers to reliably, confidently and accurately assess candidates' performance (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 6).

It may be that the latter was regarded as the justification for content prescription for art history but there has been little transparency in conveying reasons for the particular decisions for subjects, or explanation for the variability between subjects. It must be noted, however, that art history teachers are not voicing concern at the existence of the *Art History Guidelines* (effectively a prescription), but rather at the process of determining the *Guidelines*. Teachers and students may be well served by having greater certainty of the content that will be examined.

Classical Studies

Classical studies, having no need to align to any achievement objectives due to the discipline's exclusion from *The New Zealand Curriculum*, has defined content in terms of concepts and broad themes. This is against a tradition of being a highly prescriptive subject where knowledge of the classical world was recognised as the quintessential element and where examination has, until recently, focused upon the detail of set art works, prescribed literary texts and historical knowledge. Upon the introduction of a standards-based assessment system in 2002, classical studies stood out as a subject which did not emphasise assessment of skills but instead assessed knowledge. The explanation for this lies in the very nature of the discipline – a multi-disciplinary study of the art, literature, philosophy and history of the Classical world which draws upon the skills of its contributing subjects. Until recently, it retained examination structures that were very similar to its former Sixth Form Certificate and Bursary models in providing a combination of short answer, paragraph answer and essay answer formats.

However, on the basis that short answer questions and responses were not sufficiently rigorous, or equitable with similar subjects, pressure from the NZQA led to a change in 2009 where short answer questions were abandoned. The *Alignment Project* has taken this further. With no prescribed topics, examination questions are to be written in relation to general features and themes. For example 'empire and power' is a theme examined for the Level 2 Achievement Standard *Examine socio-political life in the classical world* (NZQA, 2012a, AS91203) and any classical context may be used.

Whereas art history teachers were outspoken in their concerns about the process followed in producing the *Art History Guidelines*, classical studies teachers voiced their concerns at the particulars of draft examination papers. They appear to have accepted the loss of specificity concerning which art works, texts, or historical eras will be examined but demonstrate concern that some of the content they have traditionally taught may no longer be able to be used in future and that the sample included material they had not formerly taught. Raising particular ire was the loss of Roman domestic architecture and replacement with public architecture.
In an open email to the Ministry, the Auckland representative for New Zealand Association of Classical Studies Teachers (NZACT) wrote

> One of our main concerns was …the exclusion of Roman private architecture in Pompeii. Almost unanimously, the feeling at the conference was that this was a complete mistake…As a group, classics teachers just don't see this present course as teachable. There is not enough information for us to teach, certainly a lack of resources and a lack of time to teach an entire course on Roman public architecture (Paul Artus, e-mail circulated to classical studies teachers, 20 July 2011).

Further concerns were raised concerning the emphasis on some content areas in the sample examination when compared with others, for example an emphasis on social life over politics, Greek over Roman.

Correspondence between members of the teaching community and the National Assessment Facilitator (NAF) at the NZQA for classical studies reveals critical underlying differences of viewpoint. On the one hand, is the view of a New Zealand curriculum that is broad and where knowledge is conceived of as a vehicle for developing competencies in thinking, using language and texts, participating etcetera, rather than an end in itself. On the other hand is the

classical studies teachers' view of their discipline as concerned with valuable knowledge. Teachers point out some difficulties of applying generalised knowledge of contexts in examination circumstances. In relation to particular draft examination questions for the art works standard the Auckland Representative for NZACT wrote that:

> The questions seem to assume that the students have … studied that particular plate (art work)… yet if they have not studied this specific work they would have no idea about its intended purpose in the lives of the people of the time at the time it was created…Another example would be the temple plans. How is a student meant to know what makes this temple aesthetically pleasing if they have just a plan…The only way they would be able to answer the question satisfactorily is if they had studied it in class properly and seen different views. … If plates are going to be used then either the questions need to be generic and not specifically directed to that plate, or there HAS to be a list of set works from which the plates might be drawn (Paul Artus, letter to the NAF, 17 June 2011).

There appeared to be a contradictory message in that some of the sample examinations implied that students required specific topic knowledge, despite the absence of prescribed topics. There was concern therefore, that the examination may become a lottery. 'Is it …pot luck?' asks Megan Peterson (National Moderator, classical studies, e-mail circulated to Classical Studies teachers, 17 June, 2011). While not explicitly stated, there is also the sense that the 'generic' questions act as a reductive influence on knowledge – that somehow we expect students to provide evidence of their acquisition of accurate knowledge but that we do not explicitly require it and hope that they can bring suitable contexts to bear upon their responses. This echoes concerns expressed by history teachers about 'generic questions'.

The National Assessment Facilitator responded that

> The key factor … is that there is a change of emphasis from recall of knowledge to a more skills orientated paper because a skills orientated paper is much stronger assessment method for use in a written examination (Steve Bargh, 28 June 2011).

This subscribes to, and supports, the shift in focus from 'particular content knowledge to emphasising particular cognitive skills, from substantive to cognitive procedural knowledges'

(Yates & Collins, 2010, p. 93). The difficulty with this notion in respect of classical studies is that it is the period under study (the Classical era), that is the basis for the subject itself while skills in interpretation of Classical writings, or art, or ideas are not particular to the discipline and are an amalgam of the skills of disciplines such as art history, history, and literature studies. In contradiction to this theme-based and more generic approach for classical studies NCEA examinations, is the surprising return of the formerly prescribed Level 3 topics for the scholarship examination - *New Zealand Draft Scholarship Assessment Specifications* 2012 (NZQA). Seven topics, deriving from current practice are listed (for example Alexander the Great, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Roman Art and Architecture) enabling specific examination questions to be written. This suggests that there is an expectation that teachers will continue to teach the same topics as they have done in the past when the revised achievement standards are introduced for Level 3 in 2013. Although the Scholarship examination sits outside of the NCEA, the candidates for the examination are normally those who are also sitting Level 3 NCEA. In practical terms, a teacher would select the topics in order to prepare students for both Scholarship and Level 3. Since a teacher is unlikely to investigate contexts beyond those specified for Scholarship, by default the implication is that the former topics remain in place.

Conclusion

Although commonalities can be found in the expressions of concern about how knowledge has been addressed during the alignment process, it is noticeable that very different outcomes emerged. While not fully explained, some of the variability appears to relate to the time, place and manner in which concerns were expressed. History teachers constructed carefully written responses on a weblog as part of a consultation within the Association to influence the writers of the standards, yet their voices and arguments failed to convince, and the teachers interpreted that failure to achieve change as the strong arm of Ministry of Education directives. Classical studies teachers accepted that theme-based questions were coming but complained about directions expressed through sample examinations. They spoke through the vehicle of conference debates and negotiated changes through the National Assessment Facilitator at the NZQA. Art history teachers were left in the dark about the prescription of content until Levels1 and 2 were a *fait accompli* so their voices were those of loud complaint about process. Nevertheless, out of this emerged recognition by the NZQA of the need for consultation over Level 3 content and contexts for art history. Not fully explained, however, is the ability of art

history theme to prescribe in detail and therefore transcend the clear expectation of the Ministry that contexts would be in the hands of teachers, departments and schools.

The emergence of such a wide spectrum in approaches to knowledge, from a highly prescriptive format for art history, to a thematic framing of knowledge for classical studies, and teacher autonomy in content selection for history and social studies, suggest that the question of the place of knowledge in curriculum and assessment has yet to be adequately addressed. With the current emphasis on generic skills for developing the thinking, self-managing, participatory student for the 'knowledge-age', and focus upon subject specific skills for assessment, greater consideration needs to be given to the relative importance of critical disciplinary knowledge. The New Zealand experience contributes to the debate and dilemma over the roles teachers and educational policy makers play in determining what is taught and also serves to illustrate how processes involved in curriculum and assessment decision making, in this case the *Alignment Project,* can unexpectedly produce quite different responses.

Reflection

The submissions made by teachers during the consultation process for history clearly articulated concerns that have subsequently become critical issues for a valid, fair and sensible delivery of history programmes. There were expressions of concerns over both coherence of learning and equity of access to suitable historical knowledge. Early on it was also realised that without specified content *assessment* would come to dominate what was taught, it would become the '*de facto* curriculum'. Furthermore it was recognised that without commonly taught knowledge, the generic questions that had appeared at Level 2 during the first iteration of the history achievement standards, would become the model for the new Level 1 and Level 3 questions as well. The consequences of this genericism was predicted, even at this early stage, as a further narrowing of the curriculum and students memorising their essays to address examination questions (see Chapter 9 for a more detailed account of these effects).

The concerns that New Zealand history was likely to be neglected was also suggested as a likely outcome despite the majority of the new achievement standards requiring the selected historical events to be 'of significance to New Zealanders'. From the outset, the meaning and intentions of the phrase **'***of significance to New Zealanders'* was debated. In the *Explanatory Notes* for the achievement standards it is defined as:

- a past event occurring within New Zealand *(or)*
- an international event involving New Zealanders *(or)*
- an international event influencing New Zealanders
  (NZQA, n.d., AS91231).

To be of significance to New Zealanders an event does not therefore have to be located in New Zealand. It needs to be significant and be relevant to New Zealand and/or New Zealanders. As Allais (2014) suggests, 'broad learning outcomes in level descriptors do not represent shared meanings, and are interpreted differently' (p. 147). So how permissive or constraining this statement is, was open to interpretation.

Enright, former editor of the New Zealand History Teachers' Association journal, *History Teacher Aotearoa,* (2013) placed the emphasis firmly upon the concept of *significance* and noted that

> much of the unease (among teachers) was prompted by the apparent linking of the concept to a national component… I believe that focusing upon the … "*to New Zealand/New Zealanders"* part of the formula… weakens the value of historical significance. … I'm advocating a different response: uncouple significance from its tags (*New Zealand/New Zealanders)* to increase its power… (p. 16).

However, the National Moderator saw it differently. He interpreted the phrase as clearly requiring that students establish how an event or place is *significant to New Zealanders* - 'Broadly speaking, students must describe the significance at Level 1, explain it at Level 2 and at Level 3 they need to establish it' (NZQA, 2014, *Clarifications,* AS91435). The Moderator further commented that 'Teachers may wish to bear in mind when suggesting …contexts for research and presentation that evidence about "significance to New Zealanders" may be more straightforward to produce for some contexts than for others' (NZQA, 2014, *Clarifications,* AS91230). The lack of clarity and debate over what emphasis should be placed on the phrase *of significance to New Zealanders* explains the challenges for teachers in their conceptions of what knowledge is important or required. In the light of these differing interpretations teachers needed to weigh up whether it is safer to use a context within New Zealand history, where significance may be easier to demonstrate, or to place the emphasis on significance and open contexts up to those outside New Zealand. The ambiguity over the importance of this phrase meant that there could be no guarantee that aspects of New Zealand history would be included in programmes of learning.

There are however two examination standards which are unambiguous and do specifically require New Zealand content - AS91006 *Describe how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society* and AS91234 *Examine how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society*. Nevertheless, even though these standards were in place the concerns raised during this consultation period over the possibility that New Zealand history would be marginalised have been borne out in practice as low numbers of students choose to sit these two standards (see Chapter 9).

The lack of New Zealand history in programmes nationwide both for the NCEA at senior secondary level and in primary, intermediate and junior levels of secondary schools, has

recently led to the *New Zealand History Teachers' Association* circulating a petition to ask for a law change making New Zealand history a compulsory element across all levels of schooling.

> That the House of Representatives pass legislation that would make compulsory the coherent teaching of our own past across appropriate year levels in our schools, with professional development and resources to do so provided (*New Zealand History Teachers' Association,* Petition and press release, February 2019).

In conclusion, the comparison of the way knowledge was addressed in the four subjects, and evaluation of the subsequent manner in which the aligned *Curriculum* and standards played out for history, illustrates the premise that substantive knowledge was not at the forefront of policy considerations. This led to indecisive policy, variability in subject representatives' approaches and contradictory outcomes from the *Alignment Project*.

CHAPTER 4

Research Methods

Introduction

In this study I use a realist understanding of research methods which accepts that the evidence from research participants and other empirical data contributes to, but does not comprise the findings. To understand the indicators given in the evidence, the combination of theory, context and reliable data is brought together to enable viable conclusions to be reached.

For each of the published articles or chapters included in this thesis which draw upon empirical data (Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11), the methods used are reported on in these publications. There is therefore, inevitably some repetition in this aspect of the thesis. Below I outline the overall nature of the research, the selection of interview participants, methods for data analysis and ethical considerations.

Sources of data

Research was undertaken through interviewing history teachers, analysing national policy documents and analysing survey results. First, using the qualitative approach of the case study, empirical data was collected from six history teachers in Auckland schools. The history teachers all held the positions as *Head of Departments* or *Teachers in charge* of history in their respective secondary schools (see Table 8). Each teacher was interviewed on two occasions, with at least one year between interviews in order to identify changes over time. The case study in qualitative research, is an intensive analysis of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002, p. 8) and has 'the aim of probing deeply and analysing intensively' (Burns, 1990, p. 366). The case studies exhibited a unitary character in their data collection in that they had a singular focus upon *what* was taught in their history classes and *why* the selections were made. The approach enabled in-depth interviewing and was founded on the understanding that case studies are relevant for understanding larger forces.

Table 8

Data on interviewed research participants

Pseudonym	**Years of Teaching**	**Years as a Head of Department *or* Teacher in charge of history.**	**Decile***	**Approximate School Roll size** (*exact number not included to protect anonymity)*	**School Type**
Linda	20	20	9	2000-2300	Single-sex state school
Matthew	13	7	7	500-800	Co-educational state school
Suzanne	10	2	5	2000-2300	Co-educational state school
Karen	9	5	4	900 -1200	Co-educational state school
Bianca	6	2	1	500-800	Single-sex religious integrated school
Stephen	4	4	1	500-800	Co-educational state school

*The Ministry of Education attributes a decile to each school for funding purposes. It is a ranking system with each decile containing approximately 10% of New Zealand schools. Decile 1 schools have the highest number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The case studies for this research fell within a category defined by Stake (1994) as the 'instrumental case study, where a particular case is examined to give insight into an issue, or to refine a theory'. In this research history teachers were the informants giving insight into the issues of knowledge and curricula which was then interpreted according to the social realist conceptual methodology. Because case studies can 'reveal the multiplicity of factors [which] have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of study (Yin, 1988, p. 82), the examination of individual teacher's responses collectively contains within it both commonalities and aspects of individualism. The data therefore gave insights into common issues and understandings about historical knowledge whilst also conveying some of

the variability that is inevitable in an environment which espouses to give teachers a high degree of autonomy over school-based programme design.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 169) was used to enable myself, as researcher, to investigate the research question using schools from a range of deciles and teachers with a range of experience levels. Through purposefully selecting a range of schools it was intended that the research findings would be of value to history teachers and policy makers across New Zealand rather than being seen as relevant only to a specific decile, type of school or region in New Zealand. Patton (2015) argues that it is important to select information-rich cases for research, 'those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (p. 53). With this in mind, purposeful sampling was used with the aim of maximising the quality of the data being gathered. Therefore, the criteria established for the selection of case studies was as follows:

1. Schools which had substantial history departments – those which offer history at each level of the NCEA.
2. Schools which primarily assessed their history classes through the NCEA, rather than International Cambridge examinations, or International Baccalaureate. The purpose of this is avoid the confusion of interviewing teachers who teach classes for two different examination systems and where freedom of historical topic is only afforded under the NCEA.
3. Schools where the teachers who were involved in the study have had a direct involvement in determining the knowledge selected for their history programmes. This excluded teachers who are serving their first year in a particular school, even where those teachers are experienced.

In making the selection of six schools a variety of experiences are also sought such as schools of different deciles, co-educational and single sex schools, teachers who had been in the profession over two decades and younger teachers who themselves have undergone the NCEA assessment before becoming teachers. The proposed method therefore fell within the 'maximum variation sampling' approach (Merriam, 2002) which was appropriate because it was unclear at the outset of the research how similar, or different, the topic selections may be

and this approach was aimed at facilitating a variety of responses to the question of *why* selections are made.

Data Collection

Interviews

The primary means of data collection was the interviews. In qualitative research, interviews serve the purpose of enabling us to enter into other people's perspectives (Patton, 2002, p. 341) and for this research it was teachers' perspectives about knowledge that was of particular analytical interest. The interviews were semi-structured with key questions predetermined to ensure clarity and focus upon the main elements of the study (refer to Appendix D for interview questions). A pilot interview was undertaken to test the questions in the first semi-structured interview and to gain practice in interviewing (Merriam, 2002). The interview questions were not found to need modification.

Using semi-structured interviews enabled avenues of relevance and interest to be explored in greater depth as they arose, and points made by the participants were able to be clarified or more fully explained. As the researcher, I also took opportunities offered through the participants' comments to gain further understanding of deeper, underlying concepts expressed or inferred by participants. The semi-structured interviews was conducted on the premise that that the 'participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it' with as much objectivity as possible from the researcher. This approach is metaphorically described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as a 'miner' approach where the interviewer's role is to 'dig nuggets' of knowledge which are assumed to exist within the interview partner. Kvale and Brinkmann differentiate this from a more co-constructed form of knowledge where the researcher is described as a 'traveller' who goes on a journey with interview partners.

The first interview addressed the pre-planned questions for all the six participants. The second interview began with checking that the record of the selected historical topics made in the first interview was accurate and noting the changes in programmes which had occurred between interview 1 and interview 2. The second interview also enquired further into particular points raised in the first interview to gain a fuller picture of interviewees thoughts.

Policy documents

Documentary evidence is used to explain the educational policies and New Zealand context which regulates and influences history education. Of particular relevance were *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007, history *Subject Guidelines*, and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on-line documents including the history *achievement standards*, moderators' *Newsletters* and *Clarifications, Annual Reports on NCEA & New Zealand Scholarship Data & Statistics* and *Secondary statistics consolidated data files.*

Survey data

Two main forms of survey data and reports were of particular use in this research. First surveys undertaken by the New Zealand History Teachers Association between 2014 and 2016. The survey questions were wide ranging from questions on what topics were taught, to how much use teachers made use of the history *Subject Guidelines*, to views on the external examinations and views on whether or not teachers approved of the achievement standards or wanted changes. The data from these sources was coded to identify comments relating to the range and extent of topics taught, and views on matters such as like or dislike of the generic examination questions and whether or not teachers believed there were increasing expectations of students' performance by examiners.

The second main source of data are surveys undertaken by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) across the secondary sector and comprising the responses from approximately one-quarter of the sector. While not specific to history education they provide a wider view of the enactment, impacts and opinions on the *Curriculum* and the NCEA for schools and students.

Data Analysis

The history topics taught in each of the participants' schools were mapped onto the history matrix of achievement standards and later collated into a chart. This provides data on both initial selections and changes made between the first and second interviews (see Appendix G). The transcripts of the interviews were coded and transferred to charts to provide a data set for a range of pertinent matters.

1. Topic selection: Coding identifies comments which describe the nature of the selection (for example whether the topic is a major topic, or addressed in a cursory fashion) and whether it fitted within a selected theme.
2. Who made the selection: teacher, student, co-construction.
3. Factors contributing to the topic selection decisions: These were coded according to the most important factors, secondary considerations and barriers to choices or the challenges teachers faced.
4. Factors contributing to the topic selection decisions: These were further coded according to key reasons provided by the interviewees – resources, student motivation and interest, best fit for the achievement standards, staff interest.
5. Issues relating to assessment: Comments were coded in relation to evidence of complexity, the ways teachers accommodated the standards, the reasons achievement standards are not included in programmes.
6. The main ideas about history that teachers intended their students to go away with: the understandings, contestability, skills, interest.
7. Teachers' views on the procedural concepts assessed under the NCEA: identification of the concepts, level of focus on inquiry and source interpretation skills.
8. Teachers' recognition of issues: programme coherence, usable frameworks of knowledge, progression.

Realist methodology

Data analysis followed a realist methodology for qualitative research. Realists hold to the view that 'there is a real world out there' (Barth, 1987, p. 87), which can be conceptualised independent of our perceptions of it (Maxwell, p. 6) and for which a rational account can be given. Mental concepts are used to explain the reality. Through adopting a realist approach which uses a conceptual methodology for the analysis and explanation, it is the intention that the tendency of some qualitative research to overlook complexity and contradiction within data be averted. Realism therefore avoids the issue of the researcher accepting a subject's perspectives as *the* explanation. Instead, a realist methodology enables multiple perspectives to be analysed and explained theoretically using concepts taken, in the case of this research, from the social realist literature. These concepts include knowledge differentiation, knowledge specialisation, and knowledge structures (vertical and horizontal).

This sociological study analysed the data in relation to the concept of causality, an important idea in realist methodology, because it concentrates on *change* to the history content taught in schools following the introduction of a new curriculum and assessment (causes) and teachers' responses to those changes (effects). Understanding the 'mechanism' for causality, in relation to its contexts, was therefore central to providing explanations for changes in epistemic practices. The sociological investigation of the historical context of the shift to teacher autonomy over topic selection for history through documentation has thereby been interrelated with the empirical data on teacher's experiences of the context.

By moving between the data from interviews to policy documentation within New Zealand and internationally the study has provided insight into matters of curriculum development, the assessment/curriculum interface, and teachers' thoughts and modes of practice in implementing educational policy. Through the analysis of documentation, including the *Curriculum* and educational policy documents, and the input of social realist and other educational theory which has been examined in relation to participant data, a strong picture of the 'nature' of historical knowledge has emerged. The data from different sources has shed light on the research question to at times corroborate, and at times differentiate, the experiences of participants from existing theories and curricula intentions. Goodson (1995) argues that 'curriculum history must … encompass the manner in which the curriculum is received and enacted (p. 71) and that 'a combination of life history' (the experiences and views of teacher participants), 'and curriculum history data can 'broaden and deepen our accounts of schooling and curriculum' (p. 113). By adopting a realist methodology (Lourie & Rata, 2017) the integration of data from multiple sources and its analysis using social realist concepts has therefore served to elucidate and address epistemological questions concerning the place and forms of knowledge in history education.

The realist methodology has also enabled the study to have relevance beyond the particulars of the case participants and beyond the bounds of history education in New Zealand (as indicated in the chapter comparing New Zealand and England – see Chapter 11). A realist approach has facilitated the development of concepts (e.g. the concepts concerning teachers' *conceptions of knowledge* - Chapter 7), emerging from the research which may have relevance in wider contexts. Lourie and Rata (2017) illustrate that a realist understanding enables the 'study to go beyond being limited to a description of particular phenomenon in New Zealand education to a deeper sociological inquiry' (p. 29).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was granted to interview history teachers and consent was granted by both the participants and the Principals of the case study schools. This gave approval for access to intellectual property such as history department schemes and approval for the interviews to take place in school time. The participants gave consent for their interviews to be electronically recorded and copies of the transcripts were made available to all participants providing the opportunity for clarification of points and for validation of their accuracy.

Assuring an appropriate interviewing relationship was important for this research. It was made clear to the participants that selections of knowledge were not being judged and that the focus of the study was to explore the principles upon which selections are made. All of the participants knew me as a member of the history teaching community, or knew me in my capacity as a lecturer in history education.

CHAPTER 5

Powerful Knowledge in History

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

Foreword

According to Muller and Young (2019) the origins of the term 'powerful knowledge' lie in its use by Leesa Wheelahan in 2007 (Muller & Young, p. 2) when she argued that many students in vocational training were being denied access to powerful disciplinary knowledge and the structures and reasoning inherent in that knowledge which would enable students to enter the realms of the 'not-yet-thought' (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 637). The concept of powerful knowledge was then developed by Young and Muller in successive addresses and articles including their 2013 article '*On the powers of powerful knowledge*'. Rob Moore used the phrase 'voice of knowledge', to express a similar concept where knowledge is recognised as being socially produced and subject to change over time but robust and central to education. In brief, powerful knowledge is knowledge which is reliable and has been tested and critiqued within communities of practice (normally academic communities) so that it is viewed broadly as the best available knowledge at any particular point in time.

This chapter examines both the nature of history as an academic discipline and as a school subject in the context of New Zealand education, to evaluate whether the features of 'powerful knowledge' suggested by Young and Muller, Moore and others over the last decade, are inherent in the 'product' created by historians and re-contextualised by teachers. It is published in a book which developed from contributions to the Second International Social Realism Symposium at the University of Cambridge in 2013. The book brought together discussions about the place of knowledge in educational policy and took as its starting point the view that 'one of the most fundamental inequalities in education is that of access to powerful knowledge' (Rata and Barrett, 2014, p. 1). If students are not given the opportunities to progressively learn knowledge that is initially unfamiliar to them and takes them into the realm of the unimaginable, they can be disadvantaged. Expectations for developing students' knowledge is however often left to teachers to determine and unstated or minimally stated in curricula. This

is a phenomenon which Rob Moore (2013) has spoken of as a 'blind spot' that was, he argued, under theorised (p. 333). Some of the authors in the book contend that the lack of attention given to knowledge has the potential to create differential access to powerful knowledge and that not all knowledge has equivalence in its power to facilitate higher level thought and enable students to reach their potential in their lives beyond school. Rata and Barrett, in the introduction to the book, argue that 'This is knowledge that carries with it emancipatory power which enables individuals to have a degree of control over their life trajectory' (p. 7). In the book, Moore, Young, Muller and Beck, provide chapters which relate the concept of powerful knowledge to questions about different forms of knowledge and theories within Social Realism. They draw upon writers such as Bernstein and Durkheim to explain how knowledge can be both socially produced and epistemic arguing that the knowledge which is developed within a community of scholars can be objective and reliable and is, in effect, worth learning.

A great deal has been written about the concept of powerful knowledge since my chapter was written. My publication was the first to consider the question of what constitutes 'powerful knowledge' in relation to history education and since then Bertram (2019) has considered whether education for history in South Africa and Rwanda can be regarded as 'powerful knowledge' while other scholars have investigated powerful knowledge in other disciplines including geography (Maude, 2015), physics (Yates & Millar, 2016), music (McPhail, 2017) and intercultural education (Nordgren, 2017). There has also been extensive debate over the concept of powerful knowledge in the intervening years with John White (2012, 2018) strongly critiquing the concept while others have supported its core principles (Oates 2013, Lambert 2014). In the last few years the concept in various forms has also been taken up by a number of English schools who have developed their curricula in ways designed to create a 'knowledge-rich' environment (see examples in *The Question of Knowledge: practicalities of a knowledge-based curriculum,* Association of School and College Leaders, 2017) and a project is underway in New Zealand to research the means by which a knowledge-rich curriculum can be developed for primary and secondary schools (Research Project – *The Curriculum Design Coherence Model* - Rata, McPhail, Siteine, Tamati, Ormond, Etty).

In this chapter I argue that as an academic subject, disciplinary knowledge for history has the potential to be powerful and I employ Bernstein's distinctions between different knowledge structures and discourses to theorise the nature of history as a discipline. I argue however that the ways in which history is transformed for use in school classrooms may impact on its power.

I use the term 'disciplinary knowledge' to refer to history's academic traditions which implies both the substantive and procedural forms of knowledge for history. Both substantive knowledge (i.e. understanding of first order concepts, knowledge of time, place, context, events, historical figures etc.) and procedural knowledge (how historians investigate and write about the past) are important in history education.

Since writing this chapter there has been greater recognition that the role of substantive knowledge in history education has been neglected but history educators have also recently emphasised that powerful knowledge requires attending to both substantive knowledge and procedural knowledge (for example Counsell, 2017; Yates, Woelert, Millar, & O'Connor, 2017; Bertram, 2019; Muller & Young, 2019) since procedural knowledge cannot operate in a vacuum and needs substantive knowledge to make it meaningful. Bertram concludes for example that 'the concept of powerful knowledge in history points to the need for specialised disciplinary knowledge (both substantive and procedural)' (p. 16) while Counsell comments that 'substantive knowledge and engaging in historical argument naturally support one another' (p. 81). The need for both forms of knowledge is also supported by McCrory's research which showed that while students may know appropriate substantive knowledge they may not be able to put it to effective use to explain or convey an interpretative understanding.

> Most of the essays written as a result included three well-informed paragraphs, rich in substantive detail and each with a good basic structure, but my students could not *use* their experience (2015, p. 37).

In their continued exploration of the powerful knowledge question Muller and Young (2019), in a recent article *Knowledge, power and powerful knowledge re-visited* have specifically considered the subject of history, as a representative of how the concept of powerful knowledge relates to humanities subjects. They similarly argue that 'The quality of the argumentation and 'judgement-making' characterises what history is about' (p. 13). This therefore recognises the importance of disciplinary knowledge, in its different forms and complexity, *as powerful knowledge*.

However, because history in New Zealand is framed in the *Curriculum* and in the *achievement standards* around procedural knowledge and second order concepts and because of the new circumstances in New Zealand in which teachers have considerable autonomy over content

selection, it is the matter of substantive knowledge which has been given the greatest attention in my chapter. The chapter centres upon evaluating the extent and nature of the *substantive* knowledge which teachers may offer their students in order to consider whether *powerful knowledge* is visible or possible.

Powerful Knowledge in History: Disciplinary Strength or Weakened Episteme?

Introduction

History is an academic subject rich in powerful knowledge. It is a specialised discipline which practises robust self-critique and contributes to universal understandings. Nevertheless, when the discipline is reframed for teaching school students, there are pitfalls and obstacles which can affect the ability of the discipline to maintain its epistemic status. This chapter examines the characteristics of strong disciplinary knowledge and illustrates how that knowledge may be weakened in school settings. Assessment and pedagogical practices can manipulate history's knowledge structure and dislodge its disciplinary coherence. Perspectivism and relativism may influence knowledge selection to impact upon the potential of the subject to deliver critical universal knowledge. Teachers play a crucial role in reshaping the discipline for teaching at school. What happens when, as in New Zealand, history teachers have complete authority to determine the knowledge they teach? Such autonomy places knowledge in a fragile position. There is the potential to deliver powerful knowledge but also the possibility of weakening the subject's episteme.

The place of knowledge in The New Zealand Curriculum

Knowledge occupies an uncertain place in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). The broadly framed curriculum mirrors global trends in its emptying of content and its ambiguity over the question of knowledge. Wood and Sheehan (2012) argue that 'in a curriculum that is designed to contribute to building a "knowledge economy", neither the place of knowledge in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is clearly defined nor is the question of "What is knowledge?" in the context of the curriculum addressed' (p. 17). Young (2013) claims that there is 'increasingly widespread acceptance among educational researchers of the idea that knowledge itself has no intrinsic significance or validity' (p. 106). 'The retreat from knowledge in curriculum', Wheelahan (2010) explains, is often justified by arguing that 'the knowledge society has transformed the nature of knowledge so the tacit, contextual and immediately applicable is more productive than the disciplinary and codified' (p. 3).

For history, the *achievement objectives*, which are the vehicle for conveying knowledge requirements in the *Curriculum*, are succinct (see Appendix E). They do not prescribe content or context. Instead they present a way of dealing with the discipline of history by looking at the causes and consequences of historical events and the perspectives of the people involved. While these elements are viewed as critical 'concepts' for history, when delivered in school settings, they more strongly represent a methodological approach to the discipline. It is debatable whether this broad focus on causality, consequences, and historical significance can, of itself, assure delivery of valuable historical knowledge.

The framing of 'knowledge' in The New Zealand Curriculum

Uncertainty about what constitutes knowledge and the role of knowledge in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is not confined to history. It is evident in the wide-ranging approaches taken to knowledge across different subjects. While some subjects have quite specific and detailed *achievement objectives*, others are so broadly stated that knowledge outcomes are precarious. Ambiguity over knowledge is compounded by the multiple ways in which the *achievement objectives* in the *Curriculum* are described. They may be described variously in terms of knowledge, concepts, procedures, or skills outcomes. At Level 6 of the *Curriculum* there are detailed requirements for knowledge in science where, for example, students distinguish between atoms, molecules, and ions. In contrast the achievement objectives for technology are framed as procedural knowledge. Students are required to analyse, undertake experimentation, evaluate an outcome, and so on (see Table 9). While explanations for these differences may be attributed to the intrinsic features of particular subjects or to the way progression of learning is best organised, and explained in relation to Bernstein's (1999; 2000) structuring of intellectual fields, it is possible that such variance has implications for equity between subjects and equity between schools. The opportunities students may be given to engage with powerful knowledge may vary. Where a greater degree of specificity occurs in a national curriculum, the potential for teachers to consistently deliver powerful knowledge is enhanced.

Table 9

Level 6 Achievement Objectives for Science, Technology, and History

Science	Technology	History
• Investigate the interactions between the solar, lunar, and Earth cycles and the effect of these on Earth. • Distinguish between atoms, molecules, and ions (includes covalent and ionic bonding). *(Two examples taken from the 23 Achievement Objectives at Level 6. Note: 16 of the Achievement Objectives define 'content' while the remaining objectives deal with the 'Nature of Science'.)*	• Critically analyse their own and others' outcomes to inform the development of ideas for feasible outcomes. Undertake ongoing experimentation and functional modelling, taking account of stakeholder feedback and trialling in the physical and social environments. Use the information gained to select, justify, and develop a final outcome. Evaluate this outcome's fitness for purpose against the brief and justify the evaluation, using feedback from stakeholders. *(One example taken from the eight Achievement Objectives at Level 6)*	• 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. *(There are only two Achievement Objectives)*

Ministry of Education, *The New Zealand Curriculum,* 2007.

History is now characterised by the considerable autonomy that teachers have to select the topics they teach. This is a recent development progressively introduced at senior secondary levels between 2011 and 2013. The commitment to teacher authority over topic selection emerged out of a Ministry of Education project which aligned *The New Zealand Curriculum* with the *achievement standards* for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (NCEA) qualification. The Ministry of Education (2009) addressed the question of knowledge at the outset of the project when groups working on the *Alignment Project* were informed that the new curriculum was 'intended to be enabling so that standards should as far as possible be

written in such a way as to provide schools and teachers the opportunity to select contexts which are best suited for the students' (p. 5). At this point the certainty of prescribed topics such as the *Origins of World War Two* or *New Zealand in the Nineteenth Century* was abandoned leaving the interrelated conceptual and skill-based achievement objectives and achievement standards to govern the choices of teachers over content. While teacher autonomy over topic selection may offer opportunities to deliver powerful knowledge through programmes which are both significant and of immediate relevance to students, there are no guarantees. Notably too, it is an approach which contrasts strongly with the traditions associated with national education in New Zealand. These traditions valued equity which was to be delivered through specified knowledge made available to all students. This standardisation was supported by national assessment of the knowledge. The change to teacher selection means that there will be a high level of variability in selections between schools. At this early stage in this development, however, the implications of that variability for achieving good outcomes in knowledge of history, and for equity of access to valuable history learning, are unknown.

Powerful knowledge

The discussion of what historical knowledge teachers should select rests on the deeper question of what constitutes powerful knowledge. *The New Zealand Curriculum's* focus on the development of cognitive skills is certainly critical to education. However *it is through the integration of knowledge and skills, supported by appropriate pedagogies*, that knowledge can be learned. Young (2009a) argues that 'access to knowledge … is central to the whole purpose of education' (p. 193). He comments upon the apparent 'divorce in much contemporary writing where thinking and learning are treated as if they were processes that can be conceptualised as educational goals independently of what the thinking and learning is about' (p. 202). Developing students' knowledge therefore lies at the core of schooling and access to powerful knowledge, or theoretical knowledge, is needed if they are 'to participate in society's debates and controversies' (Wheelahan, 2010, p. 1).

Young, Muller, Moore, and others have discussed qualities or elements which contribute to recognising knowledge as 'powerful' in education. Moore (2007) talks of the 'voice of knowledge' and argues for knowledge that is 'critical' in being open to revision with an understanding of its fallibility, emergentist and not isolated within its circumstances of

production, realist in its recognition of limitations of 'knowing', and materialist in understanding the 'intellectual fields' of its production (pp. 31–2). A 'working definition' given by Young (2010b) suggested that matters such as the reliability, testability, contestability, and specialisation are features evident in powerful knowledge. These have been further developed by Young and Muller (2013). In identifying the properties of specialised knowledge they note that it is systematically revisable, emergent, real, material, social, and meets criterion for 'bestness'. Compliance with these criteria is therefore a means to evaluate the potential of history as a discipline to be a conduit for powerful knowledge. Such an assessment is valuable. Through considering how historians practise their discipline and how teachers may translate such 'specialisation' for school delivery, greater understanding of the nature of powerful knowledge emerges.

Like all forms of specialised knowledge, history is differentiated from non-specialised cultural or social knowledge that we may encounter in everyday living. History is also specialised knowledge in meeting the 'materialist' criterion. The primary production site for developing disciplinary knowledge in history lies within the material culture of universities and through their academics, specialised knowledge is transmitted, debated, and revised. While it may be argued that knowledge in the social sciences is too soft, too amorphous, too much derived from the perspective of the knower to be robust knowledge, most who practise the discipline of history would dispute this. They point to the strength of the 'internal rules' which govern historians' practices and their solidarity in adhering to well-recognised methodologies, which strongly positions the discipline to deliver specialised knowledge. Historians seek to reach conclusions about the past through following a rigorous process of historical investigation using appropriate and wide-ranging sources. For example, knowledge of history derived from oral accounts may contribute to specialised knowledge but historians have an understanding that such accounts are just a piece in the puzzle to explain the past. They view individual pieces of evidence, whether it is text, visual, or oral statements, with initial scepticism. Barber and Peniston-Bird (2009) comment that 'Historians often praise their own sense of scholarship'. They add that 'We like to think of ourselves as purveyors of a discipline which not only seeks after truth but also provides as much verification and corroboration of statements as possible' (p. 8). Therefore on the grounds that historians have substantially practised within an agreed methodology for critique that recognises fallibility but enables knowledge to be closer to objective than subjective, history produced by academics can be said to be reliable, powerful knowledge.

Bernstein (1999) distinguishes between different types of disciplinary discourse and provides analysis of a discipline's relative strengths. Such theories provide a measure against which the discipline of history may be evaluated. As specialised knowledge, history constitutes a vertical discourse rather than the everyday knowledge of a horizontal discourse. Within vertical discourses Bernstein (1999) makes further distinctions in terms of a discipline's hierarchical or horizontal knowledge structure. While at times the history discipline integrates and subsumes previous knowledge typical of the hierarchical form, its structure could not normally be viewed as a 'hierarchical organisation' of knowledge or as 'systematically principled' (p. 161). History, therefore, appears to exhibit features which fall within the parameters of a horizontal knowledge structure and a vertical discourse. However, this position does not deprive it of its epistemic objectivity or lessen its power as a subject capable of delivering powerful knowledge.

Disciplinary fields also develop ways to distinguish the best knowledge when compared to other possible contenders. Such knowledge is also emergent, being the 'nearest we have to truth at any time' (p. 236). This focus on provisional truth is significant because it clearly demarcates disciplinary knowledge from everyday or social knowledge. The latter may not be verified as accurate through other means but instead expresses the untested beliefs of individuals. While postmodernists argue that there is no truth or reality, only a myriad of interpretations and a multiplicity of perspectives, historians 'remain committed to a notion of truth in which some interpretation is more justifiable than others' (Barber and Peniston-Bird, 2009, p. 10). Accepting that the study of history will always involve many perspectives, Young and Muller (2013) concur that history can nevertheless 'be objective and therefore truthful' (p. 242) and also argue that just 'because the perspectives were plural [it] did not mean that the grammaticality … had to be weak' (p. 243). This is a reference to Bernstein's (2000, pp. 163–6) theories on the relative, strong or weak, capacities of knowledge structures to generate 'empirical correlates' (Young and Muller, 2010b, p. 125). Stronger grammars are those exhibiting a capacity for meta-dialogue (Moore 2013a, p. 144). Through meta-dialogue, connections are plausibly made and competing explanations and change are accommodated to facilitate the development of new knowledge. Historians engage in a complex process of meta-dialogue and critique. They acknowledge and compare different historical accounts and subject their interpretations to scrutiny through peer review. Theories derived from this critical dialogue can then be explained using empirical evidence showing how a society of the past may have acted and responded. Strong grammars also lend themselves to cumulative knowledge-building. In contrast weaker grammars feature segmental knowledge acquisition

and describe circumstances with a reduced capacity to propagate new knowledge (Young and Muller, 2010b, p. 125). Having a stronger grammar infers a more stable, consistent ability to validly explain the world, approach the 'truth', and advance knowledge.

The discipline has a strong focus upon historiography – on writing histories that are 'systematically revisable'. Historians recognise that the selection of evidence and writing of history are contestable and open to future reinterpretation. Historians, however, have confidence that their methodologies can bring sufficient objectivity to their conclusions. Young and Muller (2013) note that 'the human and social sciences are … more "contextual" than the natural sciences' (p. 237) and that this has the potential for them to be criticised or categorised as horizontal forms of knowledge. Undoubtedly historians clearly listen to the voice of society's knowers through documents and other sources written by peoples of the past. Indeed everyday experiences of peoples of the past are a significant component in determining truths. However, the capacity of the discipline to weave a path through the multitude of voices that project from the past, along with the abstraction of ideas and weighing of significance of evidence, lifts history from its horizontal origins to its vertical position. In this sense it fulfils further criteria for specialised knowledge in being both 'emergent' and 'real'. These terms refer to the original historical contexts and social conditions as a production site for knowledge. From these conditions emerges powerful knowledge that is much more than the data and perspectives contained in the original collection of historical information and evidence. History is a discipline which has the potential to speak on conceptual matters. It takes events and people from the specificity of a period of time and place to a more universal or abstract sphere.

The fragility of knowledge – pitfalls and obstacles

Powerful knowledge, as established above, is specialised knowledge derived from rigorous and well-recognised methodologies. The question that follows is, can history's robustness as an academic discipline be realised in the school environment? In New Zealand, the question then becomes, can the robustness be realised when teachers, rather than national history prescriptions, determine the historical knowledge being taught? It is possible that the specialisation generated within the academic history community and understandings of disciplinary methodologies is transmitted directly to future history teachers during their study of history at university. Indeed, teachers of history in New Zealand schools are required to have university qualifications in their primary discipline. This experience in the discipline suggests

that history teachers will maintain the epistemic quality of the subject once they begin teaching. With the autonomy that teachers now have to determine history topics, there is a higher possibility that the knowledge learned at university can be more directly brought into the classroom. In the past, prescribed topics for study in schools may not have matched those historical areas studied at university, so the knowledge itself may not have been utilised. This argument would support the shift to teacher selection of content.

However, the matter is considerably more complicated than linking teacher historical knowledge to topic selection. There is potential for derailment of the knowledge journey at various points. Disciplinary dislocation and the destruction of the internal logic of the subject of history may occur when teachers recontextualise and mediate knowledge in response to the external imperatives of curriculum and assessment. The complete freedom to select historical topics is interrupted through requirements that students frame their responses in relation to causes, consequences, and perspectives. Through this, the discourses of historians are often radically reformed into somewhat artificial constructions. The desire to achieve high grades for their students may place pressure on teachers to be highly selective and focus upon a narrow or containable historical event which they then teach in terms of causes, consequences, or perspectives. This is in contrast to teaching the power of historical concepts and ideas which show connectivity between historical situations.

An example of imposing narrow limits on a topic is the selection of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. In recent years in New Zealand this battle has sometimes been taught in isolation from the teaching of the Vietnam War and without reference to the significant period of United States involvement a decade later. Selecting and isolating a single battle from its surrounding context of a wider war in this way has limited value. Knowledge is manipulated through framing these suitably selected ‘knowledge bites’ to relate precisely to what will be assessed. The potential for a piecemeal approach to knowledge demonstrated by this example was acknowledged in a review of the literature on standards-based assessment in New Zealand. Rawlins et al. (2005) noted that ‘holistic knowledge and understanding gives way to knowledge that is more easily measured at the expense of critical, creative and integrated thinking’ (p. 109). Students’ experiences of history may be recontextualised so significantly that history’s position as a discipline exhibiting ‘strong grammars’ is disturbed (Bernstein, 2000, pp. 163–6).

In this way, assessment operates as the driving force for teacher topic selection. The assessment requirements also have a tendency to limit the knowledge that students are required to learn each year. Compounding the aforementioned impact of history selected on narrow grounds is that students only need to demonstrate, for example, understanding of cause and consequence using one historical event in an entire year's course. The single examination question is also highly predictable from year to year because of the requirement that the question be written to fully align with the *Curriculum achievement objective* and its related *achievement standard* (see Table 10 on the following page). This enables students to pre-prepare their answers and teachers to teach a limited course, detailing the causes and consequences of a single event. It is feasible for students to use the same event for assessment of their understandings of 'perspectives', so a very limited knowledge can suffice for assessment purposes. Even when teachers encourage learning of much more extensive knowledge, students are astute and can limit their learning in the understanding that such an approach will be adequate to address the examinations.

If knowledge components are reduced significantly it is difficult to develop the abstracted conceptual thinking that powerful knowledge entails and that *The New Zealand Curriculum* claims to encourage. Narrowed or piecemeal selections of knowledge may limit students' ability to recognise and understand recurring themes, ideas, actions, and consequences in history. It may also limit the capacity of students to move beyond ideas they have formally been taught into the arena of what Bernstein (2000) referred to as the 'unthinkable' or 'yet to be thought' (p. 30). This means that, in deciding what constitutes powerful knowledge, the quantity of knowledge, and the complex interplay of breadth and depth need to be accounted for.

Table 10

Illustration of the close alignment between The New Zealand Curriculum and NCEA assessment

Achievement Objective ***The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007**	**Achievement Standard 91005** **NCEA Level 1**	**Examination Questions for Achievement Standard 91005** **NCEA Level 1** **2012 and 2013**
Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society.	Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event.	**2012 Examination** *Choose ONE historical event from any context you have studied this year, to write about.* Identify and describe the causes that led to your chosen historical event. What were the consequences of this event on people or groups in society? **2013 Examination** *Write an essay on ONE historical event you have studied this year, using the following question. Write your chosen historical event in the two spaces in the box below to complete your question.* Identify and describe the causes of _____. What were the most significant consequences of _____.

(Ministry of Education, 2007; NZQA, 2012c; 2013a).

Bernstein's (1999) structuring of intellectual fields also suggests what conditions are required for progression in knowledge in social sciences. There is the possibility that historical knowledge will be weakened if attention is not given to the interrelationships between bodies

of knowledge taught in successive years. There is a need to build upon conceptual understandings and produce programmes which logically build knowledge of time and place. In New Zealand, this matter is again left to chance and reliant upon the professionalism and expertise of history departments in schools. Inevitably the result will be very different knowledge outcomes across New Zealand.

Knowledge and skills

The ambiguity over the place of knowledge in *The New Zealand Curriculum* affects teachers' perceptions of both the importance and nature of knowledge. The 'directions for learning' section of the national curriculum places high importance on understanding of 'values' (for example, 'equity, through fairness and social justice'), 'principles' (for example, 'cultural diversity'), and 'key competencies' (for example, 'thinking') (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 9, 10, & 12). Where the term 'knowledge' appears it is frequently stated in the same breath as skills or competencies, for example, 'equipped with the knowledge, competencies, and values', 'develop the values, knowledge, and competencies', 'through the social sciences students develop the knowledge and skills' (pp. 4, 8, & 30). This suggests that the place of disciplinary knowledge in learning has morphed into, or is indistinct from, a focus on learning processes.

'Knowledge and skills' has become a lexical cluster (like 'checks and balances') where the individual words of the cluster may be weakened through their constant association. Corbel (2014) goes further to argue convincingly that 'knowledge and skills has become a single lexical item in which the word knowledge in particular has become 'delexicalised' (p. 116). Lambert (2011) argues that at play are 'cultural and economic influences that value skills over knowledge and "learning how to learn" over understanding' (p. 248). Similarly, with reference to the teaching of history in England, Counsell (2000) argues that skills are favoured over content (p. 60).

In history teaching, the focus upon developing students who can follow disciplinary practices and 'act like historians' has been prevalent for several decades and is very clearly captured in *The New Zealand Curriculum*'s emphasis on methodology at the expense of content. Students engage in processes of historical research, primary source interpretation, and weighing up evidence for its bias and reliability. It is assumed that, through inducting students into historians' practices, induction into historical knowledge will follow. However, as Keith

Barton (2005) points out, in educational settings, attempts to replicate historians' approaches to primary source material 'often reveals fundamental misconceptions about history' (p. 746). Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that when learner processes are 'linked exclusively to presumed disciplinary structures' or reduced to a set of narrow and specific procedures 'they become ends in themselves rather than tools for pursuing historical understanding' (p. 187). While there can be little doubt that students benefit from pedagogies which target skills development it raises concerns that the power implicit in knowledge acquisition is being overlooked. So it is the ingredient of historical content and its interrelationships with these history concepts and methodologies that need careful consideration if powerful knowledge is to be delivered to students. The power of any knowledge of history only emerges when such concepts are perceptively applied to suitable contexts. The power lies in the understanding of the historical circumstances under study, and on the transferability and universal relevance of such knowledge. Therefore an appropriate balance between skills and knowledge needs to be debated and the role of curricula in this issue requires consideration.

Knowledge selection

Given that suitably selected history knowledge has the potential to be powerful, those who decide 'what knowledge' play a critical role. This brings us to the point where powerful knowledge, the power of the knower, and the knowledge of the powerful intersect. Counsell (2000) suggests that 'To decide what history is to be taught … is to exercise phenomenal power. Better, then, say the nervous, not to prescribe it at all' (p. 61). History education is often criticised for being associated with 'collective memorialising', where heroic figures and events in a nation's history are taught in the interests of the nation building. History curricula are also sometimes criticised for overemphasising national histories and not adequately catering for multicultural communities of learners. However, 'the holy grail of an ethnically, culturally, socially neutral history … is arguably just as dangerous' (Counsell, 2000, p. 61) and problematic. The opportunity for the 'knowledge of the powerful' to influence what history is taught is currently evident in debates over history education in England. The close association of England's Education Secretary, Michael Gove, with what should be taught in the 'New History' suggests a high degree of political interest in school history (Ellis, 2013; Mansell, 2013).

In shifting responsibility for the selection of knowledge from a national body to individual schools and teachers, the sensitivity and contestability often associated with mandated national history curricula can be avoided. Criticisms of school history being socially constructed and the outcome of influential power relations may be reduced. However, the absence of direction in a national document may give absolute power to an individual history teacher or to a community lobby group. Whether history in *The New Zealand Curriculum* exemplifies a 'hands-off', high-trust approach, or an indifference to the importance of knowledge, is debatable. What is clear is that the present autonomy over selection of history content gives considerable responsibility to teachers and schools for powerful knowledge and that, despite a national curriculum, such freedom will inevitably produce marked variability between schools.

Perspectivism and relativism

A danger in the open New Zealand approach is that, at the point of knowledge selection, teachers may shift unknowingly into the realm of perspectivism and relativism where their choices are blinkered in several ways. These include their own personal biases, the limitations of their own knowledge, and an overemphasis on matching selection to the cultural or social environment of their students. The drive to make courses relevant to a school's community of learners can be a misunderstood notion. It may result in selections which limit understanding of the global world. For example, if students were to spend large amounts of time researching their family's histories through their family's stories then the knowledge they discover could be limited to 'memories'. This lacks the disciplinary strength of knowledge of historical context or reference to other primary or secondary sources. This is not to say that studying family is 'bad' per se but that its power in a disciplinary sense may be limited where it is not supported by acquiring further knowledge. Such a study may also fail the test of objectivity and may be perceived to adopt a clearly horizontal position, to use a Bernsteinian term, a position rooted in social knowledge.

Conclusion

History as a discipline has the potential to project a powerful epistemic voice. However, its position is a fragile one. Disciplinary strength can be weakened when history is reframed by teachers to meet curriculum learning objectives. Complexities of programming and progression, the forces of assessment, and knowledge autonomy are elements of uncertainty which have the potential to dislodge history from a powerful knowledge spectrum. To achieve

its epistemic status the knowledge selected and taught needs to derive from specialised disciplinary knowledge and to show an awareness of the broader conceptual, or bigger picture, implications that the knowledge will serve. The knowledge needs to take students beyond their existing experiences into the 'unknown', into the previously unlearned. This positions the knowledge within the scope of 'vertical' knowledge, and away from 'horizontal' or 'social knowledge'. Knowledge also needs to be understood as knowledge which is capable of change, recognising new interpretations and contestability. Furthermore history programmes need to be structured in a manner that reflects the complexity of weaving conceptual understandings, specificity, sufficiency, and progression in a robust manner. The power of knowledge in history therefore lies in its conceptual scope, its ability to transcend particulars of time and place, and its disciplinary rigour. In New Zealand, where teachers have the autonomy to determine knowledge selections and where *The New Zealand Curriculum* has broadly stated objectives, there can be little certainty over the power of the knowledge taught in schools.

Reflection

The growing interest in, and application of, the concept of 'powerful knowledge' by both scholars and the teaching community, has generated considerable debate and in this reflection I intend to pick up on several key aspects of that recent debate and consider them in relation to history education. First the debate over whether contemporary learning should be based on specialised knowledge within disciplines, as advocated for by Young, secondly the argument that there are different types of knowledge and that powerful knowledge is clearly distinct from socially and culturally situated everyday knowledge, and thirdly the question of 'truth' as a feature of powerful knowledge.

John White (2018) argues that the premise that *powerful knowledge* can be based upon *concepts particular to their disciplines* does not hold true for subjects such as history, geography, English, foreign language learning and music. He questions what these concepts may be in history and uses the example of second order concepts such as *causation* and *change* to suggest that concepts in subjects, other than mathematics and science, are not limited to the study of those disciplines. For history he remarks that 'causation and change' 'have to do with the world of human goals, intentions and achievements' and that 'learning history does not consist of getting inside schemes of concepts' (p. 327). However, I have argued in this thesis that it is not the second-order concepts such as *cause, consequence, chang*e, *significanc*e etc. but rather the substantive concepts (e.g. communism, kingship) which should underpin powerful knowledge in the New Zealand context. In this chapter I also comment that

> 'concepts such as *causes* and *consequences* more strongly represent a methodological approach to the discipline'. It is debatable whether this broad focus on causality, consequences, and historical significance can, of itself, assure delivery of valuable historical knowledge' (p.77 of this thesis).

So while points of agreement can be found in arguing that such concepts require substantive historical knowledge to be realised as powerful knowledge, White's argument is based upon second order concepts being selected whereas I have argued in this thesis that substantive concepts, along with knowledge of historical contexts, are a critical contributor to powerful knowledge.

White also argues, using this 'causation and change' example, that such concepts do not constitute the distinction between abstract knowledge which may be powerful and everyday knowledge because these are concepts which are also used in everyday life to explain 'why people do things they do'. He goes on to state that 'Explaining why there was Puritan uprising against Charles I requires a larger and more complex story than explaining why a teacher gave a child a detention' (2018, p. 327).

White is therefore seeing a parallel between the causes or reasons for a child's punishment and the causes or reasons for English people rising in opposition to Charles I's rule and arguing on this basis that the concepts for study in history as more akin to everyday knowledge than powerful knowledge. This argument however misconstrues the importance of concepts which infer particular meaning or significance in relation to historical time or place. For example, the first order concepts of Arminianism and Laudianism carry particular meaning for historians in the study of the reign of King Charles I and are critical to an understanding of the causes of the English Civil War. They are not concepts which would normally be known through everyday encounters.

White also questions whether history meets the criterion for powerful knowledge in exhibiting 'interrelated concepts' (p. 327) which Young (2016) explains are 'concepts which are 'systematically related to one another and shared in groups of specialists' (p. 190). White (2018) claims that 'History does not contain schemes of sui generis concepts as science and maths do' (p. 327) yet Young does not appear to have limited the types of concepts to *sui generis,* or unique, concepts. Therefore Arminianism and Laudianism, while very specific and important to history, are not limited to the umbrella of history and will be of importance to theologians too.

Young in his contribution to the book *MasterClass in History Education* (Counsell, Burn & Chapman, 2016) evaluated the ways in which history was able to generate powerful knowledge and concluded that first, history teachers are aware of the need for students to have 'secure factual knowledge of any topic so they can move confidently to different topics within their subject' (p. 192). This infers the value of powerful knowledge to enable students to make connections and draw conclusions about the different ways concepts operate in different contexts. Secondly that history is 'not an unchanging canon' and is open to revision and debate and thirdly that history education involves students in 'historical scholarship'. Young points

out that this means that history education is not derived through a direct route which recontextualises history from the academic discipline to the school subject, but rather that students can engage in determining the route through their own interpretations.

In this chapter I argue that history aligns with the specialised elements of powerful knowledge in seeking the truth and in being reliable knowledge following extensive scholarly critique. I also warn of the dangers of relativism in circumstances where teachers have full autonomy over knowledge selection. Yates (2018) supports the view that history is 'disciplined and tested' (p. 48) but suggests that there are 'social (questions) being pursued' that make 'the sharp distinction between so-called relativism and social interests on the one hand, and reliable knowledge on the other hand', (p. 48) unworkable for history. She argues that both the social and the reliable are important but that 'social purposes and effects' are unavoidable (p. 56). Taking this to a further extreme, perhaps this touches on the *decolonisation* initiatives in curriculum which challenge the perpetuation of 'western' knowledge traditions. Williams (2017) comments, in relation to university studies, that the

> 'days of expecting students to uncritically imbibe great books or enculturating a new generation into a monolithic western canon are long gone... In a climate of postmodern relativism when works of literature and philosophy are simply 'texts' the specific curricular content no longer matters that much... It represents a loss of faith in the ability of academics to judge some knowledge as superior, more important for students to know, than other knowledge' (para. 5).

While *decolonisation* did not appear to be a strong element in teachers' selections of content, the empirical evidence presented in later chapters illustrates both the ways in which social elements come into selections and the ways in which the purposes of learning history (both social and epistemic) are often absent from teachers' conceptions of history (see Chapter 7). There is therefore a contested space where scholars debate the merits of the concept of powerful knowledge as a core principle for curriculum theorising and formation.

However, an aspect which appears to be absent from the debate, and which I have touched on in this chapter and will discuss at length in this thesis is that powerful knowledge is *not only about what is taught but about how much knowledge* is made available to students. In New Zealand the potential for delivering knowledge 'bites' rather than interconnected bodies of

knowledge is made possible by the segmentation of assessment into standards. This rewards competency in delivering detailed yet narrowed portions of history while making links between concepts and across the divides of time and place is not encouraged. The consequence of this is to make powerful knowledge vulnerable to the variability of teachers' choices in implementing the broad *Curriculum* and defined form of assessment.

CHAPTER 6

A History Curriculum for the 21st Century

Ormond, B., & Morgan, J. (2015). A history curriculum for New Zealand in the 21st century. In J. Morgan (Ed.) *The 21st Century Curriculum?* (pp. 152-161). Auckland: Edify Ltd.

Foreword

This chapter begins the journey of considering what history is of value in the 21st century. John Morgan and I look at the possibilities for history teachers in the context of their autonomy and consider whether indeed history still has a rightful place in a future focused curriculum. With the tendency for 'learning to learn' to take precedence over what is learned and curriculum considered 'in relation to its future vocational utility' (Yates et al., 2017, p. 95), history's relevance in the 21st century comes into question. In Yates et al.'s recent study of history teachers in Australia they cited a teacher who observed that he/she gets students and parents that say 'why bother learning history if it is just old stuff and dead people, then what's the point?' (p. 98).

We also acknowledge the contestability of choices which can and have formed political debates in many countries. The role of history in the formation of national identity, consciousness, and cohesion often comes to the fore – a situation which is, at the present time, a point of discussion in New Zealand. As mentioned in the Reflection section in Chapter 3 the New Zealand History Teachers' Association (February 2019) are gathering signatures on a petition which requests a law change to make education about New Zealand's historical past compulsory.

This chapter is positioned in the thesis ahead of the reporting from my research into the principles upon which teachers made their choices of historical knowledge. The reflection section will serve to identify some of the choices made by teachers and thereafter subsequent chapters evaluate the underlying reasons for teachers' conceptions of knowledge, along with the challenges teachers faced in devising their school programmes.

A History Curriculum for New Zealand in the 21st Century

School history and the destruction of the past

Of all the subjects that make up the 21st century curriculum, history occupies the most contradictory position. On the one hand history seems anachronistic in a curriculum orientation that is so firmly geared to notions of 'the future'. Part of the ground on which the discourse of the 21st century curriculum has been built upon is the notion that we have reached an epoch-shifting point in human history. If this is the case, then 'why does history matter?' On the other hand, history remains an important resource for people living their lives in the 'new times': young people inhabit a culture where historical knowledge is more available then ever – through the internet, through video games, through films, novels and stories, and television dramas and documentaries. In addition, in many societies, the recognition of multiple national stories and the rise of identity politics has made it essential to narrate personal and group histories.

So although the 21st century is characterised by an 'explosion of historical discourse', the dominance of the ideology of 21st century learning means that the formal teaching of established bodies of historical knowledge is becoming increasingly rare. Thus, there are moves towards a narrowing of the content of historical teaching and attempts to personalize historical knowledge so that it speaks to the experiences of individuals and particular groups. For the influential historian Eric Hobsbawm, writing at the end of the 'short' twentieth century, this amounts to a severing of the links between the past and future generations:

> The destruction of the past, or rather of the social mechanisms that link one's contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late twentieth century. Most young men and women grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in (Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 3).

The role of school history was, in the modern period, to provide young people with an 'official' account of how the nation narrates itself. If successful, students leave school with a sense of where they belong and how they fit into the grand narratives of national development. Hobsbawm suggests that, at the level of culture, this transmission mechanism has broken down.

This postmodernisation of history has profound implications for the curriculum question in school history, and this chapter will explore these issues.

What is history for?

A central feature of the discourse of 21st century learning is that the over-arching goal of education is to prepare future citizens to take their place and contribute effectively to the nation's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. In such circumstances, the *what* of learning is subordinated to the *how* of learning – the important thing is that students 'learn how to learn'. If subjects such as history are to retain their place in the curriculum, then it must be demonstrated how they contribute to this economistic agenda.

This pressure to demonstrate relevance is also found in higher education. As Southgate (2005) convincingly demonstrates, recent decades have seen a strong insistence on the part of politicians that historians provide an answer to the question: what is history for? He notes a series of forces that challenge the *ownsakism* that has traditionally justified the subject's place in schools:

> External threats to the subject periodically recur from political modernizers, whose visions for the future purport to render obsolete any earlier traditions; and such recent advocates of a trendy brave new world have dispensed with respect for anything that savours of the 'old' or 'past'. A new diverse society is perceived as having different needs from earlier models, whose strength was supposedly rooted in some shared and homogenous background; and any pomp and circumstance derived from that historic background is seen as an irritating irrelevance ripe for removal (Southgate, 2005, p. ix).

Southgate's comment can be extrapolated to debates about schooling and 21st century learning to suggest that, in the current climate where schooling is to be *future focused* and geared to meeting the challenges of rapidly changing societies, history is to be included in the curriculum as long as it: contributes to the development within students of transferable skills or 'generic competences'; helps us to understand the present; and contributes to the formation of a diverse, tolerant, and cosmopolitan citizenry. In this case, history is geared to the project of educational transformation that is central to the discourse of 21st century *learning*.

In this context, the central curriculum question - '*What knowledge is of most worth?'*- seems to be less important. Instead the problem of what historical knowledge to teach is an individual or departmental issue faced by history teachers across New Zealand.

Against this instrumentalist view of school history, in this chapter we argue that in order to develop a history curriculum suitable for the 21st century it is necessary to stage a conversation which draws upon teachers' and academics' knowledge of the discipline so as to determine what history and which historical concepts are likely to be most valuable for future generations of learners. While it must be recognised that the determination over what is included and what is left out will always be contestable and open to change and regular revision, to not undertake such a debate suggests that knowledge of history is a matter of little importance in the 21st century.

The New Zealand case

With this in mind it is significant that in New Zealand there has been no opportunity at a national level to debate what history should be taught since the late 1980s when syllabus prescriptions were reviewed. The prescribed topic range was expanded at that time, to encompass greater diversity of social, gender, and ethnic histories. However, Sheehan (2010) argues that at that time 'conservatives' (p. 679) and 'a number of high-profile academics' (p. 680) captured the agenda, facilitating a continued emphasis on early-modern England at the expense of New Zealand history for Year 13 (students aged 17–18 years). In practice the wider range of available topics did not immediately create a significant change in what teachers selected and taught. Textbooks and other resources were not readily available for the newly introduced topics and because the former, often Eurocentric, topics continued to be available, many teachers continued to teach their existing programmes (Fountain, 2012). In the intervening decades only minor adjustments were made to the prescribed topics until their complete disappearance in 2013. During the development of *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007 the question of *What historical knowledge is of most worth?* was not given consideration on the basis that teachers should be given greater freedom to determine courses relevant to their students. History teachers now, therefore, have autonomy over the historical content for their individual school-based programmes.

The current curriculum aligns with international models in aspiring to develop students who have learned how to learn, are creative and innovative, and who are cognisant of issues such as equity, diversity, ecological sustainability, and globalisation. The curriculum is a broadly stated single document which encompasses the 13 years of State schooling and eight learning areas. History as a distinct subject within the social science learning area is therefore a small component of the curriculum applicable only to senior levels, with the requirements stated in six achievement objectives, for example 'Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society' (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The flexibility for teachers to make choices of what history to teach is a high trust model that is based on the expectation that teachers will select histories that best suit their students. While history teachers in New Zealand are graduates of history, and thus are expected to have knowledge of the discipline, their levels of experience in designing a school-based curriculum for history is variable. There is no mechanism in New Zealand for ensuring that teachers have had professional development opportunities in matters of curriculum design and in small secondary schools the burden of responsibility for programming may fall on a single history teacher. History as a subject in schools can only meet the aspirations for 21st century learning, as expressed through the principles and values in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, if teachers themselves are capable of, or have had sufficient professional development, to plan and execute programmes of learning that are coherent and future focused.

With the responsibility now upon school departments to re-think what a history curriculum should comprise, teachers are required to respond to the increasingly multi-cultural dimensions of our local worlds and the ever increasing influence and power of an interconnected global world. However a wide spectrum of other considerations, such as teachers' specialities, student preferences, and assessment requirements, are also likely to influence decisions. If the educational outcomes are to succeed beyond the development of process-orientated learning and values-based goals, the curriculum for the 21st century may need in the future to shoulder greater responsibility for indicating what knowledge is to be taught in schools.

Curriculum considerations for the 21st century

In their development of school history programmes for the 21st century teachers need to examine what knowledge of the past will enable students to explain the way societies function and transform. Some important considerations are:

1. To what extent should a history curriculum that concerns the past be designed to reflect and enlighten students about issues in the present?
2. What balance should be sought in the inclusion of New Zealand's history and histories of other nations or regions?
3. How possible is it in the context of school history to respond to the purported needs of a global economy and a future focused society?

Internationally, there is diversity in approaches to curriculum design in history. Many curricula place national identity and citizenship at the forefront of their curriculum design while others are based upon a post-modern pluralism where national history is viewed as just one possible area of historical value in learning. However for an increasing number of history curricula, like New Zealand's, the emphasis is placed upon developing student understanding of the way the discipline of history is practiced and on developing ways to think historically (Symcox & Wilschut, 2009, p. 5). In such cases historical contexts for learning may be seen to be subsidiary to the overall purpose of developing student's awareness of disciplinary knowledge.

In a 21st century curriculum which purports to be future focused, the selection of content based upon the relationships between national, regional, and international historical situations, and the weighting given to contexts in different parts of the globe, need to be astutely managed. For example a New Zealand curriculum may be developed with greater emphasis on understanding our Pacific and Asian regional neighbours on the premise that furthering knowledge of these regions will serve a future where trade and societal relations become more interrelated and critical.

Learning history to understand the present

Teachers therefore, in their freedom to select historical contexts and design school programmes, must initially determine their main purposes for teaching history. If history is seen to serve the purposes of the present then history content would be selected either on the

basis that it provides the background to explain issues and circumstances facing today's societies or on the basis that the concepts involved in earlier histories may still be relevant today. For example one might learn about the way the articles of the Treaty of Waitangi were understood in 1840 in order to have insight into the way the Treaty is viewed and enacted in legislation today, or one might look at the concepts of colonisation and sovereignty in relation to New Zealand to understand independence movements or territorial and control disputes in today's world. However while links can often be drawn between past histories and current events occurring somewhere in the world, it is also important to illustrate that 'every past was uniquely *un*like the present' (Lowenthal, 2000, p. 74). There is an important role history plays in illustrating that our present is not the only way society can and has functioned. In taking the present as a starting point and looking back in to the past to find parallels or explanations, there is a danger that students may view history as an inevitable progression leading to the present, or they may evaluate the past through a contemporary lens. While history can serve to aid understanding of issues today, the discipline of history should also be an exploration site for acquiring understanding of the past without always looking to trace the origins of today's circumstances.

The position of New Zealand history in a 21st century curriculum

National education systems have commonly prioritised their nation's history and placed it at the forefront of history curricula. Through doing so it is believed that student's sense of nationhood and collective identity will be bolstered. However in New Zealand the role of school history in serving political and national objectives has never been strong (Sheehan, 2010) and with the current freedom to select content there are no guarantees that any New Zealand history will be included in programmes. In contrast the History Wars fought in Australia and the United States are indicative of both the importance placed on what history should be taught in schools and the often polarised opinions about how a country's past should be represented. Macintrye and Clark, in 2003, traced the heated debates between politicians John Howard and Paul Keating over Australian history with each supporting differing historiographical accounts. Howard adopted the position of the New Right in support of historian Geoffrey Blainey's story of the 200 years of Australian progress, and in doing so played down injustices committed against Australian indigenous populations. He was therefore criticised by Keating as seeking to 'return Australia to a naïve, idealistic, '1950s view' of the nation's past' (Parkes, 2011, p. 81). In the United States in 1994 the Senate voted against

proposed national history standards that they felt were unpatriotic. 'The Standards should have recounted a story of upward progress and democratic development, from the Founding Fathers to the triumphs of the twentieth century, when America came of age as a superpower' (Symcox, 2009, p. 39). Symcox concludes that this 'victory called a halt in the debate over the history curriculum. No attempts were made to reconfigure the curriculum in a less patriotic, more cosmopolitan direction' (pp. 39–40). It therefore 'constituted a political landmark; it reinforced the intellectual ascendancy of conservative forces' (p. 39).

In England Secretary of State Michael Gove advocated for more English history through a review of the English history curriculum in 2013. The draft curriculum of February 2013 was heavily criticised for its incoherence and its narrow focus on English history 'represented through long lists of bullet points indicating events and individuals whose inclusion was mandatory' (Byrom, 2013, p. 8). Revisions to the draft led to the inclusion of more world history. In Russia President Vladamir Putin selected historians to draw up guidelines for new history textbooks to provide a positive and unified narrative of Russia's history (Baczynska, 2013). The guidelines have been criticised for both omissions, such as the protests against Putin in 2011 and 2012, and overly positive interpretations, such as Putin's success in the *restoration of Russia's position in international affairs*. In Europe the focus upon national histories has been shown by Van der Leeuw-Roord (2009) to have increased since 2000 despite the European Association of History Educators, (which represents over 40 countries), attempts to broaden history curricula. Van der Leeuw-Roord explains this as a 'yearning for yesterday' and an attempt to counter claims that students no longer know their history. He argues that 'in a fast globalising society … many influential politicians and intellectuals in Europe are afraid of losing control and want to increase the national approach using old arguments' (p. 87). While politicians often rue the lack of knowledge among young people of a nation's history, their views about the destruction of the past are often concerned with patriotism and citizenship rather than a genuine concern for understanding national histories and their multiplicity of historical interpretations. It is believed history can serve to instil in the young the 'right' values and 'right' politics. History is used as a means to explain and support national identity and a way of enforcing the 'imagined community'.

However, while history as a subject in the New Zealand education system has the flexibility to engage students in learning about wide-ranging and significant historical issues, ideas, and events occurring in the past in New Zealand, it has limited capacity to reach most students.

Many other nations place more importance on history and position it as both a primary and junior secondary subject, but in New Zealand history as a discrete subject is both optional and only available for study in the final three years of schooling. History competes with all other subjects in the curriculum and with the increasing trend towards STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects and the desire of governments internationally to prioritise subjects which appear to have a clear market value to improve their nation's competitive advantage, there is concern that history is losing ground both in secondary schools and in universities. Similarly, in New Zealand primary schools, National Standards, introduced in 2010, have given greater weight to language and mathematical literacy thereby reducing the time available for teaching about New Zealand's past and the social sciences. Therefore the ability of the discipline of history to serve as a vehicle for promoting national consciousness in students is weak.

History and globalisation

With the increasingly multi-cultural dimensions of our local worlds and the ever increasing influence and power of an interconnected global world, the purposes of history education need re-thinking. While past and current curricula in the Anglo world have commonly given prominence to national and European histories, adopting a global perspective in history curriculum making may be a means to respond to the needs of a global and future-focused society. A 21st century curriculum could be based upon consideration of the interconnectedness of the world. The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 are an example of this interconnectedness with the ripple effects of popular uprisings which were facilitated through the 21st century capabilities of internet technologies. While history study can and should at times be focused upon the uniqueness of time and place, a 21st century curriculum might challenge the belief that difference dominates and focus upon affinities between peoples across the world. This may represent a shift away from Post-modern relativism where differing cultural, gender, and localised interpretations of history tend to position history as a discipline that prioritises and gives voice to difference. An expectation that a multiplicity of histories can be addressed in school history programmes often translates into piecemeal programmes that lack coherence. Similarly within a global history curriculum it could raise expectations that studies would be cognisant of histories in all regions of the globe, which is an impossible task. There is a danger for a curriculum of the 21st century that the global arena will encourage a drive for addressing the full diversity of world history, creating unmanageable complexity and

the potential of a loss of cultural connection for learners. Instead, history education in a globally focused curriculum might include critical concepts such as the development of economic interdependence, growth in multi-ethnic communities, the influence of internationally recognised benchmarks for social justice, the movement of ideas at a global level, and development of representative governments. History curricula are of necessity selective and limited but such concepts could be explored through a range of historical periods and cultural contexts to examine similarities and differences in society's experiences and responses.

Within such global studies the relationships to national histories need to be carefully considered. The form of national narrative currently undertaken in many countries may not easily be reconciled to enable today's students to negotiate both an ever-changing globalised world and their roles as individuals knowledgeable about their nation-state. In reporting on curricula across Europe Van der Leeuw-Roord suggests that 'instead of trying to come to terms with the needs of young people to cope with this globalizing society', a 'yearning for yesterday' (pp.73-74) still forms the basic design of history curricula, resulting in a concentration on the histories of nation-states. He argues that in order for history to be regarded as 'relevant and significant for coming generations, future history curricula will have to start coming forward with new creative questions and not look backwards' (pp. 87–88).

Conclusion

Developing a history curriculum for the 21st century is challenging but essential as knowledge of the past is critical for understanding society and its structures. A comparative loss of focus in education on humanities subjects, including history, and its replacement with market-driven learning has the potential to impact upon learners being able to understand and question the way societies behave and operate. A global dimension to history curriculum design may serve to overcome some of the concerns that history is unnecessary in a modern future-focused world.

Reflection

In this chapter we suggested three important considerations for determining what history should be included in curricula. This reflection analyses the extent to which each of the three considerations are evident either in teachers' responses to the following interview questions or in the historical content included in interviewee's school programmes (see Appendix G - Teachers' selections of historical topics).

> *What were the most important factors in making the selections?* and
>
> *What idea of history are you intending your students to go away with, upon completion of the courses?*

Consideration 1: To what extent should a history curriculum that concerns the past be designed to reflect and enlighten students about issues in the present?

There was some evidence among my research participants that history was seen as valuable for understanding society in the 21st century.

> Well we want them to know the story and we want them to know the relevance it had both at the time and today and what it means to them and why they would even be interested in it. And it's a challenge for some kids because they like history but they only like small parts of history and there are bits that happen in their lives they have no realisation as to where it's linked and linked to in the past. And that's what we try and get them to do but by understanding the full story. Not just getting the half bits of information that are out there (Matthew, Interview 1).

Matthew then related his comments to a discussion among his students about the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2014 referring to it as '*The politics at the moment*… Yeah an interesting situation that we've now developed that the students want to look at the history of stuff that's happening and it's relevant to them.' Stephen similarly expressed his intentions that students see 'The idea of how the past shapes the present', noting that 'The idea they are really into is justice' (Interview 1).

Consideration 2: What balance should be sought in the inclusion of New Zealand's history and histories of other nations or regions?

An analysis of the topics selected by the research participants illustrates that all participants included some New Zealand history, although not in each year level and not in a manner which would support the idea that a national narrative was being provided in the manner of Symcox and Wilschut's (2009) *Trend 1* category (see Chapter 1, p. 16). The narrowing to significant but isolated moments in New Zealand's history is evident in the choices. For example the Influenza Epidemic 1918, the Battle of the Somme 1916, the Springbok Tour 1981, the Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior 1985. More substantial, but not representative of an extensive time period, are studies into the early contact period and the New Zealand Wars. It should be noted however that the identification of a 'topic' in the research may not convey the full picture since the extent of the narrowing to a single event within these broader topics was not always made clear through the interviews.

The separation of time between the participants' first and second interviews also showed that some had moved away from their original choices to non-New Zealand topics. For example for AS91434 *Research an historical event or place of significance to New Zealanders, using primary and secondary sources,* Linda had changed the topics for Year 13 history from researching the period of early contact between settlers and indigenous Māori in 2014 to women who made an impact in history in 2015. There was also a shift from Linda's students looking at differing perspectives about the Parihaka settlement in 2014 to looking at women's suffrage in Britain in 2015, for AS91437 *Analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders*. Nevertheless there was also a reverse example where Bianca changed the topic used to address perspectives at Level 1 (AS91004 *Demonstrate understanding of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders*) from the Birmingham Campaign in the United States to a New Zealand focus on conscientious objectors during World War II in 2015.

The question of creating a balance of histories nationally and internationally is evident in the choices but was not a matter which was identified by any of my interviewees as a matter of critical deliberation.

Consideration 3: How possible is it in the context of school history to respond to the purported needs of a global economy and a future focused society?

Taking the argument that the longevity of history as a school subject may depend on its ability to contribute to the market place rather than being regarded as having an intrinsic importance weighty enough to secure its future, Yates et al. (2017) have illustrated that many of the teachers they interviewed suggested the importance of learning history lay in its skills – transferrable skills; 'It's the skills that they use for the rest of their life that they develop in the study of history' (p. 97), commented one teacher. One of my participants, Stephen, similarly argued that

> We are studying the Treaty of Versailles but you can be doing anything ... The skills that we learn are transferrable to *what they are going to do*. So skills based and the idea that past shapes the present, and sort of an idea building on that, that where we've come from matters, and just the curiosity for the world I think - whatever that means (Interview 1).

The suggestion that history serves 'what they (the students) are going to do' is an argument for teaching history to assist students in pursuing their vocational futures.

The value of history to a knowledgeable globalised society also comes through. Suzanne gave an example of one of her Year 11 students who elected to do a speech on why history should be compulsory. She argues that it is 'because it teaches people to be able to communicate with the wider world' (Interview 1).

This question of relevance for the 'knowledge economy' is addressed more fully in Chapter 11 where Richard Harris and I consider how frameworks of knowledge and knowledge of history's procedures and contestability, may contribute to this notion.

CHAPTER 7

Conceptions of Knowledge

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Foreword

Up to this point I have examined the contexts in which teachers make decisions about their curriculum, the shifts in practice that occurred incrementally over the period of standards-based assessment between 2002 and 2012 and the potential and possible impediments for history education in New Zealand to provide access to powerful knowledge. In this chapter I set out to explain the reasons for teachers' selections of history topics based upon the empirical evidence from interviews. From the findings I develop a conceptual model to capture the essence of teachers' reasoning for their decisions and conceptualise the role and importance of knowledge in history education. Because my study involves teachers who have a much higher level of autonomy over their curriculum than most teachers who work in countries where there are prescribed topics, this study offered a rare opportunity to see what emerges as the leading factors in curriculum deliberations when there is freedom of choice. It is therefore interesting to see that a recent study (2018) in Victoria, Australia drew very similar conclusions about the drivers for making choices despite the higher level of prescription under the *Victorian Certificate of Education History Study Design* introduced in 2016 (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2015). Harris and Burn (2016) have also explored teachers' views on a proposed history curriculum in England, while Harris and Reynolds (2018) and Smith (2019) have examined teachers' choices and approaches to history education in England and Scotland respectively, but such studies are few in number. History educators have placed greater focus on investigating the politics of history curriculum, for example Symcox on American nationalism, (Symcox, 2009); how teachers perceive the discipline (Yates et al., 2017); the importance of incorporating disciplinary practices in history education (Seixas, 2004, Wineburg, 2001); and its value to society, for example Barton and Levstik (2004), *Teaching History for the Common Good*.

In a reflection which follows this published chapter I will identify the points of comparison between those studies to examine what can be learned from the findings that has universal relevance to history education and to curricula decision making more broadly.

Conceptions of Knowledge in History Teaching

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 & Roberts, 2014) in New Zealand. The implication for curricula is that there is 'a reduction or even an evacuation of content' (Young, 2010a, 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. Procedural 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) 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, 2011a), with the most significant changes occurring in response to an *open* curriculum implemented from 2011. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (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 (*achievement objectives*) for each of the levels (Curriculum levels 6 to 8 - see Appendix E). 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' (p. 4).

Distinct from the *Curriculum* are the *achievement standards* for history for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (see History Matrix of Achievement Standards, Appendix F). 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 decile, 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.

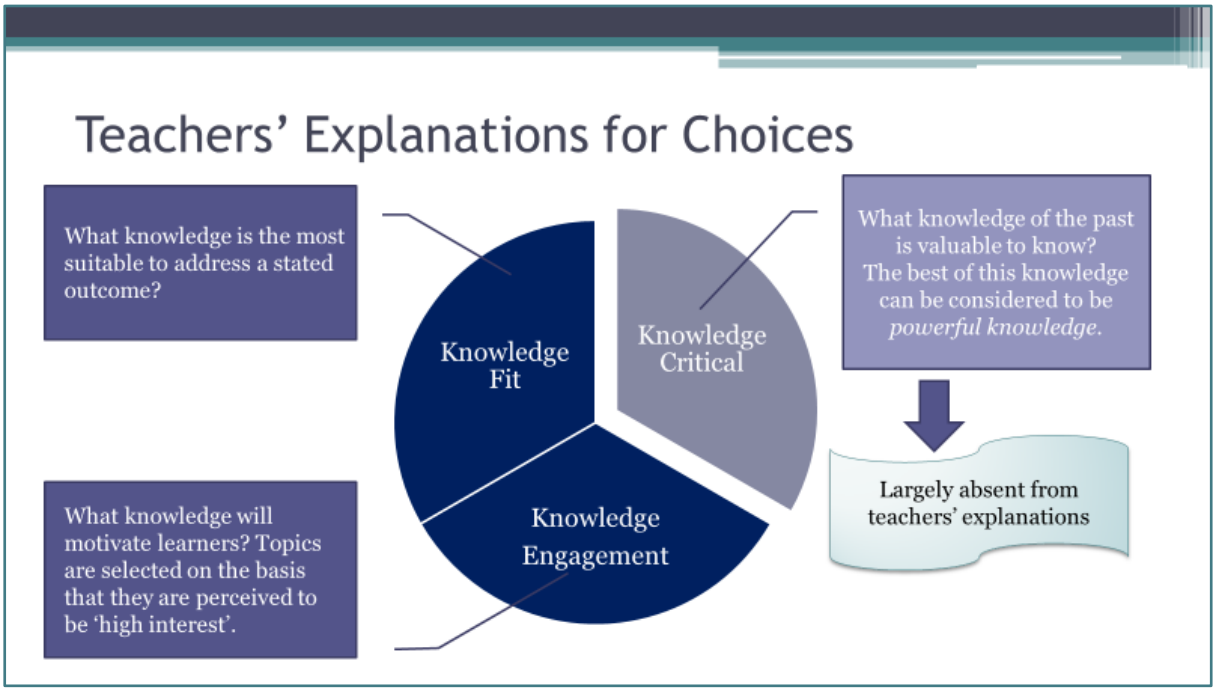

Figure 2 Explanatory concepts - Teachers' explanations for their choices of history topics

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 (see Chapter 8) 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 (Interview 1).

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 (Interview 1).

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' (Interview 1). 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"'! (Interview 1). 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' (Interview 2). 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 Gunpowder Plot because that's our "perspectives" standard. We don't look at anything else' (Interview 1).

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 (Interview 2).

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 a & b, 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 focused 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 2014a, 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 (Interview 1).

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' (Interview 1). 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 procedural knowledge to come together and be made sense of. To

enable an understanding of the past, therefore, both substantive and procedural 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' (Interview 1). 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' (Interview 1).

Procedural 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 focused upon history 'as a way of thinking and reasoning, a method of inquiry to create images of the past' (Symcox & 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' (p. 684) and therefore 'New Zealand stands apart' from international trends (p. 671).

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' (Comment 3, p. 42). 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' (Interview 2).

While placing procedural 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 & 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' (Interview 2). 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, 2013b, 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, 2015a, 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, 2015b, 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, 2014b, Level 2, p. 7).

Changes in interpretation have also led to additional features expected in answers. Karen pointed out that 'historiography seems to be creeping into Level 2 a little bit as well' (Interview

2). 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 (Interview 2).

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 procedural 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.

Reflection

While very few studies have looked into teachers' curricula choices for history, examination of several recent studies in Australia and England provide a wider context for reflecting upon my conclusions about teachers' conceptions of knowledge. There are intriguing similarities in the findings from a recent study of teachers' selections of history topics in Victoria, Australia. Cairns study (2018) is a closely comparable example as her research similarly involved interviewing teachers (fifteen teachers) of senior level history (Years 11 and 12) and the subject is similarly assessed through a combination of school-assessed course work and an examination. A significant point of difference is however, that teachers have less autonomy in Victoria and draw their choices from a selection of thirteen units, each taught for approximately one semester.

In response to the research question *What influences teachers' decision-making about the VCE history courses they teach?* Cairns begins her article *The many voices of senior history curriculum enactment* with two quotations from her interviewees.

> Our content choices are informed by what will interest students; we like to think of history as being a subject that kids can get excited about, *and*
>
> We are a results-driven business (p. 4).

These two quotations capture the essence of my findings about teachers' reasons for their content selections. In mimicking the findings from my research, one might extrapolate that student interest (*knowledge engagement*) and accountability (*knowledge fit*) are the two most prominent forces currently at play in teachers' curricular decisions and that selecting historical topics because of their significance, or their value in teaching critical understandings of societies of the past (*knowledge critical*) is largely absent from teachers' considerations.

Knowledge engagement

Knowledge engagement was also seen as significant in two other studies of teachers' curriculum thinking in Australia and England. Yates et al. (2017) similarly noted that when Australian teachers talked about their selection of topics it was primarily in relation to what would interest students (p. 100). In a much larger study which surveyed nearly 550 teachers'

views of curriculum reforms put forward by the coalition government in England in 2013, many expressed concerns that 'the proposed content was irrelevant and uninspiring' (Harris & Burn, 2016, p. 530). These findings suggest that engagement is a key priority in determining curriculum decisions and that curricula choices can be viewed as a fundamental means to motivate students and lead them to successful learning. That teachers in New Zealand, Australia and England felt it was important to select history topics which are perceived to have 'high interest', is not surprising. Nevertheless student engagement, is often viewed as primarily falling within the field of pedagogical decision-making, rather than a key priority in determining curriculum decisions. This, therefore, may indicate a blurring of the distinction between pedagogical considerations and curriculum determinants in teachers' thinking. Kitchen has suggested that *enjoyment* sometimes supersedes and triumphs over the quest to learn in educational thinking (2014, p. 32) and Young has similarly pointed out this phenomenon (2013, p. 112). With the greater opportunities to develop school-based curricula in New Zealand and other parts of the world, for example South Africa's *Curriculum* 2005, the discourse around *learner-led learning* and catering for student interest has come to the fore.

Maintaining student numbers in history and marketing history were also key drivers in topic choice in Victoria. Cairns research supports what may be viewed as an intuitive sense that 'some topics are more of an "easy sell" than others' (p. 9). One of her interviewees noted about the Russian Revolution topic that

> It is violent, there's blood, there's gore, there's war and you find your hook for it (p. 9).

In my study Linda also noted the importance of marketing the subject of history stating that 'it's important that we are able to sell the subjects'. An example of this in action was Linda's history department's decision to 'start with Anne Boleyn'. She explained that 'we are really choosing her because there's a lot of interest in her. So it's about engaging the girls' (Interview 1).

Knowledge critical

Yates et al.'s study of Australian history education also provides insight into teachers' curriculum thinking. Rather than focussing on what knowledge was important to teach, they sought to find out what teachers saw as the purpose and value of history and asked 'what

matters about history?' While the research question differed, teachers' conceptions of knowledge still emerged. Their key finding was that teachers valued the 'analytical approach history offers rather than content' (2017, p. 96).

> 'I'm really interested in the skills that you need … I'm not so wedded to curriculum documents that have content' (Teacher 24 cited, p. 96).

Furthermore, the identification of skills as the most critical factor may suggest that the current discourse about the value of transferable skills is strongly agreed with. However, Yates et al. concluded that teachers distinguished between transferable generic critical thinking and communication skills and those identified directly with the discipline, that is the tools of an historian. 'History teachers saw the study of the disciplinary … approaches of history as a more valuable, ongoing and less superficial way of teaching skills' (p. 98). A difference between the two studies is that New Zealand history teachers commented more specifically and more extensively on developing students understanding of second order concepts and of the contestable nature of the discipline of history while Australian teachers focused more on the procedural elements of engaging in historian's methodologies. This is likely to be due to the very precise focus on such concepts for the achievement standards in New Zealand (e.g. causes, consequences, significance, perspectives, contested histories).

Because skills are taking priority in teachers' views of the discipline, the matter of *what* historical content and for what purpose, may not be given much consideration. The worth of knowing about particular periods or ideas in history appears not to be the guiding force in curriculum priorities. From their study Yates et al. identified the differences between politicians and teachers in their views about the nature and purposes of history. Unlike New Zealand where politicians have rarely entered the debates over what should be taught in school history, in Australia the kind of history students should learn 'regularly dominates political and public debates', such as during the 'History Wars' where the government advocated the teaching of a national story of progress after colonisation (see Chapter 6). While teachers prioritise the skills of interpretation and argument that the discipline offers, politicians focus is on *knowledge critical,* for the purposes of promoting national understanding and cohesion.

Knowledge fit

As mentioned earlier, a point of similarity between Cairn's and my findings was that pragmatism featured strongly in teacher's explanations of the topics they selected. Topic choices were made to align well with the needs of assessment. She asserts that

> If VCE History did not include an external examination … it is likely that teachers would be making different decisions about content. … The impact of high-stakes examinations on the alignment of curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning in the VCE should not be underestimated (p. 10).

Such a finding aligns with my explanatory concept of *knowledge fit* and is a well-recognised phenomenon in education where assessment is a strong determinant in teachers' practices (for more discussion of this point see Chapter 9). Notably however, Cairns also illustrates that teachers were concerned at 'a narrowing of the curriculum' and the constraints imposed due to the examinations, a finding which I have highlighted throughout this thesis.

Both my study and Yates et al. specifically asked the question of what teachers hoped students would get from learning history. The question was broad and not targeted specifically at the knowledge that students would gain. In Australia, as mentioned 'what teachers most emphasised and talked about at length was the value of learning to do historical work' (p. 96). Among my research participants Bianca explained her hopes -

> Well I really want them to understand that history is written by someone with a particular point of view or interpretation and that they can't just take everything at face value… it allows you to have those discussions in class about historiography and perspectives. But I want them to go away thinking history is interesting as well and the idea that what they talked about yesterday, that it is like time travel and they can go back and understand, well have a look and try and understand, what people in the past were thinking' (Interview 1).

The recent studies done in England and Australia are sufficiently similar to add weight to my findings that teachers rarely select historical topics on the basis of their value as historical knowledge which is vital to learn. Instead students' potential engagement with historical topics

and its suitability for assessment, are core concerns. The shift over many decades towards perceiving the greatest value of history as procedural knowledge and second order concepts is now well embedded in teachers' conceptions while substantive knowledge sits beyond the frame.

CHAPTER 8

Curriculum Decisions

Ormond, B. M. (2017). Curriculum decisions – the challenges of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection for history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 49(5), 599-619.

Foreword

The following article reveals the complexities of curriculum making and how these difficulties are compounded when assessment requirements and practices narrow the field of what can be included in courses. Even where teachers appear to have full autonomy to select the history content they believe is most suitable for their learners, limitations for enactment of an open curriculum are evident and present a challenge for teachers.

This foreword introduces the discussion provided in the subsequent published article to more fully situate the discussion over teacher autonomy and explain the nature of teacher autonomy and the complexities of designing curriculum.

Teacher autonomy

In this article I have used the term *autonomy* to mean the freedom to choose substantive content from any period of history. From 2011 when topics were no longer prescribed in the achievement standards, teachers spoke of this as 'their autonomy' to choose. It was this promise of 'autonomy' that was the starting point for my decision to research teachers' selections of content. In this article I describe *autonomy* in terms of teachers' abilities to exercise their freedom, while fulfilling requirements of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the NCEA assessment, and argue that autonomy is coupled with both responsibilities and expectations.

It is acknowledged that the term *autonomy* can be interpreted in different ways and that 'full autonomy' could extend more widely to refer to circumstances where teachers have the responsibility for all matters of curriculum and pedagogy without the impositions of national assessment, league tables and inspections, (Ropo & Välijärvi, p. 214). The term *autonomy* is also used in recognition of professionalism where a high degree of self-directedness is possible.

However, as a consequence of the social and political circumstances in which teachers operate, it is clear that teacher autonomy in practice rarely equates with full freedom. Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) have given consideration to a related concept – that of teacher 'agency' and perceive it as 'an 'ecological construct' (Priestley & Biesta, 2013, p. 192) where teachers take action but such actions occur within the environmental, cultural and structural arenas in which they work. This recognises that teachers' 'agency (or lack of) is heavily influenced by factors which are often beyond their immediate control' (p. 192).

Nieveen and Kuiper (2012) conceptualise C*urriculum regulation* as a two-pronged approach with government control at both the input level of curricula aims and content, and at the output level through assessment. *Curriculum deregulation* on the other hand is where a government acknowledges the professionalism of teachers and supports school-based curricular decisions (p. 359). Teacher autonomy and trust is therefore at the centre of *curriculum deregulation* but for *deregulation* to be effective, there is a need to need to build the 'curricular capacities of teachers' (Nieveen & van der Hoeven, 2011, p. 52). Hopkins (Hopkins 2005, cited in Nieveen & Kuiper, p. 359) suggests that such freedom can lead to 'curriculum improvement' and that certainly has been the hope for New Zealand's 2007 *Curriculum*. However, the ever- tightening control over assessment appears, however, to have shifted the ideal of a deregulated curricula model further along the continuum line towards *regulation* (see Figure 3).

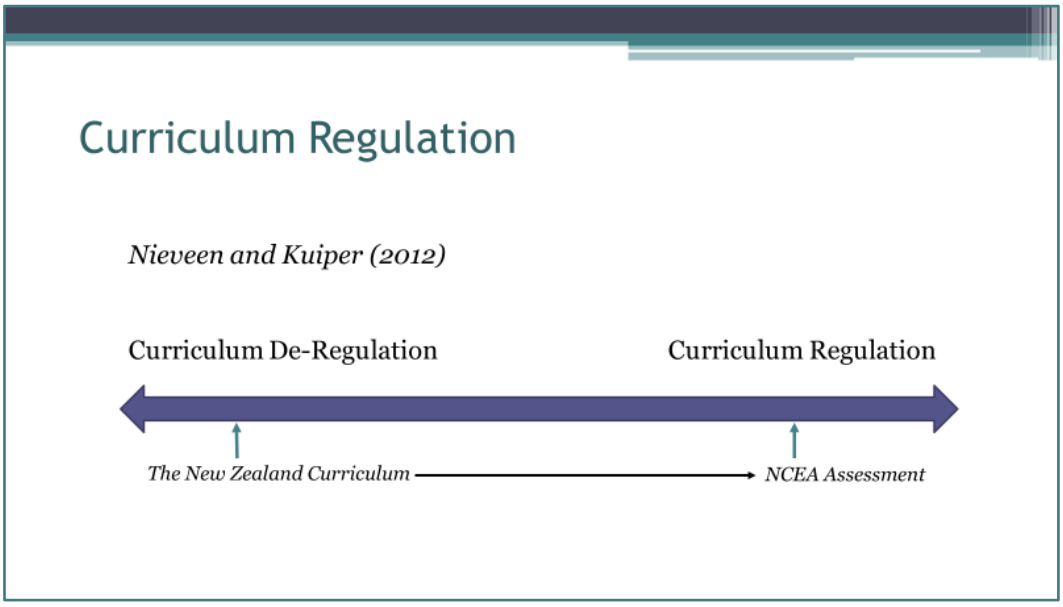

Figure 3 A Curriculum Regulation/De-regulation Continuum, based on Nieveen and Kuiper's (2012) concepts.

The level of autonomy for history in New Zealand schools seems to align most closely to Ekholm's *result-oriented responsibility* model where 'the government prescribes the aims to be achieved and at the same time allows schools to find their own ways to reach the aims' (cited in Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012, p. 360). In New Zealand the *achievement objectives* and *achievement standards* are signifiers of the aims while the selected content and the selection of achievement standards are the means.

This discord between what is espoused for curriculum autonomy and the reality, appears to be typical. Priestley and Philippou have commented that:

> 'Experience suggests that the much vaunted autonomy afforded by the new curricula remains elusive, as governments have tended to replace the former regulation of input with tight regulation of output' (2018, p. 152).

This tension between curriculum freedom and control is reflected in my interviewees' expressions of concern over how to design effective programmes. While the starting point in curriculum design could be giving consideration to the core aims and purposes of education in history, and 'entails teachers posing the right questions in their curriculum design about what knowledge is of most worth' (Priestley, 2016, 8 December, para. 2) this rarely seems to be the case. Priestley suggests there is 'A paucity of craft knowledge in how to design a curriculum' (para. 4) and this holds true of New Zealand where there was very limited professional development for teachers on how to implement the *Curriculum* and the NCEA for senior history. It is against this background that teachers in my study identify their lack of surety about whether their selections of content are ideal.

Curriculum Decisions – The Challenges of Teacher Autonomy over Knowledge Selection for History

Outline

History teachers in New Zealand have recently entered uncharted territory with the abandonment of prescribed topics for history and a new-found authority to determine the selection of historical knowledge taught to their senior secondary students. This discussion explores the challenges for teachers in positioning them as independent curriculum makers and examines the complex nature of the teacher's new role. Curriculum *achievement objectives* and national assessment places significant constraints upon teachers' selections of historical knowledge with implications for students' access to powerful historical knowledge. There is the potential for substantive historical knowledge to be downplayed in favour of procedural knowledge and the potential for assessment drivers to dominate or distort selection of knowledge for history.

Introduction

> It is an incredibly high trust model that we've presented to teachers. I understand how it sits within the philosophy of *The New Zealand Curriculum* to allow schools to evolve their own local prescriptions and curriculum, and that is admirable in terms of responding to student voice and learners in front of you, but even for a fairly confident reasonably sized department like ours where we can discuss and develop ideas together, it is still a huge challenge to create our own curriculum and justify the choices that we make (Linda, Interview 1).

Teachers of history in New Zealand secondary schools have recently embarked upon a new journey as free-agents for determining history content. They have become the curriculum designers for their subject at the local level of their individual schools. This new phenomenon in history education represents a shift away from the certainty and constraints of nationally prescribed topics and themes to an environment of diversity in knowledge selections. There is the potential for an autonomous regime to facilitate exploration of new or re-framed historical content and improved programming. Knowledge can be critically selected and sequenced in

ways which develop student's abilities to understand both important aspects of our past and disciplinary approaches to how history is constructed and contested. However, there are delicate balances at play. Selections of historical contexts need to address curriculum objectives and assessment requirements so teachers are faced with the complexities of how to successfully align their historical content. There are dangers of incoherence in programme design and the potential for assessment to dominate the choices of substantive knowledge. Selections may be limited to 'knowledge bites' suitable for addressing 'generic' examination questions. Furthermore through localising curriculum decisions variability is inevitable leading to uncertainty of outcomes nationally. Through examining the challenges for teachers in their school curricular decisions and examining how knowledge selection may be shaped by forces beyond knowledge considerations, questions are raised about the importance of knowledge in 21st century learning.

Conceptual Framework

Social Realism and 'Powerful knowledge'

The discussion draws upon social realist theories within the field of the sociology of knowledge. The principles of social realism will be used to shed light on the epistemological challenges that face teachers in their roles as curriculum makers. Social realism derives its name from the way in which its principles recognise the social basis of knowledge while asserting that the knowledge is real and reliable despite its social origins. Social realism recognises 'the necessary objectivity of knowledge as a condition for any kind of enquiry or reliable prediction about the future, and that knowledge is emergent from and not reducible to the contexts in which it is produced and acquired' (Young & Muller, 2010a, p. 14). Social realists are concerned with exploring different forms of knowledge in the interests of recognising what knowledge may best advantage students in their present and future lives. Through an understanding of the qualities that embody specialised knowledge in disciplines such as history, social realist theory assists in understanding the importance of enabling students access to higher order knowledge, or 'powerful knowledge' (Young 2013; Young and Muller 2013). Such knowledge has 'the potential to …empower all students through its ability to take them beyond their own experience' (Morgan, 2015, p. 14). Wheelahan refers to this knowledge as 'theoretical knowledge' (2010, p. 1) and contends that is necessary if students are 'to participate in society's debates and controversies'. Furthermore she argues that 'access to theoretical knowledge is fundamentally a question of distributional justice' (p. 161).

Young and Muller (2013) have discussed identifiable features of knowledge which can contribute to recognising such knowledge as *powerful*. It is knowledge which is *specialist* and normally generated by the academic community. It is also *emergent* which recognises that it is subject to re-interpretation and change over time. Furthermore it is knowledge that is both *realist* and *fallible* as it is open to criticism and is contestable. History as an academic discipline is commensurate with these criteria because historians recognise that interpretations are subject to critique and revision, and that 'truth' is not an absolute. The rigorous methodologies historians employ for seeking out the 'truth' enables knowledge to be closer to objective than subjective. History produced by academics can therefore be said to be reliable knowledge. A social realist standpoint differs from relativist and post-modern epistemological positions where 'truth' is seen as relative with multiple interpretations leading to the conclusion that there can be no reliable truth. The debate is fundamental to teachers' decision making because there is the possibility that knowledge selection and its reduction to small manageable units of teachable history, may lead to a misrepresentation of disciplinary accounts of history. This may reduce the capacity of teachers to deliver 'powerful knowledge'.

Therefore, based on its disciplinary origins, history as a school subject has the potential to deliver 'powerful knowledge' (see Chapter 5) but it is dependent upon robust selections of knowledge supported by appropriate pedagogies. It is the conversion from academic discipline to the pedagogic site of the school that is critical for teachers to negotiate successfully. Bernstein (2000, p. 33) explains the conversion in terms of two types of recontextualisation – the *Official Recontextualising Field* (ORF) which, in the case of history, refers to the way the subject is represented in official national policy and assessment documents and the *Pedagogic Recontextualising Field* (PRF) which refers to the ways history teachers reinterpret the discipline of history for the purposes of teaching and learning in schools. The relativity between the ORF and the PRF determines the enacted level of autonomy 'over pedagogic discourse and its practices' (p. 33). Through a consideration of the relationships and tensions between the ORF and the PRF challenges for teachers in their curriculum endeavour can be explained. In essence what emerges is a 'complicated balancing act between curriculum regulation and curriculum freedom' (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012, p. 357).

Knowledge in Curricula

Wheelahan, in 2008, commented that discussion of 'the role that knowledge should play in curriculum is strangely absent from debates within the sociology of education and within education policy' (p. 205). She argued that this was surprising at a time when the *knowledge society* was being promoted so widely. However, in recent years, social realist literature has refocused attention on the place of knowledge in contemporary curriculum debates (Young, 2013; Young, Lambert, Roberts & Roberts, 2014; Wheelahan, 2010; Lambert & Biddulph, 2015) arguing that knowledge is central to the very purpose of education. From a social realist perspective therefore, teachers' decisions on what knowledge they select is of critical concern.

Forms of Knowledge

In arguing for a stronger place for knowledge in curricula social realists are referring to the form of knowledge recognised by epistemologists as 'propositional knowledge' (Winch, 2013, p. 128). In history this type of knowledge is commonly referred to as 'substantive knowledge' (Bertram, 2012, p. 431). Substantive knowledge involves 'knowledge of time, space and place' (p. 433) and engages students in knowing about historical contexts, events, ideas and actions of people in past times. History education communities also commonly recognise other forms of knowledge critical to gaining a developing expertise in history as a discipline. This includes knowledge of concepts such as *continuity and change, cause and consequence,* and knowledge of the procedures historians undertake when they practice history, such as the investigation of primary sources. The *Schools Council History Project,* established in England in 1972, was based upon these disciplinary ways of thinking and inquiry and more recently *The Historical Thinking Project,* established in Canada in 2006, established a framework of six historical thinking concepts. As Seixas (2006), Lévesque (2008), Wineburg (2001), and others have shown these disciplinary concepts and procedures are vital to gaining an understanding of history. When developed in school learning disciplinary knowledge enables students to gain an appreciation of how interpretations of history are arrived at, and the contestability of such interpretations.

In *Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the future of education* (2005) New Zealand educator Gilbert places *process* at the forefront of education with her suggestion that 'people are increasingly thinking of knowledge ...as a kind of energy, something that does things. They are using the word knowledge as a verb, not a noun, as a process rather than a

product' (p. 75-6). Such a view brings the entire question of *what knowledge is,* under scrutiny. It takes 'knowledge' beyond consideration of what ideas?, what happened?, what do we know about?, to the actions involved in coming to understanding knowledge. An emphasis on 'product' and 'outcomes' often accompany this model. Young argues that 'The implications are that what might be assumed to distinctive to formal education – the acquisition of specific knowledge – is treated as relatively unimportant' (2009a, p. 195). He points out that this "'emptying of content" out of curricula can be found in the educational policies of many countries'. He refers, for example, to the introduction in 2006 of a Norwegian curriculum, known as *The Knowledge Promotion,* which defined skills and a quality framework (p. 195-6). The post-apartheid South Africa educational reforms similarly positioned outcomes-based education at the centre of educational policy in their *Curriculum* 2005 (Young & Gamble, 2006; Allais, 2014) and favoured 'local curriculum construction, and local choice of content' (Bertram, 2012, p. 430). The approach is based upon the premise that through giving teachers authority over what they teach, learners will benefit due to the perceived relevance of the selected content and increased levels of student motivation.

What knowledge is of most worth?

In designing a history curriculum or programme at the local level of the school the same issues and challenges of purpose, relevance and manageability confront teachers as would confront a national, county or state body charged with coming up with a new curriculum for multiple school settings. What is 'The right kind of history' (Cannadine, Keating & Sheldon, 2011) to assist students in critical understandings about the past and to enable students to participate in 21st century debates? Van der Leeuw-Roord (2009) notes the difficulty of that task when he observes that 'Writing perfect history curricula is an impossible mission: there are simply too many requirements to fulfil, so many desires have to be combined that reality and theory are often separated by a wide fissure' (p. 89). While at a school level the decisions may not seem as monumental as those for devising a national curriculum there are still challenges for teachers in determining the main purposes of history education for their school community and deciding what knowledge is most critical for their students to learn. These considerations also need to be weighed in relation to student motivational considerations and assessment requirements. Lambert and Biddulph (2015) argue that as curriculum makers, 'teachers have to be consummate boundary workers, constantly balancing competing priorities' (p. 221).

Breadth and Depth

One such boundary that teachers need to attend to is that of achieving an appropriate balance between breadth and depth of substantive knowledge. The issue of whether overview or in-depth selections of knowledge are best for learning, and the inter-connections between the two, has long been a matter of educational debate. Counsell (2000) sees it as important that teachers have a clear rational for determining specificity or generality in their teaching of knowledge and argues that broader knowledge assists students' facility to analyse and interpret. She suggests that

> One very helpful distinction is that between the temporary or 'working' knowledge that pupils build up during a detailed study, and the broader and lasting understandings such as broad chronological awareness, awareness of institutional structures or cultural values of a period. The first might be called 'fingertip' knowledge. It is the kind of detail that one needs to have in ready memory and that is acquired through familiarity after extensive enquiry. It does not matter if much of the detail then falls away. … This is why it is essential to think of knowledge in the context of medium and long term planning (p. 66-7).

Giving consideration to the interrelationships between ideas, events and concepts which are particular to a selected historical 'topic' and students' broader understanding of societal values and economic and political implications, should therefore be a significant factor in teachers' curriculum choices.

The New Zealand Context

The New Zealand approach to curriculum follows international trends where curricula identify learning competencies and learning outcomes that are designed to develop student's understanding of *how* to learn in order to meet the future needs of a *knowledge society* (Gilbert, 2005). *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007 (Ministry of Education) is a document which places at the forefront *'vision', 'principles'* and *'values'* statements and identifies *'key competencies'* (for example 'thinking', 'managing self') which are applicable to all years of schooling from Year 1, at the beginning of primary school, to Year 13, the last year of secondary school. In this form of curriculum, knowledge of particular content is minimised or unstated (Priestley, 2011, p. 221). *The New Zealand Curriculum* states that 'Its principal function is to set the

direction for student learning and to provide guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 6). 'Their' curriculum suggests that individual schools are expected to be the primary curriculum developers and that variation between schools in matters of curriculum is encouraged. In an analysis of the place of knowledge in *The New Zealand Curriculum* Priestley and Sinnema (2014) explain that the *Curriculum* is 'characterised by an emphasis on school-level curriculum autonomy and flexibility… that places the onus for development of school-level curriculum firmly on practitioners… it signals that responsibility for specifics rests with schools' (p. 56).

The open curriculum in New Zealand however, appears to contain an inherent contradiction. On the one hand the focus on key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the unstated implication that 'any content will do', tends to downplay both the importance of knowledge and the importance of the teacher as a curriculum designer while on the other hand, in the autonomy given to teachers, there is the unstated implication of high expectations. There is a presumption that suitable historical times and places, the breadth and depth of topic engagement, and the sequencing of historical contexts will be carefully considered and accommodated. Programmes should enable students to make connections between bodies of knowledge, build their conceptual understandings, and facilitate cognitive shifts from the particular to the general and from the specific to the abstract. Winch (2013) contends curriculum design involves having a 'coherent view of "epistemic ascent" … and that failure to get this sequencing right can have adverse pedagogic consequences' (p. 134). Allais, however, points to the difficulties of providing for such progression of knowledge learning in outcomes-based education. She argues that a focus on competencies 'implicitly rejects the idea of structured bodies of knowledge' because one begins with the competence 'and then selects "bits" of knowledge to fit … rather than seeing knowledge as the starting point' (2014, p. 247).

History in The New Zealand Curriculum

History is included in *The New Zealand Curriculum* as a discrete subject only for senior secondary levels (*Curriculum* Levels 6-8) and is an optional subject for students in their final three years of schooling. The curriculum requirements specific to history are contained in two *achievement objectives* for each of the senior levels (see Appendix E). These achievement objectives are framed in broad terms, to include the concepts of *cause*, *consequence*, *perspectives*, *trends*, *contestability*, and *significance*. For example 'Understand how people's

perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ' (Ministry of Education, 2007, Level 6) is an achievement objective requiring teachers or students to select an historical event through which consideration can be given to different views on the event. While some other subjects have achievement objectives that are more specific about knowledge components, for example Level 6 mathematics and statistics 'Calculate volumes, including prism, pyramids, cones and spheres, using formulae', the history achievement objectives neither confine history to particulars of time or place nor provide guidance on appropriate choices.

Alignment of the Curriculum and Assessment

Following the publication of the *Curriculum* in 2007 the Ministry of Education set about aligning *The New Zealand Curriculum* and assessment for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (NCEA). It was at this point that subject groups writing the achievement standards were advised by Ministry of Education officials 'that standards should as far as possible be written in such a way as to provide schools and teachers the opportunity to select contexts which are best suited for the students' (2009, p. 5). Therefore the freedom to determine historical content emerged out of the *alignment project* 2008-2010 (see Chapter 3) and was implemented successively between 2011 and 2013 for each of the senior levels of history.

The matrix of achievement standards (Appendix F) illustrates the manner in which assessment and curriculum were aligned. For each level (Levels 6, 7 and 8 in *The New Zealand Curriculum*) the two *achievement objectives* were directly transferred to two of the achievement standards (i.e. AS91004 and AS91005 align with Level 6 [see Table 1 in Chapter 1], AS91232 and AS91233 align with Level 7, and AS91438 and AS91439 align with Level 8). For example the Level 6 achievement objective 'Understand how people's *perspectives* on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ' stated in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is assessed through the Level 1 achievement standard 'Demonstrate understanding of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders' (AS91004). The remaining achievement standards also relate closely to the *Curriculum* achievement objectives with their focus upon understanding historical *events of significance to New Zealanders* but they extend beyond them to assess the procedural dimension of history. The disciplinary skills of research, interpreting historical sources and writing about history are

emphasised. Therefore both the *Curriculum* and assessment set the direction for history and provide the framework upon which knowledge selections are made. The achievement standards for the NCEA are assessed in either of two modes – internal assessment which involves assignments students complete during the school year and external assessment which is gained through sitting a national end-of-year examination.

In recognising the importance of elements of conceptual and disciplinary knowledge through their inclusion as achievement objectives and achievement standards, history in New Zealand embodies

> the educationalist 'teaching of history' trend, which is not so much concerned with the desired factual content of the curriculum, but stresses the value of the historical discipline as such, implying a key role for historical thinking and disciplinary concepts. (Symcox and Wilschut, 2009, p. 5).

In adopting this approach history education in New Zealand may be regarded as going some way towards the emphasis on the aforementioned *knowledge as process* that is common in international curricula. Nevertheless, 'historical thinking only becomes meaningful with substantive content' (Seixas, 2006, p. 2). The focus of this paper therefore, is to consider the challenges facing teachers in their selections of the historical contexts through which 'thinking historically' and engaging in disciplinary practices are enacted.

Teachers' Experience in Curriculum Design

In New Zealand history teachers are university graduates of history. They should therefore bring to curriculum design, the ability and confidence to develop programmes which take consideration of the scope and disciplinary concerns of history. Many teachers can also draw upon experiences gained since the mid-1980s of independence in selecting historical contexts for internal assessment. Following the introduction of the NCEA in 2002, they also gained experience in reinterpreting prescribed history themes and topics to put focus on concepts such as the *causes and consequences* of historical events, for the former versions of the achievement standards. Their school programmes exhibited a gradual shift from teaching entire 'topics' to more selective focus on events, perspectives and aspects of New Zealand identity (Ormond, 2011a). Since the detail contained in the former 1989 prescriptions was not formally brought

into the achievement standards when the NCEA was introduced, a decade of experience in the NCEA showed what knowledge, within the former prescribed topics, could be left out of programmes. The newly aligned standards have reinforced this approach so framing knowledge to target historical concepts will be familiar territory for teachers. It is however a bigger challenge to design programmes which are coherent across the three levels of senior history.

Methodology

In addressing the question, *What are the challenges for teachers in their selections of knowledge for secondary history programmes?* official curricula and assessment documents have been analysed to gain an understanding of how knowledge expectations are framed. In particular the *achievement objectives* in *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007 and the *achievement standards* for assessment in the NCEA have been scrutinised to evaluate whether they are sufficiently open to facilitate complete autonomy and flexibility or whether there are more explicit requirements which act to constrain teacher autonomy.

The research also draws upon empirical research into teachers' practices and perceptions. Six teachers, who are *Heads of Departments* or *Teachers-in-charge* of history, were interviewed about their curriculum making decisions. The interviewees have varying levels of experience in their leadership roles and lead departments in schools in Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand (see Table 8, Chapter 4). The interview data, which amounts to over 40,000 words of comment, explains the reasons for the participant's selection of historical topics. While not asked directly about any challenges that their new autonomy presented, the interviewees spoke of the complexities and offered insight into the challenges of selecting suitable historical content. The interviews enquired into which historical contexts were selected and why, whether or not teachers perceived any barriers to making choices, the impact of assessment on choices of topic, how teaching of topic knowledge interfaced with teaching disciplinary skills, and the ideas and concepts of history that teachers intended their students to go away with upon completion of their courses. The data collectively contains within it both commonalities of view and significant individualism. This could be expected in an open choice environment for selecting history content.

Participants were given the opportunity to check transcripts of their recorded interviews for accuracy. In response to the data collected, coding was developed to collate responses under categories with the particular matters of relevance to this article being:

- The challenges of making selections which suit assessment requirements - difficulties with the focus on *causes and consequences*, the concentration on historical *events*, the nature of the generic questions, and uncertainties in the examinations.
- Creating coherence and taking into account the depth, breadth, or extent of the historical contexts being taught.
- Designing history programmes which maintain student interest.

It is recognised that there may be limitations arising from the small number of teachers interviewed. Findings from the empirical evidence are therefore considered alongside data from the reported views of teachers in minutes, publications and surveys of the *New Zealand History Teachers' Association* (NZHTA) and the *Auckland History Teachers' Association* (AHTA). During November to December 2014 and January to February 2015 the NZHTA invited comment in two online surveys. The surveys explored teachers' views of the external examination papers, the validity of the marking, and their use of the clarification and supporting materials available online through the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website. There were 145 responses nationwide to the 2014 survey. The survey contained 18 questions and resulted in a 60 page report of statistics and collated comments. The 2015 survey, which asked 28 questions and gained 132 responses, resulted in a report of 54 pages. Further evidence of teacher responses is recorded in minutes of the *Auckland History Teachers' Association* (AHTA) meetings. Each year the AHTA holds a 'post-mortem' on the previous year's examinations. In 2015, 51 teachers attended. It is at these meetings that teachers often express their views on the challenges that face them. The minutes also record historical topics selected by teachers, which is a source of incomplete but indicative data about history programmes in schools.

While much of the teachers' associations' empirical and statistical data relates to teachers' views of specific examination questions and the marking of students' work, and is therefore beyond the scope of this article, the extent of the data and comments made by teachers helps

to explain and elaborate upon the evidence collected from the teacher interviews. Through triangulation of the data from the teacher interviews, the larger nationwide surveys, comments recorded in minutes, and official documentation, teachers' experiences of the challenges are corroborated providing a more accurate measure of the validity of individuals' observations. Now, into the fifth year of implementation of the new achievement standards and teacher autonomy, there is a growing body of evidence that teachers are experiencing significant difficulties in suitably developing programmes to meet the goals of implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* and addressing assessment requirements.

Research Findings

The key challenges for curriculum decision making identified through the research are:

1. *Suitability for assessment:* Selecting and framing historical content in a manner which achieves a perfect fit for the externally examined standards.
2. *Balancing breadth and depth:* Creating programmes which are coherent and incorporate both breadth and depth in learning about the past.
3. *Managing student interest:* Selecting topics which motivate students and retain their engagement over each year's programme.

While teachers have overall embraced the freedom to choose their historical content there is recognition that programme design is challenging and carries responsibility. Suzanne (*pseudonyms are used for the six interviewed teachers*) commented 'I do like the freedom (but) it's very scary because there's a huge amount of topics you could do'. Similarly Karen said 'I love having the freedom, I do, you know, (but) it is a little daunting actually' (Interview 1). Some teachers also illustrated the challenges through expressions of dissatisfaction with their current programmes. Bianca recognised that coherence was a problem in her school's programme. She commented that 'we teach kind of a mismatch' (Interview 1) while Linda reflected that 'We've never finished the (intended) course for our second time through and we are still struggling. So we need to make changes to the year. We are not satisfied with the Year 13 even though the title (*Empire and Oestrogen*) might be catchy' (Interview 1). Stephen similarly noted the trial and error nature of the challenge - 'We did 9/11 which wasn't perfect, it didn't work as well as I hoped'. However, he spoke positively of the flexibility that autonomy offered with the opportunity to shift direction if necessary to meet students' needs. Matthew, on the other hand, felt that choosing topics was 'pretty straightforward with kind of having

known the kids'. He explained that in 2014 he allowed Level 3 students to select their topics and planned in 2015 to allow each year level to construct their programmes – 'we are going to get a whole list of topics out to the students and let them kind of construct what they want to do .. (and) go with the majority vote'. When interviewed one year later about the choices made by his students in 2015 he reported that

> Yeah, so they're not interested in Russia. It's like the ever changing jigsaw the way these classes work, the way we're doing it, and we'll try and use the student voice to guide what we do. Yeah slowly getting there and eventually it will all fall into place and we'll figure out what actually works and take away the options that don't work so they don't have those to select.

So student interest is at the heart of Matthew's decisions on topic selection and he recognised that achieving workable programmes would take time. However, when asked 'do you like the freedom to determine the topics you teach or would you prefer them to be specified? he responded

> I would like some specification. Like I love that we have just complete choice but I think that means some people can play the system better and then kids aren't really engaging in what I call proper history, which is a real shame (Interview 2).

Matthew's concerns lie with the issues of being true to the discipline of history and of appropriately and fairly assessing students in national examinations when every school has a different programme.

Suitability for assessment

Internal Assessment

For the internally assessed standards which involve carrying out research and examining perspectives, teachers have control over the entire process from selecting an historical topic for study, to writing the assessment task, to marking their student's work. This enables teachers to be relatively comfortable in their decisions over topic selection. Bianca commented that 'We have a little bit more freedom to do what we want because they are internals – it can fit fairly

easily'. Furthermore, in a study enquiring into students' capacities to think historically Sheehan has shown that when students engage in 'research-based course work it makes an important contribution to participants developing strong disciplinary understandings of history' (Sheehan, 2013, p. 73). Because the internal standards are viewed as less problematic than the external standards, there is a trend towards entering students for fewer of the external standards and placing the emphasis on the internally assessed standards. For example in 2014 at Level 2 7287 students entered for the internal standard AS91229 while the highest enrolment for any of the external standards was 5615 with as few as 1827 sitting the examination for AS91234 (NZQA, 2014a).

External Assessment

It is, therefore, the selection of historical contexts for two of the three external standards at each level which is proving to be the most challenging. In particular the standards assessing *the causes and consequences of an historical event* (AS91005, AS91233, and AS91438), and the standards assessing *a significant historical event affecting New Zealand society* (AS91006 and AS91234) require careful selection of events. For the external standards at each level assessing the *interpretation of sources*, teachers have no responsibility as the historical context is selected by the examiner and unknown to students ahead of the examination.

Examination questions for these 'challenging' external standards take the form of generic questions which is a single question for each examination and intended to be applicable to all historical contexts. While generic questions are a practical solution in the absence of prescribed topics, matching the selected content to particular questions can be problematic. For example, in examining *causes and consequences of an historical event* it can be difficult to select an event that both significant enough to have substantial causes and consequences, but not so 'big' that the causes and consequences are too multidimensional and vast making it unmanageable. The examination for Level 3 in 2013 provided examples of possible historical events which range from large topics such as the French Revolution and the American Civil War to more contained events such as the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (in New Zealand) in 1885 and the invasion of Parihaka, a Māori settlement, in 1881 (NZQA, AS91436 Examination). Selecting, for example, the French Revolution where causes and consequences are extensive, would perhaps be unwise even though significant concepts can be addressed by teaching the topic. The ideal is to choose a topic that is of manageable size and

can be taught with fairly equivalent emphasis on both causes and consequences so that students' responses are even. However this can be difficult, as Linda explains.

> So the problem with Parihaka (is that it) isn't actually a significant enough event – … I mean you have to work fairly hard to develop the consequences for Parihaka. So things just aren't quite slotting into place for this ... topic (Interview 1).

Similarly Bianca spoke of the challenges in selecting a suitable event. In reflecting upon her choice of the My Lai massacre from the Vietnam War to address AS91438, she observed that

> really you're drawing a lot of really arbitrary links…between cause and consequence – I don't know if you could find (consequences). I mean people died and eventually they got independence. I don't know if those would be significant enough to get them through. So I have to see what happens in the exam (Interview 1).

It is also a challenge to determine how far back in time to go when dealing with causes and how far forward to go with the consequences. For example if one chose the event of World War Two and traced the causes of war then that in itself would be a substantial body of knowledge for students and it may be difficult to conceive of an effective way in which the consequences of the war could be managed.

Table 11

Alignment chart for 'causes and consequences'

NCEA Level	Achievement Objectives *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007	Achievement Standard	Examination Questions for 2013	Examination Questions for 2014
Level 1	*Level 6 of The New Zealand Curriculum* Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shapes the lives of people and society.	*Achievement Standard 91005* Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91005* Write an essay on ONE historical event you have studied this year, using the following question. Write your chosen historical event in the two spaces in the box below to complete your question. Identify and describe the causes of _____. What were the most significant consequences of _____.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91005* Identify and describe the **most significant** causes that led to your chosen event. What were the consequences of your chosen event on people and / or groups?
Level 2	*Level 7 of The New Zealand Curriculum* Examine causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	*Achievement Standard 91233* Examine causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91233* Examine the causes of a significant historical event, and the positive and negative consequences of the event on people.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91233* Examine the **most important** causes and consequences of your chosen significant historical event.
Level 3	*Level 8 of The New Zealand Curriculum* Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	*Achievement Standard 91438* Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91438* Analyse the various causes of a significant historical event, and the consequences of that event on people's lives.	*Examination for Achievement Standard 91438* Analyse the long-term political and economic causes of a significant historical event and the ways in which the consequences of that event impacted on people's lives.

Ministry of Education and NZQA. *Correlation between The New Zealand Curriculum* achievement objectives, NCEA achievement standards and examination questions 2013 and 2014, Levels 1, 2 and 3.

The challenges have been recognised by the examiners. In the assessment report written following the 2013 Level 2 examination for AS91233, teachers were advised that 'The historical event must be significant, **not too broad** in scope or cumbersome. Similarly, the event should **not be too narrow**' [*emphasis added*] (NZQA, 2013c, p. 5). This advice was further emphasised with the comment 'Selection of an appropriate event, or context, is critical' in relation to AS91234 (p. 6). Examination questions are expected to adhere tightly to the wording of achievement criteria meaning that questions are unable to change substantially from year to year. However there is some unpredictability as examiners attempt to introduce variation into the exams each year. This creates challenges for teachers and students as slight changes made to the generic question can mean that teachers' topic selections become problematic. For the Level 2 examination of AS 91233 *Examine cause and consequences of a significant historical event* in 2013 students were asked to address both the '*positive and negative consequences of the (selected) event on people*' (see Table 11) and it became apparent to both teachers and students that some of their selected events were an imperfect fit. In a NZHTA survey of 2014 teachers referred back to the 2013 making comparisons with the 'better' 2014 question.

> A much more accessible question than last year's inexcusable trap question which required students to discuss positive and negative consequences. (Comment 8, p. 29).

> Last year's paper, with negative and positive consequences was unreasonable. It suggested using an event that had both – some events are largely *either or*. ... Teaching becomes very problematic … The idea is not to trick everyone, and catch out teachers and students. (Comment 31, p. 30).

Similar concerns were raised in 2014 for the Level 3 examination for AS91438 which required 'long-term political and economic' causes (see Table 11). In a survey of teachers' views on the examinations 37.64% of the 93 respondents 'strongly disagreed', or 'disagreed' with the statement 'The question is open to responses from the contexts our students studied'. This suggests that for a substantial number of students addressing the examination question in 2014 their teachers felt that the examination question was not well suited to the historical event they had prepared for. The statistical data is substantiated by comments from 54 of the respondents and of those 38 discussed the difficulties of the question. 'By narrowing the causes to economic and political long term it restricts students' responses from certain topics' (Comment 23, p.

40). 'Far too narrow – no mention of social causes – assumes political and economic causes for an event which didn't fit our topic My Lai and asks students to make inauthentic links to answer the question' (Comment 26, p. 40). 'Most of my students struggled with the long term economic causes nature of this question…. Again the serious flaw of one generic question that it is assumed will suffice for all topics studied' (Comment 28, p. 41). 'It disenfranchised students that had prepared a discussion of an event where causes were primarily social and/or cultural causes' (Comment 29, p. 41). Underpinning these comments is the emerging picture of complexity for teachers as they try to select and adequately teach an historical event that will serve all possibilities. The responsibilities are weighing heavily on teachers as is evident in the frustration voiced by a teacher who commented that:

> Teaching an event is like playing darts in a dark room with the dart board constantly moving position. This year's question was a dog but I shudder to think what variation will be trotted out in 2015. **I just give up** [*emphasis added*]. (Comment 42, p. 42).

The burden of reliance on the teacher to get it right is illustrated in Matthew's comment that success –

> is largely due to the quality of the teacher, you know. If the teacher can write the main causes and consequences essay that is good - that the students can rote learn and turn around - they do well you know, but the teacher that can't, the students are going to struggle (Interview 2).

Suzanne similarly places the teacher at the forefront of students' achievement stating that

> We coach them a lot on how to write causes and consequences because that is quite formulaic. If they have got at least two causes and at least two consequences and the event, they can achieve (Interview 1).

Balancing Breadth and Depth

Implementing a programme that one might believe offers students' engaging 'powerful knowledge' with an appropriate interplay of breadth and depth is difficult since single historical events explored in depth are being rewarded in the examinations. The narrower the context is, the more likely that students can learn extensive detail of the causes and consequences. This in

turn appears to have led to a consequential creep of expectations and the requirement for increasingly lengthy examination answers. Bianca commented that 'They've made us very much go looking for an event that we can focus on for a topic. I mean I would never have really thought I would do a topic that was just on My Lai to be honest because it's very narrow'. As Matthew points out, teachers facing the challenges of meeting the targeted requirements of the standards can respond in ways which are at the expense of breadth of learning opportunities for students.

> I know people who teach about the Elizabethan religious settlement … without going back to Henry VIII. Well you are missing the big picture about what is going on (Interview 2).

Linda explains that

> We're so driven by causation in terms of writing … The whole focus on *causes and consequences of an event* and the whole use of the word *event* in *The New Zealand Curriculum* has driven us to piecemeal even further our delivery of topics so that it is key event, key event, key event, rather than looking at the big picture (Interview 1).

She is therefore pointing to the difficulty of devising programmes which serve official requirements while simultaneously meeting wider goals of the learning of history. She offers some hope that the challenge will be met in the future - 'the standards do drive us but we're trying to unshackle ourselves from that… but we still haven't got that nailed yet' (Interview 2).

Karen argues that while higher ability students enjoy the in-depth study of a single event, lower ability students struggle with a narrowed focus where a higher level of detail is required. They prefer a big picture approach to history.

> It means that … we go into greater depth sometimes and that's great for the gifted or talented or the more able students - for those kids who like to talk a lot and really get into it. It's perhaps not so great for the less able kids for whom it's just a spiral of too much information. It's too detailed for them … they're still trying to grapple with understanding the big picture and the basics. They're much better with that kind of that surface across a range of material to keep them engaged … and then occasionally going

> in greater depth. What seems to have happened now is that there is less topics and we are going deeper and deeper and deeper (Interview 1).

Catering for different preferences in content selection and coverage for a typical mixed ability class is therefore a further challenge.

It is possible that the generic question, despite its conceptual focus upon for example *cause and consequence*, may ironically be producing an emphasis on factual detail that it was designed to avoid. At a meeting of the AHTA in February 2013 it was observed that 'More factual essays seem to gain high grades (rather) than essays which (are) more analytical' (p. 2). The conundrum faced by teachers is identified in the following observation. The teacher believes that the intent of the *Curriculum* is to put focus upon competencies and skills but he/she observes the reality of instrumentalism where assessment drives practices. To gain a high grade, a student needs so much detail that approximately ten weeks must be spent polishing a single essay.

> 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 of History Teachers, 2014, Comment 16, p. 9.)

Managing Student Interest

Even where teachers have designed programmes which they believe have suitably addressed issues of breadth, depth and their interplay, the astuteness of students is such that they may be selective and attend only to the parts of a course that they believe will be valuable for assessment. Delivering comprehensive programmes can be hampered by students' early recognition that they can address the examination with a single event in the entire year. Pipe (former Deputy Principal, Mt. Albert Grammar) (2014) comments that 'Students are now deciding which essay they will write in March. This pragmatism is taking the edge off any topic that is taught throughout the rest of the year' (p. 21). The examinations take place in November so there is the potential for a lack of engagement for a substantial portion of the year. Following mock examinations at mid-year a student reported that 'Once I realised that I gained an Excellence in the mid-years (examination), I knew I could use that essay in the

November exams so concentrated on improving that essay. Whatever topic we studied in class in term 3 was redundant for us' (p. 21). In a similar situation Stephen reported that he had a student that 'by literally the 30th of June had 15 credits at Level 3 at excellence and had passed the mock exam at excellence. What do I do with her?' (Interview 2). Matthew indicated the difficulty of teaching history in a comprehensive and robust manner when students identify what is and what is not necessary for assessment –'You know you are trying to teach a topic where you want the kids to know everything, but … the kids are saying well what's the point?, why aren't we just focusing on what might be in the exam?' (Interview 2).

The challenge then is to avoid the distortions that assessment encourages. Teachers need to programme so astutely that students are engaged all year and they have to manage that phenomenon not only on the basis of interesting and valuable historical content, but on the basis of how students may see its relevance in relation to the *credits* they gain from assessment. The following two teachers express different views on the possibilities and pitfalls. Linda argues that teacher authority is constrained while Enright (2014) acknowledges the complexity of a non-prescribed environment but describes his journey in a positive light as one which led to the recognition of the criticality of knowledge in developing historical literacy.

> So it's creating of course all hateful things of rote learning and preparing and redrafting throughout an entire year one essay. So it's narrowing focus and you can talk all you like about teachers, it's in the teachers hands, … but it's not actually, it's the framework that we operate within. We can manage that to a point but ultimately you know the kids will rework and rework one essay (Linda, Interview 1).

Having always been a 'constructivist' at heart, I enthusiastically set about tossing out content to add in activities and investigations. In fact as I reduced and reshaped the contexts I'd previously taught and began to prepare new ones, I rapidly concluded that it was not just a case of 'cutting stuff out'. The new decisions I had to make about what we would investigate, in how much depth and for what purpose required more care and more consideration to ensure they collectively provided a coherent and balanced structure that let students develop the skills and understandings I claimed to be targeting…. I came to realise more clearly than previously that contextual knowledge …was essential to carry the conceptual understandings and foster the historical thinking I was setting as my main learning goal' (Enright, pp. 15-16).

Discussion

Access to 'powerful knowledge'

The research findings indicate that it is an ongoing epistemological challenge for teachers to develop their school history programmes. While teachers have responded positively to the freedom to select historical content, negotiating disciplinary integrity alongside the demands of student engagement and assessment is complex and demanding. Social realist scholars have suggested that students need access to 'powerful knowledge', as defined earlier, in order to go from the specific to the general and theoretical. However it is questionable whether piecemeal programming and narrowed portions of historical learning have the capacity to meet the principles of powerful knowledge argued for by Young, Muller and others. In reducing knowledge to *that which is required for assessment,* the intrinsic value of *knowing* is downplayed. Young regards powerful knowledge as having 'generalising capacities' (Young, 2013, p. 108) and it would be dependent on the particulars of the 'bites of knowledge' learned for assessment purposes, whether they would transcend to a more abstract transferrable level. Counsell notes that "'overview' understandings probably lurk in every 'depth study'" (2000, p. 67) yet if these are not recognised and planned for by the teacher their value is likely to be lessened. Creating an appropriate balance between overview and depth in programmes is therefore important in facilitating the development of more universally applicable understandings.

The research illustrates how the achievement standards strongly drive selections of knowledge and how astute teachers' decisions need to be in order to adequately prepare students to address the required outcomes. As Allais (2006) has observed with outcomes-based education, the resulting programmes may not be 'based on the internal requirements or logic of a knowledge area; instead, knowledge areas (are)… selected on the basis that they can lead to the competence in question, or that they 'underpin' it' (p. 25). Teachers are clearly having difficulties negotiating the space between the *Official Recontextualising Field* (Bernstein 2000) represented by the *Curriculum* and controlled through the national examinations, and their freedoms in the domain of the *Pedagogic Recontextualising Field*.

Challenges of Sequence and Progression

A further consideration for school history departments is how to sequence learning to achieve the desirable epistemic ascent discussed by Winch (2013). Programming should ideally develop understanding of historical time and place over the three years of senior level history. Therefore, using the example of the *causes* and *consequences* standards, it is not just a matter of understanding causes and consequences of an event using greater analysis as the achievement standards may suggest, i.e. *'describe'* for Level 1, *'examine'* for Level 2, *'analyse'* for Level 3, but a matter of building knowledge of societal and political structures, knowledge of beliefs and practices and knowledge of sequences of events and the responses to those, that builds valuable understanding of an historical period, issue or idea. 'The acquisition of historical knowledge is cumulative in its impact' argues Counsell (2000 p. 62). In reality however, teachers' attention is often swayed more towards the practicalities of topic selection - their suitability for the standards, the resources available in their schools, and their perceptions of which topics will engage students - rather than 'epistemic ascent'.

Shemilt (2009), in a chapter entitled 'Drinking an ocean and pissing a cupful' comments on the problem that most students 'leave school with bits and pieces of knowledge that add up to very little' (p. 142). He is referring to circumstances where students are 'swamped by information' (p. 143) but have difficulty making sense of it as a cohesive body of knowledge. In New Zealand there may be an opposite approach where students are taught limited breadth of historical content, but with the possibility of a similar result.

The challenges of applying 'Historical Thinking' concepts

In New Zealand, while it is apparent that curriculum and assessment are based in broad terms upon 'historical thinking' concepts these are conflated in number and scope when compared with those in projects such as *The Historical Thinking Project* in Canada. In New Zealand the concepts of *cause and consequence*, understanding historical *perspectives*, and use of *primary evidence* are given weight and examined while the concept of historical significance is particularised to 'significance to New Zealanders'. The *'ethical dimension'* is not directly assessed and *'continuity and change'* is given little prominence.

While the application of these historical thinking elements sits alongside prescriptive content in most other nations, and are used therefore as a way of understanding particular content, in

New Zealand the process is reversed. This presents a challenge for teachers and students since rather than selecting and using historical thinking concepts when they are applicable, and selecting from the range, the *achievement objectives* and aligned standards begin with the concept and historical content is then chosen and framed to argue in relation to the concept. For example, if one selects an historical period such as the Vietnam War, rather than giving consideration to the full spectrum of the *significance* of the war, differing *perspectives* on the war, understanding how war in Vietnam has elements of *continuity* in its long history of fighting for independence, understanding *ethical dimensions* of foreign intervention in war, and incorporating use of *primary evidence* (i.e. the six historical thinking concepts identified in the Canadian *Historical Thinking Project*), New Zealand teachers begin by asking the question - What aspects of the Vietnam War would be useful for addressing the concepts of cause and consequence? This places the emphasis upon assessment outcomes rather than upon deploying historical thinking concepts for the purposes of students gaining a meaningful understanding of the Vietnam War.

For teachers this means that their pedagogical strategies need to be channelled and articulated in very precise ways and that teaching the topic as framed in school text books or histories of the period is entirely inadequate. Furthermore teachers' experiences of engaging with historical ideas and eras in their university degrees rarely adopt this form. There is therefore the potential for the narrow focus on events coupled with the directed framing to investigate *causes and consequences* or *perspective*s to distort some of the widely accepted interpretations which originated among the academic community of historians.

Conclusion

Teacher autonomy in the selection of historical content offers new possibilities to engage students in history. Astutely chosen historical contexts and thoughtfully sequenced programming can improve student's disciplinary engagement with history and provide access to knowledge that is powerful in its ability to facilitate abstracted thought. However the role of the curriculum designer is complex. The broad conceptual nature of *The New Zealand Curriculum* simultaneously encourages open choice of historical content while potentially narrowing the choice to a focus on a single historical event, or a single case study of perspectives on an event. There is ambiguity over the nature and importance of knowledge in the *Curriculum* and NCEA assessment which transfers the responsibility to teachers to manage

the interrelationships and balance between substantive and procedural knowledge. Students' awareness of the limited requirements for content knowledge can further exacerbate the difficulties for the teacher in designing a programme that can be sustained throughout the year. While delivery of powerful historical knowledge is possible under *The New Zealand Curriculum,* teachers' freedom to select is being constrained so that decisions are not founded entirely upon the intrinsic worth of the knowledge. The path currently being taken is uncharted territory and an ongoing challenge for history teachers.

Reflection

The challenges

This chapter has provided empirical evidence of the difficulties of making suitable choices of topics for the externally assessed achievement standards, with fewer concerns about the internally assessed standards. In 2019, despite teachers' greater experience with 'managing' the standards, curriculum choices are still a concern. At a meeting of the Auckland History Teachers' Association on 9 February 2019 attended by 45 teachers, attendees were debating whether a well-known topic such as the Russian Revolution was better or worse to do than a less familiar topic. The question was asked 'If you teach a new topic, do you do better?' By 'new' the teacher was pondering whether students were being 'penalised for topics that a lot (of students) do and the examiner knows well'. Should they 'choose something that is less mainstream?' However, in response a teacher noted his concern that 'If the marker doesn't know the topic then he/she won't recognise the sophistication' in the answer and therefore the student may not gain an appropriately high grade. This was followed by a comment by another teacher who talked about the way 'good students are knocked about by the external process – they get diddled out of their endorsements' (notes taken by Barbara Ormond; AHTA, 2019). While the teachers' complaints appear to relate to the quality of the marking, the teachers began this discussion with their concerns over what history to teach. Given that the current achievement standards, and the associated autonomy, were first introduced in 2011 one could conclude that eight years of 'practice' in making curricula choices has not overcome the challenges.

Furthermore this is backed up in reports published by the marking panel leaders in which there are frequent comments about the unsuitability of '*candidates*' choices. In most instances these will be *teachers'* choices as it is not common for students to determine their own topic selections. For example, in the report for Level 1 AS91005, 2016, the examination panel leader wrote:

> *The choice of event by candidates remains an area of concern.* … Natural disaster often disadvantaged the candidate as there were limited comprehensive causes and/or consequences. Candidates who chose events with historical depth such as the Birmingham Campaign, had the opportunity to write in more depth than an event such

> as The Little Rock Nine. Candidates who choose to write on a movement rather a specific event were similarly disadvantaged. A common example of this is The Black Civil Rights Movement or The Feminist Movement (NZQA, 2016d).

Similarly in 2017, the examiner for AS91234 wrote that:

> The selection of a relevant and conducive event remains fundamental. Some candidates selected a topic that, at times, limited their ability to discuss the effects in depth. For example, the topic was too great in breadth (NZQA, 2017a).

Both forms of evidence, teachers' and panel leaders' comments, therefore support the findings that teachers are very concerned with a suitable 'knowledge-fit' (see Chapter 7) for the standards and that there is no greater evidence in 2019 that teachers are now considering the fundamental curriculum question of *what knowledge is of most worth*? While I have written about the difficulties of curriculum making for the subject of history, Hipkins, Johnston and Sheehan (2016) argue, in relation to all subjects, that since the introduction of the NCEA there has been very 'little creative curriculum thinking that brings these two flexible elements *[i.e. curriculum and the NCEA achievement standards]* together' (p. 154) They largely put the fault down to traditional subject courses and the failure of hybrids to emerge. While this is beyond the scope of this thesis some of their reasoning for the lack of creativity is worth consideration. They comment that 'many teachers still default to traditional experience, seeing curriculum as a specification of topics to be covered' (p. 162), and trace the problem back to 'teachers' learning as they gained their subject-based qualifications' (p. 163). However, while that may be the case for the consideration of interdisciplinary studies this study has shown that teachers are not so much constrained by tradition but by external constraints and the discourse of performativity over which they have little control. Priestley (2016) argues that for teachers to have agency and schools to successfully develop their curriculum, teachers require knowledge of core educational principles, knowledge of the relevant research and knowledge of the 'system features that enable and constrain curriculum development' (17 October, para. 3). He also suggests that skilled external facilitators can be valuable. Such features have not been strong components in school curriculum development in New Zealand. Therefore, despite the appearance of flexibility in the *Curriculum* and its accompanying *achievement standards*, embedded within the framework are directions which produce priorities, diminish possibilities and constrain the enactor in their choices. The resultant complexities, without the necessary

support or recognition, have compounded the challenges and responsibilities of curriculum-making.

CHAPTER 9

The Impact of Standards-based Assessment on Knowledge

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Foreword

This chapter focusses on the role assessment plays in influencing the decisions teachers make about the history they choose to teach. It builds on the former chapter's discussion of the challenges and complexities of curriculum-making in illustrating further how the particularities of New Zealand's standards-based assessment system influences the paths teachers take. With performativity and accountability (Biesta, 2009; Singh, Heimans & Glasswell, 2014, Ball, 2003) at the heart of teachers' decisions, the manner in which the achievement standards are assessed heavily influences teachers' decisions to narrow their history topics and reduce the overall extent of their history programmes.

The tensions between control over outputs (the NCEA qualification) alongside a less regulatory approach to inputs (the broad *New Zealand Curriculum* and autonomy to select topics for history) is a well-recognised pattern in contemporary education (Nieveen and Kuiper, 2012; Erss, 2018; Biesta, 2004; 2009; Priestley & Philippou, 2018). In the case of New Zealand, we see a combination of centrally set outcomes and school responsibility for finding the means to achieve the outcomes. Karlsen (2000) calls this 'decentralised centralism' where decentralisation is linked to the marketisation of education to meet the needs of local consumers while central authorities oversee implementation and monitoring of national education policy. Such an approach allows governments to monitor schools and, by inference, teachers' performance. As Bernstein points out 'the market may have greater autonomy, but the devices of symbolic control are increasingly state regulated and monitored through the new techniques of de-centred centralisation' (2000, p. xxvi). However, while performativity and output control influences teachers' actions across the globe, and is evident both in heavily prescribed and in more autonomous curricula circumstances, the ways it impacts upon knowledge varies dependent on the context. Teachers often complain that the prescription they have to teach is

too large and leads to transmission-mode delivery in order to get through the required *quantity* of history (for example Harris and Burn, 2016). Heavy prescription of substantive knowledge may also mean there is insufficient time to engage in disciplinary knowledge such as undertaking historical inquiry. On the other hand, in New Zealand where the extent of historical coverage can be self-determined, a culture of accountability in schools and nationally has gradually shifted teachers' practices towards a reduced and segmented knowledge – knowledge which neatly fits the requirements of the achievement standards and rewards focused yet limited knowledge encounters. Teachers have learned over time to play the NCEA game better and better, but it often comes at the cost of breadth and cohesion of knowledge. A balance needs to be struck to avoid the pitfalls and extremes of either an excessive amount of prescription or an absent one.

The following article will provide discussion about how substantive knowledge for history, now exhibits the following features:

- Knowledge reduced to only the knowledge required to address the assessable features of the achievement standards.
- Knowledge narrowed to discrete portions of what might have formerly been a broader recognisable 'topic'.
- Knowledge reduced to fewer 'bites' of knowledge in yearly programmes and limited through non-engagement with some of the achievement standards.
- Knowledge reduced through important ideas, concepts or skills being addressed just once in a year's programme. Once assessed they are not revisited.

This reduction has emerged as a progressive shift in teachers' practices over the time frame of NCEA from 2002 to the present but has become more pronounced since autonomy over content selection was introduced between 2011 and 2013. The impacts upon knowledge have largely been unintended effects of policies and decisions which have been aimed at improving the reliability and transparency of the assessment system, rather than a deliberate means to downgrade knowledge.

The Impact of Standards-based Assessment on Knowledge for History Education in New Zealand

Outline

This paper examines how a standards-based form of assessment in operation in New Zealand has impacted upon the knowledge taught to secondary history students. The segmentation of history into assessable components along with assessment mechanisms which encourage the reduction in the number of standards being attempted, has impacted upon both the breadth and range of historical content in history programmes. The reduction in knowledge is problematic as it diminishes learners' opportunities to draw connections between inter-related historical concepts from a wider knowledge base. Social realists have raised concerns about the reduced focus on knowledge in education and its effects in restricting students' development of conceptual knowledge which enables higher order, more abstract thinking. Experiences of standards-based assessment for history in New Zealand are indicative of this reductive phenomenon. In a culture of accountability standards-based assessment, as enacted in New Zealand, may impede delivery of critical knowledge.

Introduction

In New Zealand, an exacting form of standards-based assessment has created the circumstances in which knowledge for history in secondary schools has become fragmented and narrowed. While teachers have the autonomy to select any historical content which they believe will best serve their students' learning, the precision in assessing against tightly worded standards has reduced freedom and flexibility and encouraged teachers to reduce the breadth of knowledge taught to their students. New Zealand's educational practices mirror recent global trends in framing curricula requirements in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) as outcomes-based goals which operate in tandem with extensive measuring and monitoring of student achievement against defined standards. Yet the two arms of educational policy, curriculum and assessment, have different purposes. While 21st century curricula are commonly focused upon developing students' learning capacities underpinned by a philosophy that students learn best when curriculum decisions are tailored to their perceived needs and recognise what students want to learn, these objectives are not easily reconciled in a culture of accountability for grades. Through research into teachers' explanations for their selections of knowledge and analysis of

the empirical data arising from national surveys on teachers' views on the standards used to assess history, this paper aims to illustrate the impact that standards-based assessment can have on programme design and cohesion of knowledge. The findings support the theoretical concerns raised by social realist scholars (e.g. Moore, 2013b; Young & Muller, 2013; Wheelahan, 2010; Rata, 2012) that acquisition and understandings of propositional knowledge no longer has a certain place in educational thinking and practice. This paper contributes to the increasing body of social realist literature on questions of knowledge. However while much of the focus has so far been on the place of knowledge *in curricula*, this paper aims to show that standards-based assessment, under certain conditions, can also play a part in marginalising knowledge.

The New Zealand Context

New Zealand, in common with many other nations, operates an outcomes form of education for both *curriculum* and *assessment*. While the terms used to express these outcomes vary across nations, at their core are statements which define learning expectations. In *The New Zealand Curriculum 2007,* the term *achievement objectives* is used to describe the skills, concepts or content to be addressed in each learning area. The *Curriculum* is a slim, single document applicable to all state primary and secondary schools. It was designed to be flexible to enable teachers to develop programmes perceived to be relevant and appropriate for the learners in their school communities. For history, the *achievement objectives* require a number of concepts to be addressed (e.g. causes, consequences, perspectives, historical significance) rather than specifying particular historical topics. Operating alongside the *Curriculum* is a standards-based assessment system with *achievement standards* for assessing senior secondary students (aged 16-18) for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The achievement standards, which had first been introduced in 2002, were revised between 2008 and 2010 to closely align with the curriculum *achievement objectives* (refer to Chapter 3 for an explanation of the alignment project). While this discussion therefore, has its focus upon the enactment of standards-based assessment, implied within that is the curriculum *achievement objectives* because of their symbiotic relationship.

Looney, in a report for the OECD (2011), states that

> the core logic of standards-based systems rests upon alignment of three key elements: standards defining knowledge and skills …, curricula … and student assessments and school evaluations which measure attainment of standards (p. 3).

The systematic approach to alignment undertaken to create coherence between the three elements therefore suggests that the New Zealand education system operates in accordance with what is considered to be best practice in standards-based assessment (see Table 1, Chapter 1, p. 14).

The potential for knowledge to be marginalised has its foundations in a minimalist approach to specifying the learning outcomes. There are two *achievement objectives* for each of the senior levels of history in the *Curriculum,* comprising a total of only 108 words for the three levels of history (see Appendix E). Using Level 1 of the *Curriculum* as an example, the first achievement objective focusses upon *causes and consequences* and the second requires students to understand how people's *perspectives* differ. During the alignment process, each of these was translated into an *achievement standard* at Level 1 of the NCEA. Achievement standard AS91005 directly assesses understanding of *causes and consequences* of an historic event while standard, AS91004, assesses understanding of *perspectives.* The limitations of the *Curriculum achievement objectives* were addressed through additional standards to assess disciplinary processes and concepts such as interpreting historical sources, skills of inquiry and communication, and understanding the effects of significant events on New Zealand society (see matrix of standards, Appendix F). Due to the broadly stated *Curriculum* where there were no prescribed topics and themes for history, teachers gained responsibility for determining the historical content of their programmes from the time of this alignment in 2011. The new achievement standards were implemented for each senior level progressively between 2011 and 2013 and they comprise both internally assessed standards, where the assessment tasks are designed and marked by the teacher, and externally assessed standards for which students sit a three-hour nation-wide examination at the end of the year. The examinations are marked by national assessment panels and each panel marks one achievement standard.

While the six achievement standards provide scope for designing programmes which have breadth, depth and range, teachers and students can be selective of the standards they address

There is no requirement or expectation that students be assessed against all of the standards and schools and teachers are encouraged to reduce the number of standards to reduce the workload for students. Each standard has a separate exam paper or assessment, with enrolments recorded separately for each standard. The number of standards attempted may be determined by the teacher or by the student. For example, during the three-hour, examination students may sit all three externally assessed standards for history, but most will be sitting two of the standards and some will be sitting one standard. Through doing fewer standards more time can be given to completing them. This may then yield higher grades. The achievement standards evaluate students against criteria with three grades of achievement - Achievement, Achievement with Merit, and Achievement with Excellence (refer to Table 12) and each standard accrues credits, with between 4 and 6 credits per standard for history. At each level, students need a total of 80 credits across all their subjects to gain a NCEA certificate. The NCEA forms part of a *National Qualifications Framework* which encompasses both senior secondary and tertiary qualifications.

Table 12

Achievement Criteria for Achievement Standard AS91005, Level 1.

Achievement Criteria		
Achievement	**Achievement with Merit**	**Achievement with Excellence**
• Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event.	• Describe in depth the causes and consequences of an historical event.	• Comprehensively describe the causes and consequences of an historical event.

Ministry of Education, (2014b).

Conceptual Framework

To understand the impact of standards-based assessment on history education in New Zealand three key fields of educational discourse are examined. First social realist theories within the field of the sociology of knowledge are examined to explain the epistemological features necessary for delivering critical knowledge. Secondly, consideration is given to the principles

underpinning standards-based assessment and its potential to adequately assess the breadth and inter-relatedness of important propositional knowledge. Thirdly the interface between assessment and accountability are explored to examine how high accountability models can impact on the knowledge students are taught.

Social Realism and the place of knowledge

In response to trends internationally in curricula where skills for 'learning to learn' and broad vision statements have taken precedence over specifying particular propositional knowledge, social realist literature has raised concerns about the side-lining of this form of knowledge. Propositional knowledge, refers to content and concepts, in contrast to generic skills or processes. For history propositional knowledge includes the content of knowing about people, places and events in the past and concepts such as nationalism and communism. In refocussing attention on the importance of knowledge in contemporary education debates, Young (2009b) asks 'What are schools for?' and argues that the question of the place of knowledge in schooling has 'been neglected by both policy makers and educational researchers' (p. 11). The issue is gaining attention of scholars in different disciplines with studies undertaken into, for example, geography (Lambert, 2011), physics (Yates & Millar, 2016) and music (McPhail, 2017).

A social realist view of knowledge recognises that knowledge has been developed and exists within its social context. It is knowledge which is real and reliable, although not infallible, because it is produced and critiqued within communities of practice, such as academic communities. Developing from social realist theory is the concept of powerful knowledge (Young & Muller, 2013) which, social realists argue, all students should be given access to. Powerful knowledge has 'generalising capacities' (Young, 2013, p. 108) which enables the learner to make interconnections to create a framework into which new knowledge may be understood. Powerful knowledge emerges when contexts and concepts are explored in sufficient depth and breadth for students to be able to engage with their central principles.

Standards-based assessment

While a curriculum is foundational in determining the knowledge taught to students, the ways in which students are assessed on their knowledge also plays a role in both validating particular knowledge and in the ways knowledge is selected, framed and taught. With standards-based

assessment the standards comprise statements which define the knowledge students are expected to understand. This can include propositional knowledge or skills and competencies which students are expected to demonstrate that they can do. Standards therefore have the potential to clarify what is important to learn (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The effectiveness and value of the assessment against standards is highly dependent on the particular nature of the standards, the mechanisms by which they are implemented, and the accountability framework in which they operate.

The process of determining *standards,* which Sadler (2014) calls *codification*, involves identifying and separating out the critical components of a subject and condensing down a body of propositional knowledge, disciplinary concepts or skills into manageable and measurable 'bites'. A study of literature on standards-based assessment by Rawlins et al. in 2005, in which 88 publications were analysed, concluded that standards-based assessment was perceived to have the benefits of improved student understanding of what is being assessed, greater accuracy in teacher judgements, improved generic skills, and the replacement of 'quota' or norm-referenced systems (p. 108). The difficulties of standards-based systems, on the other hand, were identified as 'atomisation' of learning and the reductionist effect of standards on narrowing of curriculum, over-assessment, and the focus on assessment rather than on learning (p. 108). Knowledge, therefore, has the potential to be marginalised through the implementation of standards-based systems as it is only seen to be valid where it is directly applicable to achieving a standard. 'The knowledge that counts is the knowledge that is visible in performance' (Allais, 2014, p. 144). In making curriculum and teaching decisions, teachers therefore, 'design down' (Allais, 2006, p. 25) from the standards. Where these standards are broad concepts or skills, as is the case for history education in New Zealand, Allais (2014) points out that, propositional 'knowledge cannot, in this approach, be the starting point' (p. 25).

While the division of a subject into discrete standards has beneficial effects in clarifying what is important to learn, it can also disrupt the disciplinary coherence of a subject and reduce comprehensibility for students. Sadler (2007) argues that 'The further this decomposition progresses, the harder it is to make the bits work together as a coherent learning experience which prepares learners to operate in intelligent and flexible ways' (pp. 389-90). Moreover, Fountain (2008) comments that learning is assumed to be 'a linear process that functions like a machine, and that every piece can be taken apart, analysed, and then put back together' (p. 136) but he poses the question –

> Can the subject of history (or any other knowledge-based discipline) actually be disassembled and reassembled in this way? History is a subject where a student's progress depends on the depth and breadth of their understanding about the past rather than isolated measurable, and transferrable skills (p. 136).

The reductive effects of utilising just enough knowledge to address the standards is often further compounded by the common practice that students are usually assessed against a standard just once so that the 'peas-sized bits (are) to be swallowed one at a time – and for each bit, once only' (Sadler, 2007, p. 390). Whether a single experience of a concept or skill learned once for the purposes of achieving a standard is sufficient to enable that learning to be transferrable, is doubtful. While there may be an expectation that teachers revisit concepts or skills repeatedly to ensure the learning process is robust, the purpose of gaining the standard or a qualification is likely to be foremost in both teachers' and students' minds so that achievement of an outcome be ticked off and learning moves quickly on to the next bite-sized segment. Furthermore, Torrance (1995) comments that 'empirical evidence … suggests that minimum standards or minimum competency often become a *de facto* maximum as teachers strive to make sure all students reach the minimum (p. 149).

Transparency

A key goal of standards-based assessment is that it is *transparent* which refers to the clarity with which the standard is described. It should be able to be read and interpreted with a high degree of consistency by all users, and enable the learner to know in advance, and work towards, what he or she needs to demonstrate to reach the standard (Looney, 2011, p. 12). The degree of transparency can have implications for knowledge. Where teachers are very clear about the level of achievement required to meet a standard, knowledge may be tailored to the precise requirements of a standard. Where there is uncertainty in interpreting the standard, teachers may over-deliver on knowledge in an attempt to cover all bases, or favour detail over breadth.

Sadler (2014) argues that the qualities referred to in standards are not 'directly observable or measurable'. They are drawn from 'inferences based on evidence' in student responses.

'Codifications therefore cannot 'hold' standards by serving as stable reference points for judging and reporting on different levels of student achievement' (p. 275). Nevertheless, regardless of whether this goal of transparency is achievable, this assertion and promise of transparency encourages both government officials and teachers to seek out precision about what is required. In the search for transparency, a 'spiral of specification' (Wolf, 1995, p. 55; Allais, 2014, p. 147) arises in order to clarify the standards and create shared meanings and understandings. The clarifications and mechanisms for assurance then become so complex that transparency may further be lost. Furthermore, the process of adding layers of specification leads to a narrowing of the domain (Wolf, p. 55) to which the outcome relates. This reduces knowledge to that which fits the new specifications, overall resulting in 'narrowly specified bits of information' (Allais, 2014, p. xx).

Torrance (2007) also suggests that 'transparency encourages instrumentalism' (p. 281). 'Going ever-so systematically through all the steps, actually turns out to be instrumental in subverting the goal of assessment' (Sadler, 2007, p. 389). Elevating the focus of education to singularly and primarily the achievement of specified standards can lead to teachers and students regarding the role of teaching and learning as one and the same. This is commonly recognised as '*assessment for learning*' and while this has validity in terms of its recognition of the value of integrating learning with assessment, there has been a shift to the point where this is, to use Torrance's phrase, 'assessment as learning' 'with assessment procedures and processes completely dominating the teaching and learning experience' (2007, p. 291). Assessment therefore 'masquerades as, or substitutes for, learning itself' (Sadler, 2007, p. 388) and ultimately leads to altered perceptions of the purposes of assessment.

The interface between assessment and accountability

Governments attribute significant worth to accountability factors such as the comparative measures of PISA and TIMSS in order to ensure educational systems produce students who are globally competitive and will be able to contribute to the economies of the future. In order to meet these global expectations there is therefore pressure on governments to raise standards and monitor delivery of curriculum. To do this, student progress needs to be measured and schools and teachers made accountable for student achievement against such benchmarks. In New Zealand assessment results are reported on nationally on an annual basis, for example *NZQA, Annual Report on NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship Data & Statistics (2016),*

(2017b), and each school's results are publicly available. Through comparative analysis between subjects and years, the government aims to show progress in relation to national targets. However, there is a contradiction in play. Forms of curricula which focus upon critical thinking skills and generic competencies, such as *The New Zealand Curriculum*, are founded on expectations of teacher autonomy to determine local curricula in the best interests of students. When accompanied by standardised testing or highly specified standards-based assessment the flexibility of determining what is taught, is often weakened or undermined. 'The technical-managerial approach to accountability can in no way be reconciled with an approach in which responsibility is central' (Biesta, 2004, p. 250). Schwartz (2009) explains that the United States move to nationwide standards has created accountability, which he regards as a good thing because it has shifted resources to those who are need it and provided incentives for district leaders, but he argues that the challenge is to 'recalibrate the balance between top-down and bottom-up control' (p. 16). Similarly, Looney (2011) asks the question 'Is it possible to achieve an appropriate balance between bureaucratic needs for accountability and a strong role for teachers as professionals?' (p. 5).

Research Methodology

Evidence for this paper is drawn from interviews, on-line surveys and official documentation. Semi-structured interviews of history department leaders in six secondary schools were undertaken through two interviews, a year apart, in 2014 and 2015. To select the participants, purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 169) using schools from a range of deciles (a method used to classify schools according to the socio-economic backgrounds of students and used for funding purposes) and teachers with a range of experience levels, was chosen to enable the research findings to be representative of the diversity of schools and of value to history teachers and policy makers across New Zealand. The teachers ranged from those with over twenty years' experience as Heads of Department, to those who had recently taken on the responsibility. The interviews, which had ethics approval, were undertaken by the author with no formal connections to the institutions in which the teachers worked. The interviews inquired into selections of historical topics for assessment and the principles upon which choices were made. Of the ten interview questions, the two questions which were most relevant and provided data for this paper were:

1. What were the most important factors in making the selections (of content)?

2. Explain how the different requirements for external and internal assessment impacted upon your choices of topic.

The interview data was coded to categorise the factors contributing to teachers' choices of history content and these were further coded to distinguish comments which related to either internal or external assessments. Following the second interviews, points of difference between each teachers' comments in successive years were identified.

Four on-line surveys of history teachers undertaken by the *New Zealand History Teachers' Association* (NZHTA) between 2014 and 2016 provide a larger data set (refer to Table 13). The surveys inquired into teachers' views on examination papers, marking and results, and on whether changes should be made to the standards. Therefore, while the interviews focused more broadly on school history programmes and their relationship to assessment requirements, the NZHTA surveys were more directly investigating teachers' views on assessment. Official documentation derived from the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on policies and requirements in relation to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the NCEA, is also referred to. The combination of sources serves to triangulate the evidence and give validity to the findings.

Table 13

New Zealand History Teachers Association Surveys 2014 - 2016.

Title and Date of Survey	Length of document (pages)	No. of respondents	Survey Content
2014 Externals 1: The Papers	60	148	Views on the 2014 examination papers – whether they addressed the standard fairly, whether the question(s) were open to responses from the contexts students had studied, whether the tasks were appropriate to the level.
2014 Externals: The Results	54	132	Views on the validity of student results
History Department Survey 2015	51	106	The approach taken in programme planning, the extent to which changes should be made to the standards to improve them, views on issues with the current standards, suggestions for changes to the examination format.
History Matrix Review (NCEA) initial questionnaire 2016	25	87	Views on whether NZHTA should embark on its own standards review process, which standards should be re-considered, whether aspects of New Zealand history should be made compulsory.

Research Findings

Teachers have considerable concerns about the impact of assessment on the delivery of history education. In circumstances where assessment is closely controlled and where interpretations of requirements in the standards have shifted in subtle but significant ways since their implementation from 2011, there is increasing uncertainty over what is required of students and how best to prepare students. While the interviewees and survey respondents raised issues about the nature of the assessments which went beyond concerns over knowledge, the research identified the following as significant impacts of standards-based assessment on history programmes.

1. The narrowing of history programmes to focus upon selected concepts, skills and containable historical events at the expense of integrated learning and 'big picture' history.
2. The manner in which full alignment between the achievement standards and student assessments has resulted in 'generic' examination questions, which in turn has encouraged students to pre-prepare their responses and learn just sufficient to address the question(s).
3. The rising expectations of students' levels of achievement year after year which has led to more detailed responses. When coupled with the overall drive to improve grades through reducing the number of standards being attempted, the breadth and range of knowledge is reduced.

Narrowing of history

Teachers recognised that their history programmes had narrowed. Of the six research participants five directly commented that they believed such narrowing was problematic while one participant continues, for some standards, to teach broader topics leaving it to the students to choose a narrower focus to prepare for the examinations. A key factor contributing to the narrowing is the way in which the selected disciplinary concept or skill for each standard becomes the focus and framework for the teaching and learning. This impacts upon the capacity of teachers to freely and authentically deal with an historical topic in terms of both breadth and depth and dissuades teachers from bringing in other relevant concepts or skills when applicable. The reality of designing programmes to address the individual standards is that the targeted aspect, such as *perspectives*, provides a narrowed frame for examining a topic. In an interview, Linda *(pseudonyms have been assigned to the interviewed research participants)* comments that –

> I think what has changed is the fact that we are not delivering a detailed narrative through the topic as much. We're using the topic to deliver a concept or a skill so it might be historical sources working with historical sources or it might be working with causation. So that becomes the driver and it changes the way we deliver the topic. I think the students are the poorer conversely because they are being driven towards this narrow definition of what history is. It's an event and it's about causes and consequences about that event (Interview 2).

In this comment Linda also points to the way in which the focus upon an *event* for many of the achievement standards (refer to Appendix F) has encouraged a narrowing to a containable single historical event. Examining an historical theme, a broader historical period, or continuities and changes over time are less suitable for most standards. Illustrating the focus upon an event using an example from a Level 1 programme in her school, Linda explained - 'So we just take (the) Montgomery (Bus Boycott) out of black civil rights and … we don't want our textbook on black civil rights anymore – we just want one chapter' (Interview 1). Matthew advocates that it is important to 'get the big picture of everything that is going on as opposed to just these small bits' and suggests that in the current structure there is 'not that scope to think about the bigger picture … trends and patterns get lost'. He then explained why teachers design programmes in this manner – 'Because I guess you want kids to pass ultimately'.

However, teachers do point out that the history standards which require students to undertake research (AS910001, AS91229 and AS91434) and communicate their findings (AS91002, AS91230 and AS91435) (refer to Appendix F), are generally considered to be working well. For these standards, undertaken at any point during the school year, teachers design and mark the assessments. This means teachers have greater control over outcomes and can require students to investigate longer periods of history, or investigate a topic more holistically, if they wish.

Further encouraging the narrowing of students' studies in history are mechanisms known as *certificate endorsement* and *course endorsement* introduced by NZQA (the body overseeing the NCEA qualification) to recognise high achievement and incentivise learners to apply themselves and go beyond *just* achieving the standards. The NCEA certificate records all standards which students achieve, and the certificate as a whole, or an individual course, may be 'endorsed' as 'Merit' or 'Excellence' where students gain the required number of these higher grades. Students are astute in making their own decisions not to attempt particular standards. They seek to reduce the number of standards in order to gain the remaining standards at a higher achievement level. Most schools also limit the number of achievement standards they teach each year and each of the six research participants identified at least one of the six achievement standards at each year level which were not included in their programmes. For history one common way of achieving this reduction is to complete fewer externally assessed standards. The three hour examination for the *external* standards can then be dedicated to

completing the assessment for just one standard, or two standards, which gives time for writing lengthy answers. Matthew explains the reality that there is greater value inherent in gaining higher grades of achievement for fewer standards, while the acquisition of more credits accrued through sitting additional standards is perceived to have little value.

> You get your three excellences for the internal standards and one for the external and that is your endorsement. You know, no one is giving a prize for the kid who gets 120-130 excellence credits. People really stop caring once you get 80 of them (Interview 2).

> Students become very focused on only what is required for the exam throughout the year. Content is not as big a focus – history skills are. A balance needs to be achieved to ensure they are gaining both. Also, the now fashionable option of withdrawing students from a paper as they want excellence. It feels like there is so much focus on credits and excellence instead of developing all necessary history skills (NZHTA, Survey 2015, Comment 13, p. 38).

While Sadler (2007) has suggested that it is problematic that components targeted in standards are commonly addressed just once before moving on, this is therefore further exasperated in New Zealand by the non-engagement with many of the standards in the first instance. The incentive to reduce standards also impacts upon knowledge of historical content as it encourages the minimising the number of historical 'topics' studied in each year's programme. Whereas a Level 1 programme, prior to the introduction of standards-based assessment in 2002, contained six topics for the national examination, the number of topics studied in a year is now likely to be three, with perhaps only one topic used for the examination and two for the internally assessed standards. Four of the six research participants taught three topics in the year's programme, one taught two topics and the remaining participant included three topics for assessment but briefly addressed a further topic to provide context. However, in assigning some standards to the 'untaught basket', learning opportunities can be lost and the cohesion of the discipline of history can be affected.

The external standards most commonly left out of history programmes are those requiring study of New Zealand history (AS91006 and AS91234). In 2016 only 33% of Level 1 students and 18% of Level 2 students sat these standards (NZQA 2016b). Through non-participation, propositional knowledge of New Zealand's past is weakened. Similarly, many students did not

sit the source interpretation standards (AS91003, AS91231, and AS91436). For example, in 2016, just under half of the students at Level 2 attempted the paper examining interpretation of primary and secondary sources even though this standard targets a universally recognised core disciplinary skill in history. The avoidance of the source interpretation standards largely arises because the historical topic used for the sources examination is not known until the time of the examination and therefore cannot be prepared for. This produces uncertainty for candidates. Since the topic is not taught during the year, it also contributes to the narrowing of school history programmes.

Pre-preparation of examination responses – the 'generic' examination questions

The implementation of a well aligned triage of curriculum, standards and student assessment in circumstances where there are no prescribed history topics, has been facilitated through the introduction of 'generic' questions. For most of the externally assessed standards, the exception being those assessing source interpretation, each examination paper contains a single question designed to be capable of being answered using any historical content. Because the questions are required to precisely assess the achievement standard, they are written in a manner which closely matches the wording of the achievement standards' criteria (see Table 14). While this alignment is seen as desirable and a fundamental feature of standards-based assessment (Looney 2011) when put into practice it provides the circumstances for students to fully pre-prepare their responses and gives little incentive for students to learn beyond the narrow confines of the requirements of the examination question.

Table 14

NCEA History Examination Questions 2016 and 2017 for Levels 1, 2 and 3

NCEA Examination Questions 2016 and 2017		
Level of the NCEA	Achievement Standard	Examination Question
1	AS91005 Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event.	2016 Identify and describe the causes of your chosen historical event. What were the short-term and long-term consequences of the event for people and / or groups?
		2017 Identify and describe TWO main causes of your chosen historical event. What were TWO main consequences of the event for people and / or groups?
2	AS91233 Examine causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	2016 Examine the long-term and short-term causes of a significant historical event, and explain the consequences.
		2017 Examine the causes of a significant historical event, and its positive and / or negative consequences.
3	AS91438 Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event.	2016 Analyse the extent to which particular factors caused a significant historical event, and the different ways this event changed people's lives over an extended period of time.
		2017 Analyse the most important causes of a significant historical event, and the extent to which the consequences of this event changed people's lives at the time.

Achievement standards and examination questions which assess the causes and consequences of an historical event. (NZQA, [n.d.] *History subject resources*).

The generic approach to the questions also leaves the examiner with little room to manoeuvre so examination questions are relatively predictable. In a 2015 NZHTA survey history teachers were asked to consider the main issues with the current achievement standards. Of the 87 respondents, 63% felt that 'The external standards put unreasonable/unnecessary constraints on the nature of exams'. In the NZHTA survey on the 2014 examinations there were also 27 comments expressing concern about the difficulties arising from the generic questions and on the capacity for students to rote learn their essay answers. For example –

> The question is too predictable and as a result many students attempt to rote learn essays written in class. This is not really a good assessment of their understanding of the event – just an assessment of how well they can memorise material (NZHTA, 2014a, Comment 21, p.17).

These difficulties associated with generic questions were specifically mentioned by five of the six interviewees when discussing their selections of content. Karen commented

> I love having the freedom I do, you know (but) what I perhaps don't like so much … is that we have got these generic questions which are lending themselves to rote learnt answers (Interview 1).

Bianca recognised that students could 'rote learn a fairly good essay and get an excellence because the question doesn't really change' (Interview 2) and Stephen commented on the prevalence of the practice - 'everyone is going in with a prepared answer'. Matthew viewed the process as 'game playing' saying that teachers 'make the essay standalone so the students can copy it (and) take it away for preparation for the externals'. Matthew also put the success of the students down to the extent to which teachers provide students with quality answers. He argued that 'if the teacher can write the main causes and consequences essay, the students can rote learn (and) do well, but if the teacher can't, the students are going to struggle'. Reflecting on his own practice he commented that 'I think I can prepare (an essay) to get excellence but I'm trying not to do that. Morally I don't think it's right but I know it is happening' (Interview 2). Linda suggests a feeling of powerlessness – 'the person absolutely committed to the generic world would say that it is all in the hands of the teacher. They have all the power to change the

scenario if they want to [with open choice of content] but I would argue that we are hamstrung by the structure of the standards' (Interview 2).

The examiner however, is faced with a dilemma. While the opportunity to fully pre-prepare answers is clearly viewed as a major concern arising from the generic questions, teachers also voice their concerns when examinations depart from the exact requirements of the standards. On occasions when the examiner has tried to introduce a new twist on the generic question to avoid its inevitable sameness from year to year, teachers have been outspoken in their complaints, particularly when the altered question disadvantages their students through the selected topic being a poor fit. The examiner is then accused of not sticking to and honouring the standard.

> If they are going to have generic questions, I would just wish that they then don't try and change it by adding in random little words to … trick the students because that's really frustrating. It throws them off guard (Bianca, Interview 1).

> For some reason a moronic person set this exam [Examination question for AS91006, 2014]. It featured words 'action' and 'reaction' which don't even appear in the standard!!! It was completely unfair and totally unexpected that the whole standard would be sabotaged in this way (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 54, p.16).

It is the combination of the tight adherence to written standards alongside freedom of content which has had such an impact on the delivery of history education in New Zealand. Where students can pre-prepare their answers, knowledge which sits beyond the parameters of the requirements of an examination question, is viewed as having little worth. As the respondents from one history department observed:

> We have come a long way down the generic pathway with some unexpected consequences. We have doubts whether we could, without the decades it took to develop, re-establish the rigorous character of school history as it was' (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 1, p. 42).

Rising expectations and uncertainty

Also arising from the generic questions is the perception and reality of ever higher expectations and the impact this has on what and how students learn. In circumstances where students can pre-prepare their examination responses there has been a progressive shift in expectation that answers provide ever greater detail. This has encouraged teachers to focus upon depth of response at the expense of breadth. In the 2015 NZHTA survey the broad questions 'To what extent should there be changes to the standards to improve them?' and 'What do you consider are the main issues with the current standards?', gave rise to 21 specific comments that there was a lack of clarity over what was required and that more is expected year on year for the equivalent grades (pp. 33-39). Only one respondent expressed the view that he or she was certain of requirements - 'I have got to the stage where I can work out what we have now'.

Each of the six research participants similarly reported concerns over rising expectations and feelings of uncertainty. Stephen commented on the way markers were 'looking for more' which he suggested was a 'by-product of the fact that everyone can prepare' their answer (Interview 2). Karen illustrated how extra elements are being expected in student answers giving the example that 'historiography seems to be creeping into Level 2 as well'. Linda commented that 'it's insufficient to just do it in depth, you have to do it in depth plus, plus more. The standard just incrementally creeps up which is why we dropped *achievement standard* AS91438 this year. We get swamped by the need for detail'. Since students are not required to address all of the external standards during the examination, where students only do one standard they can write longer, more detailed answers in the examination time allowance. As one teacher observed 'Some schools are encouraging students to spend three hours to write an essay – this means each year the benchmark to pass is being raised higher and higher (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 44, p. 16). This phenomenon is exemplified in the following comments.

> Essays that three years ago would achieve a Merit, are now only attaining Achievement and (there is) the emergence of the super-essay to gain Excellence' (NZHTA, 2014b, Comment 26, p. 15).

> They seem to shift the goals posts every year. It is almost impossible for students to get Excellence unless they write 1500-2000 words (NZHTA, 2014b, Comment 52, p. 20).

While it could be argued that rising expectations have led to, or are a reflection of, improved outcomes with students successfully handling greater detail, teachers' responses do not suggest that this is a sensible or a viable development.

> We have an absurd raising of the bar each year …The standard should not be set by the outstanding but instead by what is required by the Achievement Standard – I no longer trust this is occurring or we would not see this huge rise in demands (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 1, p. 45).

> 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 (Linda, Interview 2).

In addition to the reduced number of standards addressed by students, the rising expectations and increasing length of answers can also be attributed to a statistical mechanism *Profiles of Expected Performance* (PEPs) which were instituted as a means to distribute the Achievement, Merit and Excellence grades in similar percentages from year to year for the examinable standards. Percentages for each grade are based, according to the NZQA, on 'historical information, statistical analysis and the professional judgement of marking Panel Leaders and NZQA staff' (NZQA, 2011b, p. 66). While the purpose of PEPs is sound, in that they provide some measure of consistency in the allocation of grades, they have drawn the criticism that the PEPs determine the standard rather than the achievement criteria. 'There is a huge problem with these generic questions because it is the marking panel and the PEP that determines the standard, not the standard (itself)' (NZHTA, 2014a, Comment 22, p. 29).

In the belief that the required standard is continually on the rise, teachers are being driven to constantly fine tune their teaching and curricula choices to meet assessment ends. The editor of the Auckland History Teachers Association, Jim Frood, e-mailed all members in August 2016 with suggestions on how to improve the essays still further.

> Students should aim to include historiography and some memorised quotes to add impact and authority to their essays.

He then notes that:

> **Neither** of those requirements (historiography or quotes) are in the standards or assessment specifications. But the essays in the popular causes and consequences standards have tended to become a bit predictable over successive years. Anything you and your students can do to lift essays above just average attempts, should pay dividends. It is clear that over the past several years NCEA history has become an 'arms race' of rising expectations – longer and more fluent essays gaining better results.

Adopting such suggestions means that both the propositional historical knowledge taught to students, and teachers' approaches to disciplinary skills, are undergoing change and expansion as teachers seek to gain an edge in assessment.

Teachers have noted that longer answers are also a feature of internal assessment. Bianca explained that 'some of the assignments would get up to 5,000 words' for their response to the standard which assesses an historical inquiry AS91435 *Analyse an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders*. However, she did not feel that this was driven at national level saying, 'so I wonder if it's us doing it. I also sometimes wonder if it's just the students, they just kind of think if we keep going, if I keep explaining more I'm going to get a better (grade) - quantity over quality sort of thing' (Interview 2). The National Moderator, who moderates the internal assessment grades nationally, commented that 'Students, particularly at Level 3, sometimes produce a far greater breadth of evidence than is needed, even for Excellence' (NZQA, 2016c). The overall shift in many school programmes to greater depth and fewer standards, can therefore be seen for both internal and external assessment and the added depth places pressure on the time available for teachers to go beyond the assessed knowledge to gain the standards, to broader framework knowledge.

Transparency in interpreting the standards and assessing student work

Linked to the concerns about the rising expectations is that the goal of transparency in interpreting the achievement standards comes into question. The NZQA has in place measures to achieve their goals of transparency and fairness of assessments (NZQA, [n.d.], *Understanding NCEA*). This includes rigorous checking and critiquing of examination papers,

the provision of assessment schedules and examination panel leaders reports, returning marked examination papers to all students following the publication of results for the NCEA examinations (a feature which is unique to New Zealand according to the NZQA, ([n.d.] *Understanding NCEA*) and enabling students to apply for a reconsideration of their grade. The latter provides an opportunity for teachers to scrutinise student answers and results and gain professionally from a greater awareness of how grades were allocated.

Nevertheless, survey comments indicate that teachers have concerns about the examiners having expectations beyond the criteria in the standards, or that the criteria on which answers were marked lacked transparency, or that the marking was inconsistent. An analysis of the survey responses concerning the 2014 examination question for AS91005 *Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event* reveals that 13 of the 31 comments made specific mention that the question expected students to discuss the 'significance' of an event and therefore went beyond the requirements of the achievement standard (NZHTA, 2014a, pp. 16-18).

After receiving the results back from the 2014 examinations, teachers in the survey conducted in early 2015 wrote:

> Wondering what on earth students have to do to get Excellence … It seems like the markers are not adhering to the achievement standard but have a standard all of their own that we are not privy to (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 4, p. 14).

> I have numerous students that have answered … very very well with specific examples and quotes etc. and a lot of detail and still only got Merit. They come to me asking why??? and I can't actually give them an answer (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 20, p.15).

So while the purpose of a *standard* is that the qualities required for success are stated ahead of assessment and that they can be consistently measured, teachers' experiences are that the standard is neither transparent or immovable. The uncertainty influences teachers' decisions on what historical knowledge to teach with a common response being to narrow the field of history and engage in that field with greater depth.

Discussion

The empirical evidence suggests that social realist concerns about the marginalisation of knowledge are justified in circumstances where a standards-based form of assessment exhibits the commonly practiced features of segmenting knowledge into manageable units for assessment and where accountability for grades encourages teachers to narrow knowledge in order to focus closely and almost exclusively on assessment requirements. While the enactment of standards-based assessment in New Zealand meets the fundamental design goals recognised and utilised widely across the world with the three elements, the achievement standards, the *Curriculum* and student assessments, appropriately aligned (Looney 2011) this study points to problems when other variables come into play. In particular, it illustrates the difficulties of assessment when the knowledge to be taught to students, through an 'empty curriculum', is so open that generic examinations questions are required to provide access for all. It therefore points to the problem of designing assessments for contemporary curricula which espouse learner-led goals, flexibility, and prioritising generic competencies over prescribed knowledge.

Sadler (2014) speaks of the futility of attempting to codify standards, that they will always be 'elastic in their interpretation' (p. 275). He argues that more detailed descriptions cannot make meanings clearer because 'their specifiers are in turn of the same essence and type as the main elements. … All of them are fuzzy and do not lock things down definitely' (p. 279). This study also illustrates that transparency in assessment is an unobtainable notion – that the written descriptors cannot provide teachers with a clear understanding of *what the standard is.* While this view is supported through research by Sadler (2014), Looney (2011), Rawlins et al. (2005) and others it is not always recognised by policy makers. NZQA, instead has aimed to clarify the standards. The experience in New Zealand therefore concurs with Allais' research that there is a spiral of specification in an attempt to make transparent the limited original statements in *standards*. The body of documentation has continually expanded over the period of enactment, for example *clarifications* documents, and as a consequence, there have been re-interpretations, shifts in emphasis and clarifications of the standards on an ongoing basis (see NZQA, [n.d.] *History subject resources*).

Various mechanisms such as the PEPs, course and certificate endorsements, and grade and cut-score marking, which allocates numerical scores to differentiate within grade bands (see Table 15) have also been introduced over the period of the NCEA to overcome issues as they have

arisen and are indicative of the complexities and difficulties of implementing the standards-based system in New Zealand. While not all mechanisms have had a direct impact upon knowledge, their combined weight has influenced conceptions of knowledge (see Chapter 7).

Table 15

Cut scores – History (AS91005)

Cut scores - History AS91005			
Not Achieved	**Achievement**	**Achievement with Merit**	**Achievement with Excellence**
0-2 marks	3-4 marks	5-6 marks	7-8 marks

Cut score grades for AS91005 – *Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event,* Examination 2015. (NZQA, [n.d.] *History subject resources*)

As shown through this case study in history education, the standards have had a reductive effect on knowledge, narrowing the historical topics selected to address the standards and dis-incentivising engagement with more comprehensive history programmes and 'big picture' history. While not common to all standards-based systems across the world, the facility in New Zealand to selectively choose standards while ignoring other standards normally seen as critical to any study of history, is actively encouraged. Both the drive by students and teachers to gain higher grades and the desire by policy developers and teachers to avoid over-burdening students with assessment, has seen the number of standards addressed by students declining each year. The course endorsement mechanism, in particular, has put a higher premium on grades for few standards at the expense of credits gained over a greater number of standards.

The pressure to reduce the number of standards is an accountability matter. Students' grades and therefore teacher responsibility for such results are paramount when school performance is publicly compared in league tables. Nationally, locally and at teacher level it becomes important to 'play the game' efficiently to produce results. In a 2012 NZCER report 53% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel under pressure to boost my students' NCEA results' (Hipkins, 2013, p. 17) and, in 2015, this figure was 77% (Wylie and Bonne, 2016, p. 22). One of the research participants echoed this finding commenting that,

> I feel under pressure to improve my students' NCEA results. We are quite results driven in terms of government targets around percentage of kids getting Level 2 and that's sort of what we are held accountable for. So it is really about getting results' (Stephen).

He is referring to a policy which states that 'To boost skills and employment the government has set a Better Public Service target that 85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification in 2017' (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The concern history teachers expressed about the narrowing and reductive effects of standards on their teaching programmes has also been identified for other senior secondary subjects. A survey by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) comprising one in four teachers in the secondary sector, showed that 51 percent agreed or strongly agreed that changes from 2011 in 'the NCEA had narrowed the curriculum for my students'. Mathematics and Sciences teachers rose above this average with 63 percent expressing concern about this effect (Wylie and Bonne, 2016, p. 25). 43 percent of respondents to the survey also identified the NCEA requirements as a barrier to making changes or maintaining the quality of the curriculum.

In an environment where accountability for national assessment is often in the public headlines, a teacher explains that such strong oversight at national level is driven by the desire to follow a risk aversion strategy.

> We are concerned that the assessment process is too subject to NZQA's obsession with risk management, leads to interference and manipulation of the assessment process through a fixation on the damned PEPs they claim not to use but persist in clinging to. Examiners should focus on examining the standard, checkers should check it has been examined and markers should focus on how the student has measured up against the standard. We thought the grade score marking was supposedly there to guard against 'serious blow-out' of grades – whatever that means in a supposedly standards-based system. Perhaps NZQA is reluctant to use these and the cut scores because that would transparently reveal scaling (where trying to persuade markers to blur the edges is less obvious and allows central deniability (NZHTA, 2015, Comment 46, p. 16).

More specific to history is the findings related to the generic questions. For history the combination of the freedom of what content is taught alongside a highly specific and narrowed framework for what is assessed and how it is assessed, has strongly impacted on what knowledge is taught. While over prescription and expectations of coverage burden teachers in many nations and lead to students being extensively coached over the line (Sadler, 2007, p. 390), in New Zealand it is generic questions for a number of the external standards which vary little from year to year, which encourage coaching, rote learning and consequences for the allocation of grades. Differentiation between grades is perceived by teachers to be increasingly reliant upon extensive detail and expectations which go beyond the requirements of the standards. The capacity for the pre-preparation of examination responses may also undermine a broad goal of new curricula - to produce flexible learners who can adapt in new situations. While governments' desire to enhance the future employability of their citizens and their contribution to society, educational mechanisms and practices can reduce the potential benefits.

A future for standards-based assessment in New Zealand

The New Zealand experience in history education provides valuable indicators for what can transpire with a segmented form of assessment and mechanisms which compound and reward a reductive response to knowledge. However, a shift in the variables is likely to have significant and different outcomes where the benefits identified for standards-based assessment, such as improved students understanding of what is required through clearly signalled goals for learning, may come to the fore. For example while the absence of defined common topics for history studies has created complexities for assessing history, more flexibility in applying the standards within an open curricula environment, may alleviate some of the difficulties. To address the reductive impact where critical standards are left out, and where standards are assessed individually, a body of standards could be collectively assessed so that for example, responses to an examination paper might provide the required evidence for a number of standards. Similarly, where standards are written with a broader range of components or where the alignment between a standard and the wording of its parallel assessment is more holistically interpreted, the outcomes could be fundamentally different. Looney (2011) suggests that 'rather than thinking of alignment literally… it may be more appropriate to approach it as a matter of balance and coherence' (p. 3). This may be the way forward to enable knowledge to be taught and learned in a more cohesive way, where relations between concepts are managed and assessed in ways which are authentic within their particular disciplinary fields.

Conclusion

The model of standards-based assessment implemented in New Zealand espouses features which are maintained to be beneficial to the success of outcomes-based educational systems. Transparency and clear alignment between curricula and assessment are principles which underpinned the development of the achievement standards. However, these factors have emerged as a contributing constraint on history. While the curriculum is broadly stated, the standards are envisaged as precision tools for measurement. The need for assessments to be written in a manner which tightly adheres to the wording in the standards has not provided the flexibility for teachers or assessors to fully support the open selection of historical content. While few subjects have gone as far down the path of exactitude as history with a single generic question asked in many of the history examinations, the precise measuring against stated standards is evident in assessment across all secondary subjects. Through the segmentation of subjects into assessable components, standards-based assessment in this form can have the effect of narrowing knowledge to the minimum of what is required for assessment and an overall reductive impact upon substantive knowledge. The case of history in New Zealand therefore has implications for curricula development and assessment practices in other international settings. Where curricula goals are overly broad, and where curricula position competencies and skills as the key learning objective, there can be unforeseen implications. High levels of imposition at the accountability level of educational practice through assessing defined standards can undermine best practices in the delivery and selection of knowledge.

Reflection

In this chapter I have argued that the particular ways in which the NCEA operates and has developed over time, has impacted upon the range and extent of knowledge taught to senior secondary students in history. This has occurred within a context of assessment policy which aims to give recognition to students for the portions of learning that they show competence in, and in a context where there are constant demands to improve student success rates and improve educational outcomes which can be recognised both nationally (e.g. NCEA targets) and internationally (e.g. PISA and TIMSS).

A participant in my research, put it this way.

> At the end of the day I think what the school is looking for is for those high grades - merits and excellences. Course endorsement has forced another shift in thinking towards manipulating the internal and external standards in order to get a higher percentage of endorsements hence not doing resource interpretation… I'm seeing a more significant weight being put on internal assessment in order to get them across to that line… It wouldn't be so bad perhaps if you were going to be offering all your standards in one form or another so it was a more cohesive programme. But instead what we are looking at now is reducing those standards in order to get the best academic record for their students… I think it has shifted the balance the wrong way (Karen, Interview 2).

Karen's comments are further evidence of the way mechanisms introduced to counter the difficulties of standards-based assessment have added to the regulatory environment at output level. Since course endorsement rewards students who achieve fourteen credits at Merit or Excellence level in a subject, the effect has been for students to put more effort into fewer standards. It therefore disincentivises students from applying themselves to a full complement of standards and rewards reduced knowledge. This pulls teachers in a direction which may run counter to their professional judgements of what students in their discipline should experience, or shifts teachers' and students' conceptions of knowledge towards equating learning with what counts for assessment.

A curriculum-wide issue

As noted in this chapter, the incentives to narrow the range of knowledge learned in a year in favour of depth and practicing for perfection is also evident in some other subjects, particularly where there is a high level of predictability in the exams. In Classical Studies the relatively recent abandonment of text extracts and images of Classical art works in the exams and their replacement with themes has similarly led to a reduction in knowledge. A leading Classical Studies teacher commented that

> The number of topics taught in a typical Classics course has reduced over time, and the content coverage of each topic has also reduced significantly. So some teachers only do about four art works for the art standard, focusing entirely on the ones which they predict will give the greatest scope for answering a generic exam question. Likewise, the amount of text studied in the *Odyssey* for example, can also be reduced significantly to focus simply on the themes in the assessment specifications. I abhor these tendencies because I think *it compromises a student's all-round classical knowledge and education*. But I know that it is widespread practice. Many Classics courses are extremely 'light-weight' as a result. I suspect that there is a lot of time spent practising the perfect answer. *The fault lies in the new achievement standards and the examinations.* Ironically teachers have less idea now of what is expected in an exam answer than they did in the past! (e-mail from a Auckland teacher, *anonymity protected*, 13 April 2018).

Even where a form of prescription exists, the phenomenon is evident. The external standards for art history are examined in relation to listed artists, meanings and contexts. As a writer of the art history standards (Member of the National Assessment Expert Panel 2000-2, National Assessment Review Group 2004-6, Project Leader *Alignment of Curriculum and Assessment Project Art History* 2008-2012) I was enthusiastic about the process of identifying the key elements of the subject and writing standards which captured their importance. The components which make up art history - its subjects, style, techniques and context - were all given their due recognition in distinct standards. However, there was no expectation early on that teachers and students would leave out what we considered to be critical standards, or that teachers might teach the subject of art history in a segmented fashion separating out an art works' style, subject and context. Such segmentation is somewhat arbitrary and does not align

with real world discussion of art even though these identified aspects are vital to any study of art. Furthermore, teachers generally teach just one topic for the whole year as only one is required to address the external standards, for example *Early Modernism 1900-1940.* This reduction is substantial when compared with the required four topics prior to the introduction of the NCEA. This does however have to be seen in relation to a yearly programme which also includes internal standards for which teachers do not need to cover the mandated topics and can teach additional art movements and periods.

Comparing how many topics are commonly taught in a years' programme for history, classical studies and art history provides some evidence of the reduction in knowledge over time (see Table 16).

Table 16

Year Programmes – Reduction in Knowledge

	Year Programmes – Reduction in Knowledge		
	Pre-NCEA	**2002-4 Early NCEA**	**2019**
History Year 11 Level 1 NCEA	6 exam topics + 1 or more internally assessed = **7**	3 exam topics + 1 internally assessed = **4**	1 or 2 exam topics + 2 internally assessed = **3 or 4**
Classical Studies Year 12 Level 2 NCEA	5 exam topics = **5**	3 exam topics + 1 internally assessed = **4**	1 or 2 exam topics + 1 internally assessed = **2 or 3**
Art History Year 13 Level 3 NCEA	4 exam topics + 2 or more internally assessed = **6**	2 exam topics + 2 internally assessed = **4**	1 exam topic + 1 or 2 internally assessed = **3**
Note: The number of 'topics' does not equate to the number of achievement standards undertaken as students can use the same topic for more than one standard e.g. History Year 11 – most teachers use the same topic for AS91001 and AS91002.			

Number of topics typically studied in a year programme for history, classical studies and art history in the period prior to the introduction of the NCEA (Pre 2002) to 2019.

While this is indicative only since there is variability across schools and the depth and breadth of the knowledge is not easily conveyed in numerical terms, the chart illustrates the significance of the reduction with about half the number of topics being taught in these humanities subjects when the pre-NCEA period is compared to the present. When added up across all of a students' courses, and over their years of senior schooling, there has been a concerning reduction. When coupled with the fragmentation that standards can produce, this has had a major overall effect on the range of knowledge in programmes.

Assessment driving curriculum

In New Zealand, we are not alone in such concerns over knowledge, as illustrated in this quote from a Year 10 student in England.

> It doesn't matter what you've learned. At the end of the day, it's the grade' (Clements, 2018).

While the effects on knowledge was not her particular focus, a study by Erss (2018) of teachers' views of educational drivers in Estonia, Finland and Germany illustrated similar patterns of accountability. In relation to Estonia, she noted that

> Although the Estonian national curriculum guides teachers to support holistic development of students while focusing on general competences and the learning process, what counts at the end are the numbers on the report card and the exam results (p. 251).

The manner in which assessment drives curriculum and learning is a well-known phenomenon across many jurisdictions and a well-versed discussion among educational scholars, but when this emerges in a standards-based assessment system which purports to be an improvement over standardised 'one size fits all' approaches of the past, it raises concerns which can no longer be ignored. In a document entitled 'Learning and Assessment' which outlined the fundamental principles of the National Qualifications Framework in New Zealand (1996) the second chapter begins with the statement –

> Assessment ought to complement learning, not dominate it… Assessment for the National Qualifications Framework is provider-based largely so that assessment can be done in conjunction with learning – it can enhance learning rather than disrupt or constrain it (NZQA, p. 9).

While it must be acknowledged that this document was written with the fore-runner *unit standards* in mind rather than *achievement standards* which have now became the dominant form of secondary assessment, the principles upon which both forms of standards-based assessment was based remained the same – a limited number of identified components within each subject written as 'standards', a commitment to recognise the learner's achievements for each individual standard and an intended flexibility in employing the standards.

Generic Questions

Since writing the article there has been a notable incident, in June 2017, in which the issue of generic questions for history came under public scrutiny (Collins, *New Zealand Herald*). This arose not from concerns over the way generic questions impact on knowledge, but rather from concerns over plagiarism. An Excellence exemplar freely available on the NZQA website was almost word for word the same as an exemplar put up as a model in the previous year. The Education Minister Nikki Kaye roundly criticized the supposed error made by NZQA and issued a 'please explain' to the Authority. Gregor Fountain, principal of Paraparumu College, was subsequently engaged to undertake a review of what went wrong. Following the review the Government announced that there would be changes made to mitigate against such plagiarism. There was little recognition that this came about as a consequence of the generic questions. As a system which actively rewards memorizing a well written essay, it is unsurprising that students would go onto the NZQA website and learn an essay that has clearly been marked as Excellence and make use of it for their end of year examination. However, delivering a very fine essay in this manner does not necessarily mean that the student engaged with the knowledge in ways which are meaningful, or that the student had deep understanding of the historical knowledge.

Since the plagiarism incident, there has also been a change made to one of the Level 3 examinations to overcome the problem of predictable questions and potential plagiarism. In 2018 the examination for AS91438 *Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant*

historical event included a quote which students need to incorporate into their argument. This is further evidence of the difficulties of rote-learning and the dilemma facing the examiner where teachers dislike the capacity for students to rote-learn answers but conversely want the certainty of the predictable questions and complain if the question is altered in unexpected ways. It also points to the wider concern that standards cannot be held as fixed measurable entities but are subject to a 'spiral of specification' (Wolf, 1995; Allais, 2014) or change to make them workable over their time of existence.

Conclusion

So looking to the future we need to envisage an education where, to use Michael Young's words, knowledge is brought back in (2008). We need to retain the best features of standards-based assessment where students know what their goals in learning are, while not closing down the ability to explore pathways through a field of knowledge and go beyond that which is assessed. We need to avoid 'a culture in which …. targets and indicators of quality become mistaken for quality itself' (Biesta, 2009, p. 35) We need assessment which assesses what has been learned while not allowing performativity and accountability to dominate the educational experience. The balance between teachers' professional judgements and national controls needs to be reconfigured in the interests of placing learning at the forefront of educational endeavour.

CHAPTER 10

Epistemic Structure - The Challenge of Systematic Progression in a Complex Horizontally Structured Field

Based on a paper presented at the 7th Annual International Symposium, Knowledge in Education Unit (KERU), Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland. 13 November 2017.

Introduction

Epistemic progression should be a fundamental objective for curriculum design. Systematic provision for developing understanding of critical knowledge is essential if equity of access to powerful knowledge is to be achieved. I argue however that 'epistemic progression' as a goal in learning, has taken a back seat and that this has impacted upon the capacity to deliver powerful knowledge to students. In contemporary curricula progression is often stated in terms of the gradual development over time towards higher order thinking skills and the capacity to acquire and exhibit core competencies, while designing a curriculum structure which builds substantive knowledge and facilitates progression largely remains unaddressed or is fragmentary in the way it is accommodated in curricula or in school programmes.

It is important to establish from the outset that I am making a distinction between measuring progression and providing for progression when designing learning programmes. Because of a culture of accountability (Biesta, 2004) which is a feature of both our local and global communities, the primary desire is to prove that students have progressed in their learning. Students' responses to assessment, formative or summative, are often then equated with the substance and existence of progression, yet genuine progression in learning heavily relies on the ways in which knowledge is organised to progress learning and may not always be measurable. It is this measuring of progress in students' understandings of history that has been given considerable attention by history educators while epistemic progression has received less attention.

I use the term 'epistemic progression' to mean the way in which the episteme can be mapped in curricula and teaching programmes so that critical concepts and knowledge are organised in

ways which progressively build knowledge. It is only through well considered provision for knowledge that student's understandings can be appropriately developed. The goal in planning for progression is that students will acquire conceptual understandings and knowledge frameworks which enable them to make inferential links and develop abstract ideas. Epistemic progression should also be based upon the specialised knowledge produced within academic institutions and is reliant, for its effective structuring in the recontextualised locality of the school, and upon teachers who are well versed in the substance of the knowledge they teach.

The systematic ordering of knowledge to enable substantive concepts to be understood and brought in relation to each other to make sense of history is however, complex. In history any model of progression needs to be flexible and capable of taking into account a multiplicity of possible avenues of inquiry and interrelationships. Concepts lie at the core of planning for epistemic progression. As Rata (2016) has illustrated, conceptual progression enables a teacher to explain the unknown by linking it to concepts which are already familiar to the students. A logical structuring of the concepts provides for the building of knowledge.

> Conceptual progression (or epistemic ascent [*to use the phrase coined by Christopher Winch]*) means the concepts already understood by students are brought into new relations of abstraction and generality as further concepts are acquired and integrated into students' understanding (p. 172).

Positioning concepts at the heart of progression is critical since, as Oates (2011) argues, accumulations of facts without an integrating structure become 'mere noise' (p. 133). Concepts are necessary to give information meaning. It is therefore the possible pathways of ordering concepts which need to be thought through and deliberately planned for and it is a teachers' specialist knowledge of their discipline which enables the sequence of learning to be organised in ways which facilitate progression. The ability to order 'comes primarily from systematic work with an organised body of knowledge … at different degrees of complexity, in and outside of specific contexts' (Shalem & Slonimsky, 2014, p. 211).

Progression in The New Zealand Curriculum

The need for deliberate mapping for progression to enable students to understand and logically develop their knowledge means that teachers must look forwards to what should be learned

and then give careful consideration on how to achieve it through building the epistemological steps. This is important because the broad and minimal New Zealand curriculum hands much of the responsibility to teachers and school departments to make provision for progression. There are high expectations that teachers will create effective programmes in accordance with the philosophy underpinning the curriculum that school-based programmes will best serve the students in their local communities yet the notion of progression is only briefly and sporadically mentioned in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. When it is mentioned it largely relates to how we evaluate whether students have made *progress* in their learning. Progress or progression are mentioned in relation to skills on four occasions (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 18, 24, 39, & 41), for example, 'Students' *learning progress* is closely linked to their ongoing development of *literacy and numeracy skills* (p. 41) and in relation to assessment or measurement on six occasions (pp. 37-9, 40, & 44), for example, 'Curriculum design … clarifies priorities for student learning, the ways in which those priorities will be addressed, and *how student progress* and the quality of teaching and learning *will be assessed*' (p. 39). Only two references appear to show awareness of the desirability of epistemic progression in curriculum design.

> Some achievement objectives relate to skills or understandings that can be mastered within a particular learning level. Others are more complex and are developed with increasing sophistication across a number of learning levels. The broader and more complex an objective, the more significant it is likely to be for a student's learning (p. 39).

The second reference relates to the arts learning area.

> By building on and revisiting learning from previous levels, arts programmes in each discipline [dance, drama, music, and visual arts] provide progressions of learning opportunities… This spiral process ensures that students' learning is relevant, in-depth, and meaningful (p. 20).

A further reference explains how the *achievement objectives* in the *Curriculum* are structured into eight levels marking the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school.

> The achievement objectives found in the *New Zealand Curriculum* set out selected learning processes, knowledge, and skills relative to eight levels of learning. These desirable levels of knowledge, understanding, and skills *represent progress* towards broader outcomes that ultimately amount to deeper learning (p. 39).

It could be argued that by organising the *Curriculum* in this manner progression has been catered for but the broadness of the objectives often provide little guidance on the episteme. For example at Level 6 of the *Curriculum* for Science an *achievement objective* for *Astronomical systems* requires students to 'Investigate the conditions on the planets and their moons, and the factors affecting them' while at Level 8, for students who are two years older, they 'Explore recent astronomical events or discoveries, showing understanding of the concepts of distance and time'. It seems possible to do these in reverse order, rather than follow a progression from looking at planets and moons to exploring astronomical events and discoveries. So by not making epistemic progression an explicit feature of the *Curriculum* there is a chance that teachers will not give much consideration to progressive building of knowledge when planning the programmes for the different year levels.

Progression in history education

The way in which history education has developed is significant for how progression has been conceived. Beginning in England in 1972 with the *Schools Council History Project*, history as a school subject adopted a new procedural approach which was influential in shifting practices internationally. From the 1980s New Zealand followed this lead and positioned procedural knowledge at the centre of learning history. An emphasis was put on interpreting historical evidence and developing arguments, and on questioning and validating the premises upon which particular knowledge about history was constructed and arrived at. As has been identified at many junctures in this thesis, more recently New Zealand history education has also encompassed second-order concepts or 'historical thinking' concepts – concepts which reflect the main ways that history is thought about such as giving consideration to the *significance* of specific events. Throughout these shifts prescribed knowledge was still a feature of most countries' history programmes and substantive knowledge was still regarded as important. What has changed however is the increasing emphasis on using *competence in procedures* as the yardstick for evaluating student's progression. Students are to be measured in accordance with how well they can engage with primary and secondary sources, how they

use evidence in support of an historical argument and how they understand and use second order concepts. Therefore, progression is equated with progress in skill development and higher cognitive development shown through the ability to provide greater sophistication in interpreting history. Lee and Shemilt (2003) have researched the idea of progression as a 'way in which pupils' ideas - about history and the past - develop' (p. 13).

Forty-five years on from these beginnings, history education has reached a point where, as Smith (2016) puts it –

> There is a shared recognition that substantive knowledge on its own provides no scope for progression. Since it is not inherently more challenging to understand one (historical) event than another, school curricula must be based on 'progression in procedural knowledge rather than substantive (p. 503).

Smith therefore points to the difficulties in using substantive knowledge for measuring progression. He argues that knowledge of itself is neither easy or hard and cannot be positioned in a ranking structure from first learning steps to expert learning steps.

While both *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the *achievement standards* have similarly approached progression in terms of history's second-order concepts and procedural knowledge, I argue that this, in its current form in New Zealand, is neither straightforward nor a particularly strong means of progression. For example at Level 6 of the *Curriculum* the Achievement Objective '*Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society'* and at Level 7 '*Understand how historical forces and movements have influenced the causes and consequences of events of significance to New Zealanders*' are differentiated in their focus but are not clearly differentiated in terms of progression. The Level 6 objective has its focus on how causes and consequences *shape the lives of people* while the Level 7 objective has its focus upon understanding *how forces and movements can influence* causes and consequences. This does not clearly represent a conceptual progression, but rather a difference in emphasis. Similarly if we compare the achievement standards which require students to understand and critique historical sources the differentiation between year levels is not overt and is open to interpretation. For example, one might argue that greater insight and understanding is required to *interpret* than to *examine* sources, or that to *analyse* evidence is the first step in a process which then allows the reader to develop an *interpretation* of the evidence (see Table 17).

Table 17

Level 1 Achievement Standards for Interpreting Historical Sources

Level	Achievement Standards (2011-present)
Level 1 AS91003	**Interpret** sources of an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.
Level 2 AS91232	**Examine** sources of an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders.
Level 3 AS91437	**Analyse** evidence relating to an historical event of significance to New Zealanders.

One of the History teachers I interviewed made the comment about progression that 'Level 2 in my mind can be harder than Level 3' (Linda, Interview 2), which suggests a major problem. Similarly, in response to a *New Zealand History Teachers Association Survey* a teacher commented that he/she felt that the examiner lacked 'any clear overall strategies for identifying or measuring progression' (NZHTA, 2014b, Comment 48, p. 47).

Smith has shown how outcomes stated in Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence,* a curriculum which was designed with a similar philosophy to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, also demonstrate these difficulties. The attempts to capture the elements of progression in short outcome statements do not serve to deliver either clarity or genuine progression (Smith 2016). Furthermore in basing progression on the development of skills, Counsell (2000) contends that it is a flawed idea that merely by 'doing' skills students will get better at them. Evidence has shown that despite 'a constant diet of activities relating to [for example] causation and evidence' and the assessment of students 'against those aspects in relation to England's National Curriculum Level Descriptions' (p. 55), students still struggle.

Therefore, while recognising that developing more sophisticated or multi-dimensional interpretations of history is of great importance in enabling students to understand the nature of history and make valid assertions about historical situations, as mentioned earlier, this chapter instead has a different focus. My point of departure is one in which the possibilities for progression in the *epistemological dimensions* of learning about the past are explored. Furthermore, while it is possible to recognise the progress made by students in employing

second-order concepts such as *cause* or *consequence* when thinking about history, they require substantive knowledge to be realised. Therefore, to progress students' understandings of what happened in the past, it is also critical to systematically build substantive knowledge. Through the vehicle of well-ordered substantive knowledge, understandings of procedural knowledge can be enhanced, and vice versa.

Bernstein's knowledge structures

Bernstein's structuring of intellectual fields suggests conditions for progression in knowledge in social sciences. Due to its specialist knowledge Bernstein positions a subject such as history within his vertical discourse category and thereby differentiates it from the socially based unsystematic knowledge of a horizontal discourse. A vertical discourse, according to Bernstein (2000), exhibits 'specialised symbolic structures of explicit knowledge' (p. 160). However, Bernstein further differentiates the vertical discourse between hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures. In a hierarchical structure knowledge is progressively subsumed and integrated and operates at increasingly abstract levels (such as in some fields within the sciences) whereas a horizontal knowledge structure (such as for the social sciences, or arts) exhibits knowledge which is made up of multiple segments which do not exclude or subsume each other – they sit alongside. These are however not rigid categories able to be applied for all knowledge contained within a discipline as is evident with the astronomy examples above which could be seen as overlapping segments within a horizontal knowledge structure. Nevertheless Bernstein's theoretical model is relevant to the question of progression because while in some features of the sciences a student may progress through understanding the basics of a science principle, that knowledge is then overtaken by more sophisticated knowledge. It is subsumed and it is difficult to progress without working through the learning steps to reach the necessary understanding. In history progression is less linear and more tangential, with multiple pathways. This means that it is critical for the teacher to astutely structure and sequence knowledge in order to accommodate its complexities.

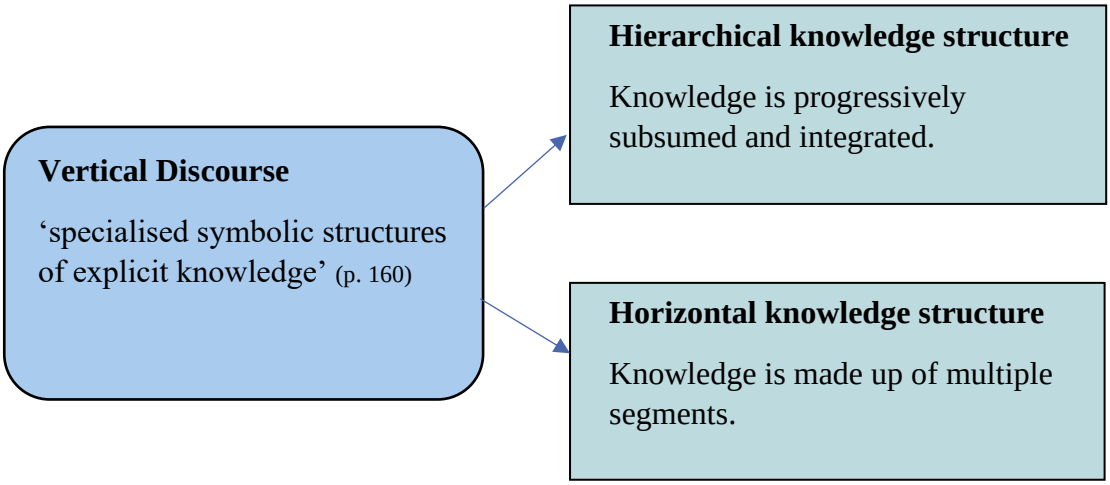

Figure 4. Bernstein's Horizontal and Vertical Discourses

Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1987) makes similar distinctions to Bernstein in the nature of knowledge through distinguishing between what he calls 'spontaneous' concepts which are unsystematic and 'scientific concepts' which have the potential to allow for generalisation and conceptual development. He argues that 'scientific concepts' provide for progression because they 'impose new orders of meaning on existing concepts'… 'Concepts generalise phenomena; they extend them in time and space' (Shalem and Slonimsky, 2010, p. 757). This means that a concept arising in one context may then be applicable to other circumstances. In history, for example, knowledge of concepts such as communism or nationalism enables progression from the specifics of knowing about the particular events which represent the concept at a point in time and in a particular location in the world, to a more universal or abstract sphere. The concepts provide the basis upon which to discuss connections over time and place. Furthermore Vygotsky distinguishes between 'general', or 'higher' concepts, and 'subordinate concepts' creating a hierarchy of concepts where generalisation plays a role in the 'formation of a higher concept' (1987, p. 192). Teachers therefore need to differentiate between concepts in terms of their significance to the entire episteme under study.

Providing for Progression

Determining the particulars of structure and progression needs to be individualised to the selected topics taught in school programmes and must retain the flexibility to create adequate connections between concepts and bodies of knowledge. In New Zealand's history classrooms, where knowledge is commonly minimised to be just sufficient to meet a particular achievement standard, providing for progression is challenging and not often a matter which is foremost in educational priorities. The revisiting of concepts throughout a year's learning and their application in different contexts is rarely necessary for students to achieve the standards. As discussed in Chapter 9 while the broad *New Zealand Curriculum* and teacher autonomy over content enables teachers to facilitate epistemic progression through exploring concepts in different historical contexts, in practice, when an achievement standard is gained learning quickly moves on to the next assessable component. Nevertheless knowledge building, in terms of sequencing events or building an adequate knowledge of ideas and contextual knowledge, is required to do well in any single achievement standard.

In my early years of teaching I recall struggling with how to best progress students' knowledge of a year-long topic taught to Year 13 students. The topic covered the political, economic and social history of England between 1558 and 1667. This prescribed topic was in place until 2013 when teacher autonomy over topics was introduced. The history prescription clearly outlined the key questions which should be addressed and provided a list of content we needed to cover but it did not provide any clues on how to progress students' understandings, conceptually. For example, a portion of the prescription included the focussing question *What was the nature of Elizabethan and early Stuart Government?* and listed the content as 'Elizabeth: as a ruler, government, finance, religion, Crown and Parliament in peace and war' (Ministry of Education, 1998).

In terms of a structure, one could go through each of these listed content areas but that did not enable students to adequately understand the content. Students needed *concepts* to explain the history. Over the first few years of teaching this topic I gradually learned how to structure the concepts to integrate and build students' knowledge. For example the concepts of *monarchy, personal monarchy* (the way in which individual monarchs have the powers to exercise their authority), *royal prerogative* (the rights of the monarch to rule as understood by convention), the *trinity* (made up of the Crown, House of Lords and House of Commons), and

omnicompetence (the all-encompassing powers of a monarch) were defined and used to explain actions taken by these monarchs over a hundred year period. The concepts were therefore ordered in a manner which introduced them and regularly revisited them building more subtle and deeper understandings of their meanings over the course of the year's programme.

Because progression needs to be particular to the selected topics taught in school programmes and is best able to be achieved when approached with flexibility and with refinement over time, a model of progression cannot easily be imposed through prescription. Prescriptions, which are commonly formulated by a group of teachers who are regarded as experts in their disciplinary field, can provide guidance through identifying core concepts and content, and sequencing them, but there are difficulties in expecting a prescription to fully serve the purposes of progression. To demonstrate the necessary conceptual progression able to be interpreted by all users of the prescription, its structure would be likely to be both complex and highly detailed. Therefore, to create the meaningful connections between concepts and bodies of knowledge for the horizontally structured knowledge discourse identified by Bernstein, I argue that the teacher plays the critical role in determining the means for epistemic progression. Counsell (2000) describes teachers as the '*chief resonance managers'* (p. 68). She is referring to the way incorporating new knowledge is dependent on resonance – how it is understood in relation to earlier learning. The teacher therefore is in the best position to structure progression. Young (2018) notes that 'Many who endorse the importance of a knowledge-rich curriculum are seduced by the good intentions of ED Hirsch and his lists of 'what every child should know' (p. 1). However Young argues that teachers play a 'vital and difficult role' in … "curriculum making"' (p. 1) so that the teacher is a critical agent in determining knowledge components and by inference their sequencing to facilitate progression and build understanding.

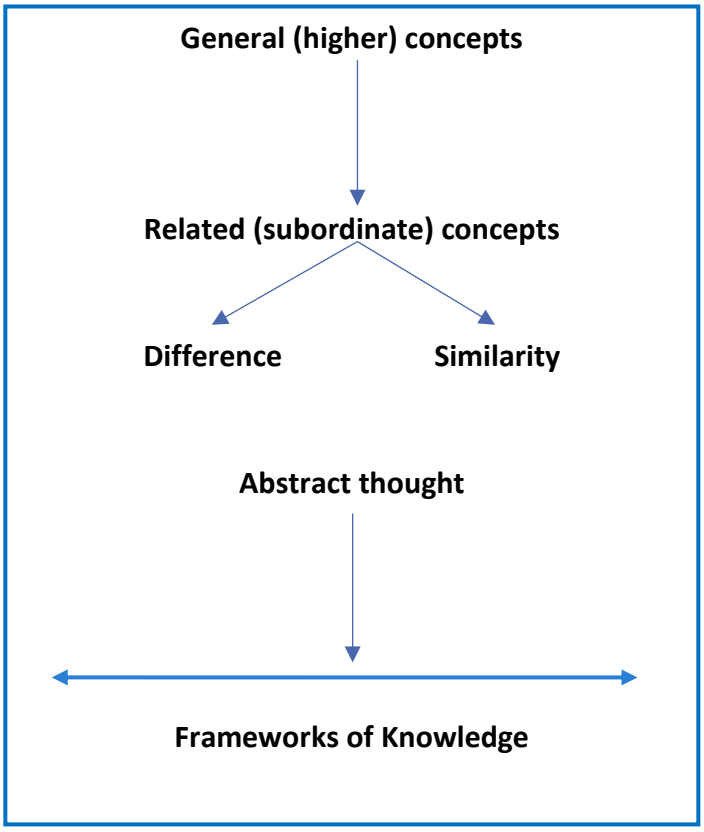

Figure 5 Model of progression.

Model of Progression

A model for progression applicable to planning for developing conceptual understandings in relation to any historical topic could take the following form.

1. Identify general (or 'higher') concepts which may be familiar but as yet unapplied to the particular context – for example, *monarchy*.
2. Build progression through related (or 'subordinate') concepts – for example, *personal monarchy*, *royal prerogatives*.
3. Consider how these concepts differ from other concepts – concepts which challenge them, for example, *'personal rule' under Charles I.*
4. Consider how these concepts are similar to other concepts in different times and places – for example, *presidential executive orders in the United States compared to personal monarchy*, or *the Trinity having some things in common with the President and two houses of representatives – Congress and Senate.*

5. Evaluate how these conceptual understandings are generalisable and serve abstract thought – for example, *thinking about a leader such as President Putin – where does he fit?*
6. Consider how 'frameworks of knowledge' can serve to introduce and/or further explain these conceptual understandings – for example, *looking at different approaches to monarchical governance in Europe during the Early Modern Period.*

This model contains relational elements suggested by Vygotsky. He argues that the relations between concepts forms a vertical order, where the general or 'higher' concept frames the relations between subordinate concepts. Thinking about the distinction between general concepts and subordinate concepts means there may be different levels of generality of the concepts and that these concepts need to be arranged in students learning so that the more general concepts are recognised for their potential to be brought into relations with other concepts at various points in a programme of learning. Hence the concept of *monarchy* is brought into relations with *personal monarchy* and *personal rule* making each concept more accessible and meaningful.

As outlined in Chapter 11 the evidence from my empirical studies also suggests that 'frameworks of knowledge' are largely absent from teachers' conceptions and schemes. This means that concepts and ideas are rarely positioned within a wider episteme limiting the possibilities to develop and progress student understandings. Opportunities to make connections over a longer time frame or across cultural and political borders and for students to evaluate their substantive knowledge within a wider context to develop interpretive analyses and build their knowledge, is not strongly developed in teachers' programme designs.

Conclusion

The lack of provision for progression was mentioned by one interviewee who commented on progression in relation to the overall narrowing of knowledge.

> They (the students) are more of a magpie and they only know very discrete things whereas before at least they had an understanding of more historical context. Even when you think back to old *School Certificate* with six topics, that was piecemeal to a point.

> There was no logical progression or chronological understanding that they come out with. So that has just worsened (Linda, Interview 2).

Because structuring the episteme and planning for epistemic progression is not prioritised in *The New Zealand Curriculum* nor successfully provided for in the achievement standards for the NCEA, teachers' accommodation of, and planning for, progression is inconsistent and variable both within school programmes and across the nation. In order for students to 'do history' and demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of what makes history a recognisable discipline, substantive history needs to be structured in a logical, sequenced manner but with permeable and malleable boundaries which can be altered to enable the complexities of historical connections to be accommodated.

CHAPTER 11

Historical Knowledge in a Knowledge Economy

Harris, R. & Ormond, B. (2018). Historical knowledge in a knowledge economy – what types of knowledge matter? *Educational Review*, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1462764.

Foreword

This chapter examines the ways knowledge is organised and taught for history in England and in New Zealand to consider whether it serves to support the widely promoted concept of the 'knowledge economy'. It evaluates the contribution disciplinary knowledge in history may have and differentiates such knowledge from generic skills and competences which form the foundation of many contemporary curricula. 'Frameworks of knowledge' are also given consideration as it is the view of a number of history educators (for example Shemilt & Howson, 2017; Rogers, 2016; Gibson, 2018) that in order for students to make meaning of events in history, students need to understand the bigger picture in which any particular historical incident fits. Such frameworks of knowledge contribute to history being *powerful knowledge* which has the potential to serve the broad notion suggested by the phrase 'knowledge economy'.

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the problems of fragmentation and narrowed foci for the selection and teaching of knowledge for history in New Zealand is encouraged through the ways in which the achievement standards operate to reward detailed but limited knowledge. Students rarely have the opportunity to develop a coherent knowledge of the past and rarely engage in examining a broad expanse of time, or have opportunities to draw connections between events and ideas which may be spatially or chronologically separated. This problem of piecemeal knowledge is also evident in other jurisdictions with a greater level of prescription (Shemilt, 2009, p. 142). In circumstances where 'knowledge' is valued for its contribution to the present economic well-being of nations, an inability to make use of the knowledge due to its selective focus or disconnected nature suggests that history education may not serve the purposes of policy makers or meet the ideals of the globalised rhetoric of the knowledge economy.

Schissler (2009), points out that while education must provide students with the 'necessary qualifications for the labour market' and therefore contribute to the 'knowledge economy', beyond this there is value in education which enables learners to 'make sense of the world'. She refers to the concept of *Bildung* suggesting that it encapsulates learning which takes students beyond instrumental purposes to what Rohlwink (2014) describes as the deeper understandings 'of human nature and history which leads to wisdom'. Schissler observes that 'The German educational system is well on its way to valuing compliance with economic demands' (p. 95). She expresses her concerns that 'revolutionary changes to our knowledge systems' such as 'containment of knowledge' have led to 'deserting the idea of empowerment through education and *Bildung'* (p. 96).

Frameworks of knowledge are one means of addressing some of these issues. Frameworks of knowledge can help students

> contextualise, organise and analyse events, developments, and people over broad temporal and spatial scales. (Such frameworks are) open and flexible to new content and perspectives, adaptable to different historical questions, and are used to generate 'little', 'big', and 'bigger' narratives of the past (Gibson, 2018).

Through using such frameworks, new knowledge can be built and cross-referenced, debated and expanded upon to construct reliable interpretations of the past as well as having the potential to provide insight into the actions, values and ideologies of societies seen in the present.

Three Futures

Consideration of the direction in which education is heading whether in Germany, England, New Zealand or elsewhere, is recognised in Young and Muller's influential article theorising three scenarios for the future (2010a). This chapter relates the discussion of the knowledge economy and powerful knowledge to these three scenarios. The three possible scenarios are relevant and useful as analytical 'types' in explaining where the present form of history education lies in England and New Zealand and how it could develop in the future. It is also important to elucidate the three scenarios here for the reader as they are only briefly described in the published article.

A Future 1 scenario describes an education which is largely conservative and which changes little over time. 'Dominant knowledge traditions' (p. 17) persist and variability in the student community is largely unaccounted for in the education provided for all students. Young and Muller refer to this as an 'under-socialised epistemology' (p. 14).

A Future 2 scenario, in contrast to Future 1, is seen as 'over-socialised' where the learner's knowledge and preferences are accommodated in decisions over what is learned and how it is learnt. Young and Muller point to the way academic knowledge and everyday knowledge are not sufficiently differentiated and argue that the boundaries between subjects may be weakened with a move towards integration of school subjects. In this form of education curricula exhibit the trend towards promoting generic skills and competences and an instrumental view of knowledge where curriculum choices are overly tied to their relevance to the real world.

A Future 3 scenario envisages an education where knowledge differentiation is recognised and where subject boundaries form the basis for education. Specialised disciplinary knowledge is differentiated from everyday knowledge through the concepts which underpin it and its objectivity which emerges from robust critical debate within academic communities. Disciplines 'possess legitimate, shared and stably reliable means for generating truth' (p. 21), a truth which is emergent and capable of change. In this scenario disciplinary boundaries can be crossed but only after core concepts within the specialisms are known. Future 3, is viewed as the best way forward by Young and Muller because in recognising the differentiation of knowledge the concepts, skills and content are all recognised as important. They suggest this will facilitate 'equalising epistemological access' (p. 23) for all students whereas in Future 1 priority is given to fixed content, and in Future 2, too little attention is paid to concepts and substantive knowledge.

Historical Knowledge in a Knowledge Economy – What Types of Knowledge Matter?

Outline

This article examines the potential of history as a subject to contribute to a 'knowledge economy'. Global trends in curricula reforms have often emphasised generic competences and development of students' critical thinking to benefit the future economic position of citizens and nations. However, viewing knowledge in these terms presents a reductive view, particularly given that there is no clear definition of the nature of the knowledge which could or should be universally deployed in the pursuit of a 'knowledge economy'. This paper presents an argument that a focus on 'powerful' disciplinary knowledge and 'valuable' frameworks of knowledge, in areas such as history education rather than generic competences and skills, would better serve a knowledge economy. Drawing on two empirical studies from England and New Zealand, which present different policy contexts, the paper explores the extent to which the potential of history education is being realised to develop such powerful and valuable knowledge. The data reveal similar patterns in both contexts; despite the history teachers in both countries sharing a disciplinary understanding of the subject this is not comprehensively reflected in the curricula they construct, and there are few attempts to create coherent frameworks of knowledge. This suggests that the opportunities for history education to support the development of a knowledge economy have not been fully realised and exploited.

Introduction

The idea of a 'knowledge economy' has emerged as the impact of globalisation has seen a shift towards innovation as a key driver of economic advantage (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2017; Porter, 1998), and is commonly used to suggest direct causal links between developing specific forms of 'useful' knowledge and improved economic outcomes to give nations and individuals a competitive advantage (OCED, 1996). In linking 'knowledge' to the 'economy' education is seen as critical to this development and means 'Government policies will need more stress on upgrading human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, and especially the capacity to learn' (OECD, 1996, p. 7). The importance of developing the knowledge economy can be seen in policy documents and statements in a range of contexts. Duncan (2011), the then American Secretary of State for Education, states that 'in a knowledge economy, education is

the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity.' Within the European Union (EU), Veugelers and Mojmir (2009, p. 1) argue that the knowledge economy is 'a pivotal policy area', and that supporting new member states in this regard is vital to the future economic well-being of the EU. In New Zealand a *Knowledge Wave* conference co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Vice-Chancellor of The University of Auckland in 2001 is illustrative of the credibility given to the concept as the conference aimed 'To spark a broad-based national discussion on how New Zealand can benefit from the pursuit and application of knowledge-based creativity'. In the UK the knowledge economy features in government White Papers, such as 'The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper (DfE, 2010) and the more recent 'Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice' about the future of higher education (DBIS, 2016). In Scotland the *Curriculum for Excellence* has at its heart a focus on ensuring 'children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century, including skills for learning, life and work' (Education Scotland, 2017).

What this means in reality is however open to debate. Lauder et al. (2012, p. 1) see the knowledge economy as a 'social imaginary that has education at its centre'. The OECD (2001) states that the knowledge economy requires an emphasis on competences and skills per se, but also acknowledges there is little agreement on which competences and skills are seen as necessary. However the OECD (2001, p. 100) argues that the ability to 'use information and communication technologies (ICT), to solve problems, to work in teams, to supervise and lead and to undertake continuous learning' are key areas for development. Despite these vagaries over the precise understanding of the term the emphasis in reformed education systems is on the development of generic competences (OECD, 2001) and 'on knowledge, the conditions for the production of knowledge and innovation, and the role of technology in enabling that process' (Robertson, 2005, p. 157). This has seen developing STEM education, lifelong learning, 'learning how to learn', and the value of networking as crucial elements of an education system in supporting a knowledge economy (e.g. OECD, 2016; US Department of Education, 2010). However existing educational systems are often viewed as being ill-equipped to meet these economic requirements. The curriculum has been a particular focus of criticism for being a 'one size fits all' model, lacking flexibility and choice, and for encouraging the transmission of knowledge (Robertson, 2005; Winter, 2012). Yet deliberations about curriculum reform can be poorly informed by curriculum theory, for example debates about

different forms of knowledge that could be developed and seen as desirable are often overlooked or simplified (Harris & Burn, 2011).

This paper seeks to contribute to the debate about knowledge and what type of knowledge should be promoted by governments keen to develop a knowledge economy in a global context. The result can be a reductive view of what constitutes knowledge so this article examines changes to curricula for history in two different contexts, New Zealand and England to consider how curriculum decisions support government objectives. Both countries have been heavily influenced by neo-liberal policies and successive governments have introduced a series of educational reforms to secure future economic competitiveness. Yet both countries have currently adopted different positions regarding 'knowledge' in the curriculum. The paper focuses on historical knowledge because it offers an interesting insight into the debates about knowledge and the knowledge economy, especially as a number of subjects such as history, which are not directly related to STEM subjects are overlooked in this context. Typically history is seen as contributing more to issues over citizenship, social cohesion and identity (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 2004), but a focus on historical knowledge and what constitutes history knowledge demonstrates the potential of a subject like history to provide a powerful means of equipping people with the sort of cognitive capabilities expected in a knowledge economy.

The different policy contexts

The place of history within the secondary school curriculum

While not a core subject in secondary schools in either England or New Zealand, the place of history within the curriculum in each country differs. In New Zealand history is taught as a discrete, optional subject only in senior secondary school, for students aged 15 to 18 years. In earlier years of schooling history has a presence within the Social Sciences learning area. *The New Zealand Curriculum* 2007, which is applicable to all years of compulsory schooling, contains broad vision and values statements, key competencies, and principles for curriculum decision making. Relevant to this discussion, for example, is the vision statement that young people will be 'enterprising and entrepreneurial' and the values statement that students will be encouraged to foster 'innovation, inquiry and curiosity'. The outcomes-based form of curriculum also specifies requirements for history through six *achievement objectives*, two for each of the three senior levels of history (see Appendix E). But more dominant than *The New Zealand Curriculum* in determining teachers' practices, is the *National Certificate of*

Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualification for senior students. From 2011 prescribed history content was abandoned when new achievement standards for the NCEA were written. This delegated authority over what historical content was included in history programmes to individual schools. Teachers' decisions are however constrained by the practicalities of what works well for addressing the achievement standards for the NCEA. There are six assessable achievement standards at each level of history and they address second-order concepts such as cause and consequence and procedural knowledge such as enquiry skills.

The situation in England is more complex. History is a foundation subject in the National Curriculum meaning it is a compulsory subject in the lower secondary school (for students aged 11-14 and known as Key Stage 3 or KS3). It is an optional one in the upper years of secondary schooling for students aged 14-16 working towards public examinations (typically the General Certificate of Secondary Education or GCSE), and remains a specialist option for those aged 16-18 studying for A level exams. From 2003 secondary schools in England were encouraged to experiment with the length of their curriculum for students in the lower secondary school, so schools could teach KS3 in two, rather than three years, thus enabling them to spend three years working towards the public examinations at 16 years of age. Schools were also encouraged to experiment with the structure of this KS3 curriculum, for example the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) published a radical new curriculum (known as 'Opening Minds') framed around five key competences rather than subject areas. These curricula models represented a move away from subject knowledge per se and towards more generic educational outcomes, centred on ideas such as learning to learn, managing information and relating to people. However, following the election of the Conservation-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, and the more recent Conservative government, there has been a shift back to a more 'traditional' subject based curriculum, with a greater emphasis on 'knowledge'.

Curriculum changes

History practitioners commonly regard knowledge as differentiated into two main forms - substantive and disciplinary procedural knowledge. Substantive knowledge refers to knowledge of events, ideas and people and includes substantive first order concepts such as nationalism or communism which enable connections to be made across different historical periods and places. Disciplinary knowledge includes procedural and conceptual dimensions. Procedural thinking involves the processes required to effectively work with evidence, develop

interpretations and construct arguments. The conceptual dimension draws upon what are called second order concepts such as cause, consequence, change and continuity, which provide ways in which history can be thought about and ordered. The shift to procedural knowledge and disciplinary ways of thinking can be traced back to the Schools Council History Project established in 1972, which began in England but was also influential in New Zealand. Therefore, requiring students to engage with second order history concepts and understanding how history is constructed from sources, is currently at the heart of professional discourse over curricula, which is also reflected in the national assessment systems, in both countries.

However the wider policy contexts differ as does the degree of freedom teachers have when determining what to include in their history curriculum. In New Zealand teachers have to work within an assessment framework, in which students have to demonstrate an understanding of historical concepts and processes, but in which no substantive knowledge is specified. This has seen a move to greater genericism and less prescription as teachers have complete freedom to choose the substantive knowledge. In England there has been a shift in the opposite direction. Teachers assess students' understanding of historical concepts and processes, but debate has focused more on what students should study and the place of substantive knowledge in assessing students' understanding of the past. A review of the curriculum in 2010 saw an attempt by the government to introduce a highly detailed and prescriptive level of substantive knowledge all students would be expected to know, based around chronological periods of history; although this was heavily modified and the level of prescription reduced, the proposals have sparked a renewed debate about the value of substantive knowledge per se. Therefore the two systems make for interesting comparison, looking at how teachers with potentially similar conceptions of history as a form of disciplinary knowledge (for example Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ormond, 2017 [Chapter 8]), approach the subject within contrasting policy contexts.

Literature review

Central to the curriculum reforms in both contexts are questions about knowledge, and the type of knowledge deemed valuable and useful. For example in a knowledge economy the ability to 'learn how to learn' is deemed crucial. This is because the availability of technology means information is more readily available and accessible so the where and when of learning can be more flexible. Potentially learning can happen outside of an educational institution and does not require a 'teacher' to mediate the knowledge, hence the need for learners to know what to

do with the knowledge they encounter. This implies the need for generic competences in working with knowledge.

This model has been criticised on different grounds. For Hirsch (1993) there needs to be an element of core knowledge that everyone is taught, rather than a curriculum that emphasises skills at the expense of knowledge, as 'a coherent approach to specific content enhances students' critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills' (p. 24). In part this provides equal access to a common heritage, learning about the 'best' from the past, and therefore is a form of cultural capital. However the core knowledge model, has been criticised (Cain & Chapman, 2014; Young & Muller, 2010); this is because students are expected to comply and accept preordained bundles of knowledge as valuable and uncontested, and are not expected to examine or understand the process by which particular claims to knowledge are made. Wheelahan (2007) attacks competency-based models of vocational education as being 'unproblematic 'descriptions' of the skills needed by employers' (p. 645), and argues that people need to see that content is a product of disciplinary thinking. Young and Muller (2010) also critique the emphasis on competences and skills, which they refer to as a 'Future 2' model of education. For them this type of curriculum has the potential to provide isolated, random areas of content within a sea of competences, where young people are not taught to distinguish between different types of knowledge and forms of thinking, instead knowledge is regarded as information. This can limit young people's understanding of the world to their own experiences. Similarly McPhail and Rata (2016) critique genericism for focusing on perceived relevance to the 'real world' as an organising principle for a curriculum rather than disciplinary concerns.

Instead Young and Muller (2010) advocate a model whereby young people are introduced to the processes and standards by which knowledge is constructed, and which therefore makes it contestable and modifiable, which they refer to as a 'Future 3' model; this disciplinary approach is seen as powerful knowledge (Young, 2016). It requires understanding of discipline specific ways of thinking; as Cain and Chapman (2014) argue:

> Interrogating sources' in history is certainly not a generic critical thinking skill: it has conceptual dimensions (a concept of evidence) and a procedural element (modes of reading and interrogation) and knowing any number of facts about the historical context of an historical document will not help students interrogate that document as evidence

> unless they have some knowledge and understanding of the concept of evidence and some understanding of how to ask questions and of what questions to ask (p. 117).

This counters Hirsch's claim that contextual knowledge is the main feature in distinguishing whether a text is seen as accessible. As Wineburg (2001) has shown, historians read texts differently to students; the latter read for information and therefore extract information whereas the former draw upon their conceptual understanding of history and read for meaning, subtext and to develop explanations. It can be argued that this disciplinary approach to knowledge is far more sophisticated and valuable than a more generic approach; advocates of the knowledge economy are often those who claim education needs to develop generic skills, valorising information retrieval and information processing, as essential elements needed for the knowledge economy, yet disciplinary knowledge appears to offer a stronger analytical ability (Cain & Chapman, 2014). It could be argued that a disciplinary approach to history exceeds what might be gained through a 'learning to learn' or 'critical thinking' approach seen as necessary elements of education for a knowledge economy.

There is a strong argument for seeing history as powerful knowledge (Young, 2016), but it does not necessarily make history 'useful' knowledge, nor does it mean that a disciplinary approach to history is enough to contribute to a knowledge economy. The Usable Historical Pasts (UHP) project (Foster, Ashby, Lee, & Howson, 2008), showed few students had a coherent view of the past and were unable to identify trends and patterns through time, despite being taught a history curriculum in England that emphasised the notion of history as a discipline. In other words students' historical knowledge was of little use to them in explaining their current reality. In order for historical knowledge to be useful it ought to allow young people to orientate themselves in time, and enable associations or connections to be made between events and themes, which help provide a sense of change and continuity, and similarity and difference within eras and across time and geographical space. Rüsen's (2004) notion of historical consciousness provides an interesting perspective into how history might be useful, by connecting our understanding of the past, to the present, and to possible future actions. Rüsen has devised a typology outlining four different ways in which people might make use of the past. The 'exemplary' and 'traditional' types essentially mine the past for information to provide a moral model of how we should behave and to justify current practices. The 'critical' and 'genetic' models both emphasise studying the past through a more critical lens, providing counter-narratives and appreciating that events in the past could have worked out differently

and that there are a range of possible future actions. These last two types use history in a more critical and potentially useful way, and require a good understanding of the nature of the historical discipline. However all four types require a sense of a 'big picture' of the past, suggesting that useful historical knowledge needs to be based around a coherent framework. Such a framework could be constructed on different scales. Shemilt (2009) advocates a framework based around four fundamental themes - modes of production, political and social organisation, growth and movement of peoples and culture and praxis, which span all of human history and geographical space, whilst the recent Dutch curriculum is based around ten periods of national history (Wilschut, 2009). However these different proponents agree that any framework should be seen as a provisional scaffold, subject to modification as students develop further insights into issues as they study them, which differentiates it from the core knowledge approach. By studying recurring themes throughout history young people should be able to make increasingly sophisticated associations and connections between people, events and themes, appreciating the 'big picture' of the past, rather than seeing it simply as 'a formless collection of events' (Lee, 2007, p. 60). This form of thinking provides both a sense of perspective, links past and present and could therefore inform potential future actions, and requires the ability to adapt thinking as new knowledge is encountered. This ability to make connections and to modify ideas in the light of new knowledge are important ways of thinking expected in a knowledge economy.

This literature review highlights the debates about the value of different forms of knowledge. The global emphasis on a knowledge economy is driving educational reforms in one direction, namely the importance of generic competences, and is a feature of both New Zealand and England's policy contexts, but within England there has also been a drive towards some form of core knowledge curriculum. Yet knowledge debates in history education present other forms of knowledge as being of greater value, namely the importance of 'powerful knowledge' through a disciplinary approach, and the development of provisional frameworks of knowledge.

Exploring what teachers actually do and what choices they make about the form of knowledge to develop provides helpful insights into policy enactment and the extent to which teachers are (un)consciously supporting the development of a knowledge economy. Exploring this in two countries, which to an extent have a shared vision of history education, but with differing policy contexts, adds to the richness of our understanding about what teachers choose to do. This

study therefore focuses on what type(s) of historical knowledge is being developed, and in particular looks at the extent to which teachers a) adopt a disciplinary approach to teaching history and b) give consideration to building a coherent, usable knowledge of the past when planning their programmes. And therefore whether the teaching of history is in a position to support ways of thinking that would be seen as valuable in the context of a knowledge economy.

Methodology

Evidence of history teachers' practices and views derives from data collected in slightly different ways in the two countries. In England data were gathered from eleven teachers in ten history departments in two southern counties, which represents a non-probability, convenience sample, whilst the New Zealand teachers were drawn from New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, as a purposeful sampling of teachers from diverse school types. All the teachers were either Heads of Department or had some responsibility for curriculum planning. Some of these teachers were new in post, whereas others had up to 20 years of experience. In both contexts the teachers represent a range of schools – single sex, co-educational, low to high socio-economic areas, urban and suburban, and religious and non-denominational schools. All schools were state-maintained. Ethical approval was granted by the universities in which both researchers were based and appropriate ethical procedures were followed. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, and agreement received to electronically record interviews. Copies of the transcripts were made available to all participants for validation.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants in each country and in New Zealand a further second interview was undertaken a year after the first to evaluate any changes in teachers' views and approaches. In New Zealand, in response to a new environment of having no prescribed topics, participants were asked what historical topics they selected for their programmes and asked how this interfaced with the teaching of disciplinary skills while in England participants were asked to explain their programme choices. In England, schemes of work were also collected from each of the participants' departments, covering the 11-13/14 KS3 curriculum. Schemes of work, which outline lesson sequences, are an expectation of History departments in England. These documents are artefacts, which present the thinking behind lessons to be taught. There is no particular format to which these documents are supposed to conform, but generally the schemes of work collected in this study specify what is

to be taught and the aims of particular lessons, and many then provided suggested activities and resources.

In both countries the use of semi-structured interviews allowed a range of issues to be explored, including the thinking behind teachers' choice of content and how they understood what they were trying to achieve in developing students' understandings of history. Interviewees' explanations for their programme structures were coded in relation to the degree to which teachers adopted a disciplinary approach to teaching history and the extent to which teachers deliberately tried to construct young people's framework knowledge of the past. In both studies the data were hand-coded. Pursuing a disciplinary approach could be recognised in teachers' comments on the development of substantive, procedural or conceptual understanding (which were adopted as broad codes) and within each area more specific ways of thinking could be identified; for example procedural thinking would be seen in an emphasis on students gaining an understanding of how to critique and interpret primary and secondary sources, whilst a conceptual focus would be reflected in reference to ideas such as understanding of causation or change. Ascertaining whether historical frameworks were being deliberately planned for would be discernible through the use of themes and the deployment of depth and overview topics to cover a broad range of historical themes and periods, which were adopted as broad codes. An emphasis on themes would suggest opportunities to revisit issues that resonate through the ages, building up an increasingly sophisticated understanding of an issue, with the ability to make connections between events and issues across time. The interplay of depth and overview could also indicate how students are enabled to develop a coherent 'big picture' of the past. For the schools in England the schemes of work were analysed to see whether they revealed signs of a strong disciplinary emphasis in the planning, and whether there were explicit attempts to create a usable historical framework. Given the nature of the documents and varying levels of detail, this does mean that there is an element of interpretation involved in the analysis. In the majority of cases the combination of enquiry questions or topic headings, along with intended learning objectives, and some detail about possible lesson activities give a good indication as to the nature of what was being taught. In the New Zealand context analysis of the record of topics addressed in school programmes and explained by teachers during the interviews, serves as a verifiable source of evidence for how programming supported or mitigated against coherent frameworks of substantive knowledge.

Findings

A disciplinary approach to teaching history

Analysis of the schemes of work in the English schools showed that five of the ten schools used enquiry questions extensively throughout their planning; for example, in Plum School the enquiry question 'How can Sutton Hoo help us learn about the Saxons?' is firmly focused on the process of working with evidence, the question 'Why was Henry II whipped?' has at its heart the concept of causation, whereas 'Who should be king in 1066?' is much more about substantive knowledge. These first two questions, especially when combined with an analysis of the learning objectives for the lesson and lesson activities indicate a disciplinary approach. Two other schools had a more mixed approach using both enquiry questions and topic headings (and was probably indicative of changes being made as departments rewrite their schemes of work), and three schools had schemes of work that simply identified topics to be taught, suggesting a focus on substantive content was the priority. Interview data also reinforces the idea that some clearly saw history as a discipline when it came to planning:

> I do think some of the skills that history gives are unique to the subject, particularly the use of evidence, um, and the consideration of purpose of author, and where interpretations come from. I think those are absolutely vital (Kerry, Cherry School).

However there appeared to be two important issues arising from an analysis of these departments' approaches to teaching history as a discipline. One is the extent to which these teachers saw particular concepts and processes as being specific to history as a discipline or as generic and important life skills. This applies particularly to the idea of working with sources, and using them as evidence to make claims about what happened in the past, and exploring the process by which this is done. In total eight of the teachers mentioned the importance of understanding historical 'skills' such as working with evidence. But in most cases teachers explained the value of working with sources generically, stressing the ability to think about societal issues generally:

> It really does encourage them to analyse and question what they read, to consider how accounts of the past are formed and we relate that to the present day quite a lot and particularly in their understanding of the media (Judith, Ash School).

The problem with stressing the importance of generic ways of thinking devalues the uniqueness of the subject and the discipline, and although the teachers might align themselves with Young and Muller's (2010) Future 3 curriculum model, their justification appears to fit more comfortably with a Future 2 curriculum.

The second issue is revealed through an analysis of the actual enquiry questions, and the accompanying detail in the schemes of work, which makes it possible to identify the particular focus of lessons; this was possible with seven of the ten sets of schemes of work (the other three were less detailed so any comments would be merely speculative). Analysis of the Year 7 schemes of work on medieval England (for students aged 11-12) shows several teachers placed a far greater emphasis on issues related to second order concepts (such as cause and consequence, and change and continuity) rather than the procedural thinking about how the past is constructed, i.e. working with sources and the development of historical interpretations (see Table 18). The former essentially provide the means by which we explain and communicate our understanding of the past, i.e. why events happen, and the extent to which things have changed. The latter however is, arguably, at the heart of disciplinary thinking as it provides the means by which claims to knowledge are made.

Overall causation questions tend to dominate the majority of the schemes of work which have a disciplinary focus. Enquiries about historical interpretation, which has been called the 'jewel in the crown' of the curriculum (Counsell, 2003, p. 6) because of its value in showing how history is fluid and is open to misuse, feature infrequently in the schemes of work.

Table 18

Focus of Enquiry Questions in Units of Work on Medieval England

	Second-order concepts				Procedural thinking		Substantive knowledge	
	Causation	Change and continuity	Similarity and difference	Significance	Source work	Interpre-tations	Substantive content or concepts	Other
Pear School	5	1	0	0	1	1	6	2
Ash School	11	0	1	1	6	2	22	3
Cherry School	8	3	1	2	5	1	3	0
Elm School	7	1	1	1	8	0	15	4
Plum School	5	8	2	2	9	2	5	0
Oak School	8	1	1	11	6	3	12	0
Apple School	10	7	0	1	8	1	6	1

In New Zealand, on the other hand, given the strong focus upon disciplinary procedures and concepts in the *Curriculum* and *achievement standards*, teachers could be said to be adopting a strong disciplinary approach. Selections of historical content are largely made on the grounds that they are suitable for addressing the concepts or disciplinary procedures assessed in a particular achievement standard. For example, all interviewees, in relation to the standards assessing understanding of the concepts *cause* and *consequence* explained how the substantive content they chose was an attempt to ensure its suitability for addressing the requirements of these standards. Stephen found that the topic of the Bombing of Hiroshima worked:

> You can do long term, short term causes and consequences which you need to do. You can analyse them which means talk about the type of political causes, social and economic and you can do that with that topic really well (Interview 1).

As he explained 'It's really about understanding the achievement standards … and then picking topics that work' (Interview 1).

However, less certain is that teachers recognised, or viewed as important, the conceptual basis of their teaching. Instead the concepts of causes and consequences were commonly discussed in terms of ticking off that they had taught students an appropriate number of causes and consequences, in sufficient depth, for students to achieve at the highest levels; as Bianca commented 'I teach them three causes, I teach them three consequences, they don't get like a fourth. We had a fourth to begin with, but we dropped that because it was just too much' (Interview 2). This results in an historical convenience rather than validity emerging from evidence and interpretation.

The historical concept *significance* is also a consideration in programmes. Students are required to engage with evaluating an events' 'significance to New Zealanders'. Yet the importance of *significance* as an historical concept can be side-lined as teachers focus upon the suitable selection of an event as their priority. Matthew commented that for his Level 1 programme:

> it is just simply World War 2, what caused it, what were the consequences. And that decision was more just because we could deal better with the significance to New Zealanders… We wanted just to make sure, that should they be given a question in the exam which relates to New Zealand, they at least had something to talk about (Interview 2).

In these circumstances, where assessment is the driving factor, second order concepts such as cause, consequence, significance, can have reduced capacity to fulfil their critical role in disciplinary thinking. The concepts are not brought into play because of their appropriateness for explaining a particular body of knowledge, nor are the second-order concepts utilised in conjunction with each other. Instead a pre-determined concept is the starting point for organising a response to an assessment. Such an approach does not guarantee that disciplinary concepts are understood or used in ways which assist in the development of historically literate students.

One of the interviewees however, regarded the 'greater focus on historical concepts (as) a significant advantage' (Linda, Interview 2). She noted that 'driving … our programme is a desire to shift from content to bringing forward the historical concepts … so we cottoned on to *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* book' (Seixas & Morton, 2012). She highlighted, for example, the benefits of putting an explicit focus on *perspectives* and on *significance*.

Countering this argument though were her concerns that there is an over emphasis on *causation*, and that concepts such as *change and continuity* are not given sufficient emphasis so that 'trends and patterns get lost' (Interview 1). She referred to the way causes and consequences are assessed at each year level which she viewed as being 'done to death' (Interview 2). Linda also felt that students were 'the poorer because they are being driven again towards this narrow definition of what history is. It's an event and it's about causes and consequences of an event' (Interview 2).

The focus on the second order concept *perspectives* was also regarded as valuable by all research participants. The perspectives standards are internally assessed where teachers set an assessment and students research the views of people in the past or present about an historical event. By their final year in school students are expected to see perspectives through the lens of an historian, making judgments on the validity of differing perspectives. Therefore, historical interpretation becomes a stronger feature at this level.

A disciplinary focus on source analysis, research and essay writing were also viewed as important. Linda was quite typical when she explained

> I think the research, component, has allowed for a greater level of thinking and greater understanding of working with evidence, so the tools of an historian, and a greater understanding of information literacy and being critical. It has developed a more critical appreciation for a variety of sources (Interview 2).

Teachers therefore, are emphasising the way the achievement standards lead students to the use of disciplinary processes.

Teachers however viewed their attempts to adopt a strong disciplinary approach to sources as somewhat compromised when it came to preparing students for the source interpretation standards assessed through examination. In the absence of prescribed topics, the source interpretation examinations require students to understand sources for a historical context in which they have no prior knowledge or learning. As Karen noted, 'that's part of the problem isn't it because the depth required for unpacking those sources is just not there, because it's not backed by any content knowledge' (Interview 1). Teachers have a choice over which standards they pursue and have increasingly become reluctant to enter their students in the source

interpretation examination papers. So while teachers recognise the importance of interpretation of sources for developing the understandings required for effective history research, teaching the methodologies and thinking processes required to interpret a variety of sources, in circumstances where there is no intention that students sit those standards, is likely to be less of a priority.

Planning history programmes to build a coherent, usable knowledge of the past

Clearly, given the enormous scope of what could be taught in history, teachers face a series of constraints as to how much history can actually be taught within the limited timeframe of a curriculum and the depth in which topics and themes can be explored. History teachers are therefore forced to make choices about what to teach, so it seems imperative that they are absolutely crystal clear as to what they wish to achieve through their selection.

However the interview data from both countries reveals that few of the teachers consider the overall shape of what students would learn when planning. George, one of the teachers in England was an exception, as he was keen that each year's work was based around a central theme, which were 'identity' (as in, who are the British?), the relationship between the individual and the state, and empires. For him different topics were included to help contextualise later ones:

> the Enlightenment ...there was only one lesson there but it becomes important then when we mention the French Revolution …when we do the Tudor or Stuart period, it's what the significance of this period is, and how it links together, more to just elaborate on the context more as opposed to oh here's just another topic.

Jane demonstrated the most overt and conscious approach to content selection; her schemes of work were characterised by large sequential taught thematic overviews, which created a layered, rather than linear, approach to knowledge construction:

> [Students are] able to assess then each historical period of time and go right, this is a period of rapid progress …and then they can say….well because we did religion last term and there was masses of progress there, or change, and whereas this time we're doing technology and there wasn't that much progress, so maybe the two correlate and

> they go well religion was strong and therefore maybe that explains why they're not progressing with technology and medicine, so that's the idea.

Another exception was Tanya, whose planning, combined depth studies and overviews. Many of these overviews provided a broader context for periods as well as providing a big picture of developments, into which depth studies were slotted to exemplify issues.

Most other teachers justified content selection for their curricula on the grounds of student and/or staff interest in topics, alongside concerns over resourcing. Consequently their schemes of work more closely resembled a series of chronological, yet randomly, selected series of individuals and events, with few attempts to build overviews. For example, looking at the schemes of work to see how the development of political authority in Britain was presented, showed most schools would look at medieval kingship (usually regarding the clash with ecclesiastical authority in the shape of Thomas Becket, and the Magna Carta), before hopping forward several centuries to look at the English Civil War (which in some cases extend to the Glorious Revolution), and then moving forward a couple of centuries to look at the campaign for female suffrage. Although each topic is worthy of study in its own right, expecting students to make meaningful connections between them as part of a coherent narrative is deeply questionable.

Similar issues were also evident in New Zealand. Powerful and valuable knowledge involves students being engaged in learning that enables them to generalise and recognise connections between ideas, so ideally teachers would plan for coherence, and the autonomy teachers have in New Zealand to select any historical content would appear to make this possible. However the segmented nature of assessment in history where independent concepts and procedures are targeted, provides little encouragement for teachers to consider programming in an integrated manner. Furthermore, experience of assessment has led teachers to narrow the *events* selected for externally assessed standards to containable events such as the Abyssinian Crisis 1935, the Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955-6, or the My Lai Massacre 1968. Particularly where the focus is on the *cause and consequence* of such events there is a tendency to teach them in isolation from the broader context of the period.

When the research participants described their programmes they tended to jump from identifying one topic to the next and made no comment on how the topics might relate to, or

build upon, each other. Nevertheless, as in the English study, one interviewee, Linda, was an exception. She spoke of coherence and the yearly programmes were organised according to themes e.g. Conflict in the 20th century (Level 1), Revolutions (Level 2), and Empire and Oestrogen (Level 3). She also noted

> I'd like us to shift to having essential questions – having those dominant fertile questions … that challenge and they start to become our framework for the year rather than "we're doing Russian Revolution and we're doing you know". So that's where I want to go in the next year or two (Interview 1).

Another participant appeared to give some consideration to how the programmes worked as a whole - 'we've been very much thinking about what's the sort of range of things we can pull in at various points. So they've got that kind of broader knowledge and can draw greater connections' (Karen, Interview 1). A further interviewee recognised that a thematic approach had advantages but he did not feel that his students would cope – I thought about doing a thematic topic around nationalism and I actually thought I'd do Vietnam and Samoa and do a contrast. What I found is they couldn't get their heads around this – it was quite conceptual. I ditched Samoa' (Stephen, Interview 1).

There was however also recognition by some interviewees that their programmes did not consistently take into account the relationship between topics to build contextual connections. Bianca mentioned topics being 'a mismatch' and 'a bit random' (Interview 1) when describing her school's programmes. Co-construction of the selection of topics was the approach used by Matthew which made it very difficult to create a logically organised and interlinked design and its ever-changing pattern from year to year as students select different combinations of historical topics from a list of options, would make it impossible to track and plan for building knowledge of particular concepts during the year and across the three senior year levels. Matthew referred to the approach as an 'ever changing jigsaw' in trying to use 'student voice to guide what we do'. However he recognised the element of luck and value when some linkages emerged –

> I give them a lot of options for the trend essay … It's funny that last year they chose the role of women in 16th-17th century England and then women's suffrage (in New Zealand) so the two pair up. Then they've chosen crime and punishment and paired it

> up with Jack the Ripper without any kind of push from me, but the two marry into each other – both years they've done that (Interview 2).

The relationship between depth and breadth studies is important in seeking coherence and a usable knowledge of the past. Lee (2007) has argued that students need to understand 'patterns of change … to build a big picture into which depth studies would fit. This kind of 'nesting' structure enables the depth studies to act as a test of the picture, which in turn gives the depth studies meaning' (p. 58). While some teachers recognised the benefits of such framework knowledge, their programmes rarely exhibited this approach. In New Zealand the segmentation of the achievement standards have had a powerful influence on teachers' design conceptions, and while some teachers recognised the randomness of their selections and the loss of breadth, they felt compelled to place the pragmatism of *best fit* for assessment and, as with the research in England, student engagement ahead of programming for coherence (see Chapter 7). The idea of building a framework of knowledge that would be of value to a student, with a few exceptions, was notably absent from these teachers' curriculum planning. Instead other drivers, such as making teachers accountable for student success in high stakes qualifications, to serve an imagined future workforce, has placed a premium on narrowed knowledge conceptions and procedural competences which can be packaged and assessed.

Discussion

Educational policy curriculum reforms which have prioritised 'learning to learn', have commonly positioned critical thinking and generic skills-based forms of knowledge in the ascendance while knowledge particular to the disciplines has gained less attention. In a knowledge economy which 'places a premium on advances in knowledge' (Young & Muller, 2010, p. 23) history may even appear to be of little use in progressing society's economic well-being (see Chapter 6). In order for the discipline of history to contribute to the knowledge economy, an economy which is perceived as being in a continual state of flux requiring intelligent and flexible responses, history education needs to be able to confidently provide students with the means to investigate and scrutinise society's actions, in the past and present, to inform future thinking. Disciplinary knowledge provides the 'intellectual means for doubt, criticism and judgement' (Rata and McPhail, 2016, p. 59) so that for history the understandings of how history is constructed, interpreted and contested is therefore critical. Such powerful knowledge has the potential to enable students to both gain insight into the ways communities

have responded in the past but also to contextualise those understandings in their considerations of the present.

As the research has indicated, this is a challenging task. While teachers expressed their belief in the value of enquiry questions, recognised and taught history in relation to second-order concepts and implemented pedagogical practices which explored disciplinary processes such as source interpretation and historical research, there was limited development of some of these critical features. In both nations understanding causal relationships was emphasised while investigating historical interpretations appeared to be more limited either through non-engagement with the relevant achievement standards in the case of New Zealand, or through a narrowed application in the case of England.

The evidence also suggests that potentially valuable frameworks of knowledge are largely absent from teachers' thinking. The ability to cross-reference knowledge and for students to evaluate, analyse and interpret their substantive knowledge within a wider context is not strongly developed in teachers' programme designs. Understanding the inferential relations between concepts (McPhail & Rata, 2016), bodies of substantive knowledge and interpretations of those within a broad framework of knowledge, enables students to progress to deeper understanding. This challenges teachers' pedagogic practices too as they seek to structure learning of the discipline in ways which is rich and meaningful. There was evidence from both countries of teachers' struggles with this. In New Zealand there is recognition of the randomness and inadequacy of their programming with pragmatism coming to the fore while in England there was a lack of clarity over the nature of disciplinary knowledge for history versus less discipline specific competences and ways of thinking.

A distinction can also be made here in evaluating the impact curriculum reforms have had on history in the two jurisdictions. While disciplinary knowledge is embedded in the curricula for both England and New Zealand, *The New Zealand Curriculum* is empty of specific content while England's provides some guidance. While in both places teachers have a reasonable level of freedom to determine the history they teach, in New Zealand disciplinary knowledge in the form of procedures and concepts dominates, sometimes at the expense of substantive knowledge. The impact appears less extreme in England where some level of prescription remains and certain topics appear to have become embedded in practice. Despite the differing levels of prescriptive direction however, both exhibited levels of constraint. Assessment

compliance, resourcing, and time availability were among the reasons given for narrowing the knowledge, both procedural and substantive, taught to students. In these circumstances, there are lost opportunities for history to contribute to the knowledge economy.

Conclusion

Underpinning the curricula reforms, which emphasise transferrable competences and generic skills, is the belief that a knowledge economy requires citizens to be adaptive and able to effectively utilise knowledge, derived from diverse sources, to innovate, progress and enrich society. However this particular form of curriculum development, as noted earlier, has been critiqued. As Chisholm (1999) argues:

> New information and communication technologies offer ultimately non-controllable access to diverse and plural worlds - yet they do not assure the acquisition of the ethical and critical faculties needed for personal orientation and balance in negotiation of those worlds (p. 3).

For Wheelahan (2007), the move towards genericism in education promotes 'mundane', context specific knowledge, and although some may regard this as valuable, it is essentially unproblematised knowledge – i.e. young people learn about knowledge as a *product*, rather than seeing the *process* by which any knowledge is derived. It can be argued that to create genuinely adaptive, intelligent knowledge users requires a disciplinary, rather than generic competency based, approach to the curriculum. History has the potential to contribute to this when students are engaged in developing interpretations of the past, which may be relevant to new circumstances in the present or the future. Powerful knowledge, as suggested by Young and Muller (2010), incorporates features such as the reliability, contestability, and specialisation of knowledge. These are essential considerations in contributing wisely to any society's knowledge, including that of a knowledge economy. History with its interpretative elements and disciplinary strengths, combined with the potential to develop usable frameworks of knowledge, has the potential to contribute to a future-focused society. However the data in this paper suggests that there is some way to go before this is fully realised; if a knowledge economy is to be supported then perhaps curriculum reform should focus more on supporting teachers' understanding of developing disciplinary knowledge and appropriate frameworks of knowledge, rather than pushing education towards genericism.

Reflection

This chapter has considered whether in addition to the downplaying of substantive knowledge, disciplinary knowledge for history, comprising procedural knowledge and second-order concepts, are also being marginalised in both New Zealand and England in favour of generic competencies. The comparison of the two countries' approaches has identified that while both put a focus on disciplinary knowledge this is not always pursued in an authentic or robust manner to best serve students' understandings of history. Therefore, while students may be using the tools of historical thinking they may still struggle to arrive at reasonable, informed interpretations or relate them to broader issues.

In England the problem of how to develop historical thinking has been at the forefront of history reforms and practices for several decades but as Aiken (2017) observes in relation to interpreting historical sources, 'many students struggle to convey confident and sophisticated evidential thinking' (p. 48). She explains that through teachers' discussions, conferences and extensive publications during the 1990s teachers worked to transform approaches to source analysis but that 'despite the strength and depth of the history education community's comprehensive solution to it … the problem gradually reared its head again during the late 2000's (p. 48). She argues that this is due to the need for teachers to focus their teaching on examination requirements, rather than 'prioritising secure, deep learning of the GCSE curriculum and the fundamentals that sit behind it' (p. 48). We see a similar outcome in New Zealand with the measurement against standards reducing the capacities of the disciplinary concepts to be employed in a comprehensive and effective manner.

While Aiken has looked specifically at source analysis and not at other aspects of disciplinary knowledge such as research and second order concepts, it does point to a fundamental problem. While there is the potential for disciplinary knowledge to assist with the kind of thinking that may well enable students to contribute effectively to the imagined *knowledge economy,* influential drivers such as assessment, Future 2 over-socialisation, or a primary focus on generic competencies, can draw the focus away from the most effective means of delivering powerful knowledge in pursuit of a knowledge economy.

CHAPTER 12
CONCLUSION

Arising from a complicated web of policy, practice and context, history education and education more broadly in New Zealand, is exhibiting a loss of direction in asserting what knowledge is valuable for students to learn. Throughout this thesis I have illustrated how, at the input level, policies which underpin the broad New Zealand *Curriculum* are aspirational in their goals to accommodate all students' needs through a flexible, multi-pathway learning structure where components of the *Curriculum* and assessment can be picked up, left out, combined, and adapted. This appears to fit well within the context of a diversified school population where bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism are recognised and where students' needs are perceived as highly differentiated. The freedom of direction for schools under *Tomorrow's Schools* management by school boards of trustees, has also been seen as desirable to achieve these goals. Meanwhile at the output level students' and schools' achievements are measured, compared and evaluated which has applied pressures influencing teachers' decisions and practices in ways which were unintended. In a competitive and performative environment, schools, parents and students place high value on the accumulation of 'excellence' level credits for the NCEA qualification while comprehensive and cohesive knowledge of subjects has little apparent worth.

My conclusions have been reached, and the cohesion of this thesis has been created, through applying the theories of what constitutes powerful knowledge in history, evaluating the impacts assessment has had on the framing of knowledge, and conceptualising how history, in its current form, relates to political and educational ideas about 21st century learning and the knowledge economy. By tracing the shifts in the ways knowledge has been managed and conceived of from the time of the first iteration of the standards 2002–2012 to the present era of teacher autonomy over content, and investigating teachers' explanations for their school programme designs, my research contributes to understanding of the complex interplay between national curriculum policy, localised curriculum implementation, recontextualization of academic disciplinary knowledge for school purposes, and international trends which influence and drive education, such as outcomes forms of curricula and PISA results.

While history education is the selected example for this research into the place and importance of knowledge in learning, the relevance of my findings goes beyond a single subject. In New Zealand we need to re-consider both the implications of current curriculum goals and requirements, and the conceptual framework and workings of an assessment structure which compartmentalises knowledge. In particular, we need to address how open curricular choice conflicts with narrow and tightly worded assessment standards and how incentives for achieving excellence grades, such as certificate endorsement, can undermine possibilities for demonstrating excellence of subjects in a more holistic way. The singularity of the learning focus seen in the 'bites of knowledge' required to address particular achievement standards, narrows the field of learning. We need therefore to carefully balance breadth and depth and support engagement with broader frameworks of knowledge. We also need to re-look at whether the current curriculum and regulatory systems are sufficient to provide reasonable guarantees that students will be taught the most valuable knowledge of any discipline, while recognising that such knowledge is emergent and that its selection will always be a matter of debate. Access to such powerful knowledge is an issue of equity. In a study of the subject of English for the NCEA qualification, Wilson, Madjar and McNaughton (2016) examined participation rates for two achievement standards assessing disciplinary literacy and found that opportunities to read complex written texts were much lower in schools serving lower socio-economic communities than in those of mid or higher ranking. Therefore, students' opportunities to learn were impacted through inequities in access to the types of knowledge required to progress to more advanced levels.

Current Review of Education in New Zealand

At this current point in time, some eight years after I (Ormond, 2011a & b) and others (McPhail, 2012; Rata, 2012) began to write about the downgrading of knowledge in policy and practice in New Zealand, there appears to be an opportunity to bring this critical matter to the attention of policy makers. Under a Labour-led coalition government in New Zealand (from October 2017), education is currently undergoing its most significant review in over two decades with both the *Tomorrow's Schools* administrative structure (Ministry of Education, 2018a) and the *NCEA* (Ministry of Education, 2018b) under review. In their 'overall findings' the taskforce reviewing *Tomorrow's Schools* have concluded that:

> the system is not working well enough for our most disadvantaged children and young people' … 'There is no evidence to suggest the current self-governing schools model has been successful in raising student achievement or improving equity as was intended by its originators (p. 11).

Indeed, data from the OECD's PISA tests (Education Counts, *Pisa Reports*), assessing 15-year olds in reading, mathematics and science, indicates a continuous decline in performance between 2003 and 2015. Although the extent of the decline is debated (e.g. Ministry of Education, 2016; Elley, 2016) the data does indicate that 'there is a larger difference in achievement between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds in New Zealand compared to the OECD average' (Ministry of Education, 2016). While the causes for this are multi-faceted and lie beyond the scope of this thesis it is possible that the generality of *The New Zealand Curriculum* plays some role in this. Therefore, it is notable that there are no plans at this point to review *The New Zealand Curriculum* and in fact the report by the NCEA Review Ministerial Advisory Group, under a heading '*New Zealand's curriculum is world-leading and focused on the most important learning*', states that –

> our national curriculum is well placed to prepare our schools and kura (Māori schools) for the future of education. The education system trusts local communities, schools, and kura to weave together the principles, values, attitudes, and competencies with subject-specific knowledge to make sure learners develop what we're calling capabilities and attitudes for lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2018b, p. 10).

While *The New Zealand Curriculum* is not included in the review there is, however, recognition that changes are required to the NCEA.

> ***NCEA's current structure can be a barrier to rich learning.***
> By breaking learning up into standards, NCEA can fragment teaching and learning. This discourages coherence and linking learning across courses. Support is focused on standards rather than the curriculum, so teachers often have to resort to building courses starting with assessment, which means rich learning can be lost (Ministry of Education, 2018b, p. 11).

This statement goes some way to identifying the underlying causes of knowledge fragmentation and the way it affects the coherence of programmes, although the report does not suggest that there is awareness that there has been a significant overall reduction of knowledge during the seventeen years the NCEA has been in place. The recent *NCEA Change Package* (May 2019) produced by the Ministry of Education is suggesting a change towards 'fewer, larger achievement standards' so that 'each standard covers a broader range of knowledge'. This may not necessarily mean that students would have the opportunities to engage with more knowledge overall or that such knowledge has been selected on the basis of its particular worth and cognitive power but it may open the way for expanding the breadth of knowledge learned so that connections can be drawn between concepts and ideas.

Looking to the Future

The way forward is to take notice of the particular mechanisms which engineer student and teacher decisions and lead to undesirable learning outcomes, while also looking more broadly at what form of learning, and in particular what knowledge, is of most worth in developing students' abilities to participate in our current world and think critically and in abstract ways. In order for students to learn the 'best', most valuable knowledge at any given time, we need a Future 3 (Muller & Young, 2010a) form of education in which access to powerful knowledge becomes a priority of education. The national curriculum and school programmes should position knowledge as the starting point with generic skills and engaging pedagogies serving their purpose in providing the means for students to access, understand and use the knowledge. Assessment should measure suitable aspects of what students have been taught while not encouraging levels of performativity among students and teachers which divert attention away from education's core role of educating future generations in the substantive knowledge required to understand our world and to generate new knowledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

Epsom Campus

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www.education.auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: PRINCIPAL/BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Project Title: TEACHER'S DECISIONS IN SELECTING HISTORICAL TOPICS

Researcher: Barbara Ormond

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Dear _____

My name is Barbara Ormond and I am a lecturer in the secondary education programme at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. I am undertaking research into teachers' decisions regarding the selection of topics for senior secondary History and seek permission to include _____ from your school in my doctoral research. This research is being undertaken as partial fulfilment of my Doctorate in Philosophy (Education) at the University of Auckland.

The research involves interviewing History teachers from a range of schools and looking at History programmes to identify the choices teachers make and the reasons for those decisions. Through considering the questions "what knowledge?" and "why choose it?" the implications of the recent shift to teacher autonomy over knowledge selection can be evaluated and understood.

Your acceptance of this research will involve

- consenting to a member of your staff participating in the research
- giving permission for the researcher to use a space within the school to carry out the interview

_____ will be interviewed by me for approximately 60 minutes and if required to clarify points, there may also be a follow-up interview taking approximately 30 minutes. interview questions will be provided in advance of the interview. With the participants' permission, interviews will be recorded and subsequently transcribed. Participants have the right to request that the recorder be turned off at any time during the interview. Participants will also be offered a copy of the transcript of the interview so they can check for accuracy and make any additional comments or clarifications.

Participants have a right to withdraw from the research at any time, but information that they provide cannot be withdrawn, unless it is requested within two weeks after the interview, or two weeks after a requested transcript is provided. The audio file and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet within the University premises for a period of six years for the purpose of further research. The consent forms will be stored in my principal supervisor's office on the University campus. After the six year period the information provided will be destroyed. The reporting of the information in my thesis, or any subsequent publication of information, will not name participants or their schools. However, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be absolutely guaranteed because participants will be identifying particular topics they teach and offering views about the research topic which may be identifiable.

At the interview participants will be asked whether the Head of Department is willing to provide a copy of any written documents, such as student course outlines or History Department schemes, which outline the History topics being taught in the school. The purpose of this is to avoid the need for the participant to list the topics and enable more time to be given in the interview to discussion of the rationale for the choices.

Teachers' participation in this research is voluntary. If a teacher agrees to participate I seek your assurance that their participation or non-participation will have no bearing on their employment or relationship with their school.

If you are able to give permission for _____ to participate in this research, I would appreciate it if you could fill out the consent form (attached). If you have any queries or wish to know more, please phone me or e-mail me at the contacts given below. I would also be happy to talk with you or members of your school about my research once it has been completed.

Thank you very much for your time and for helping make this study possible.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Ormond

Enquiries about the research can be made to:

Researcher: Barbara Ormond

School of Curriculum & Pedagogy
Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92-601, Symonds Street, Auckland 1035.
Ph: (09) -623-8899 Ext. 48476
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Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata

School of Critical Studies Education,
Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92-601, Symonds Street, Auckland 1035
Ph: (09) 623-8899 Ext. 46315Email: e.rata@auckland.ac.nz

Head of School: Professor Judy Parr
School of Curriculum & Pedagogy
Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland,
Private Bag 92-601, Symonds Street, Auckland 1035.
Ph: (09) 623-8899 Ext. 88998Email: jm.parr@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 1 August 2014 for (3) years. Reference Number 012370.

Appendix B

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: TEACHER

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS.

Project Title: TEACHER'S DECISIONS IN SELECTING HISTORICAL TOPICS

Researcher: Barbara Ormond

- I agree to take part in the research
- I have been given and understand the Participant Information Sheet for this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary, and that the Principal has given assurance that participation or non-participation will have no bearing on my employment or relationship with the school.
- I understand that I may withdraw at any time up until and during the interview, without giving a reason, but that information I provide cannot be withdrawn, unless it is requested within two weeks after the interview, or two weeks after a requested transcript is provided.
- I understand the interviews will involve a time commitment of approximately 60 minutes. If required to clarify points, there may also be a follow-up interview taking approximately 30 minutes.
- I agree/do not agree to the interview being audiotaped (*circle one*).
- I understand that I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time.
- I would/would not like the opportunity to check the typed copy of my interview (*circle one*).
- I understand that consent from the Head of Department is required where written documentation such as student course outlines of History Department schemes is provided.
- I understand that if the information I provide is reported/published, this will be done in a way that does not identify me or my school as its source. However anonymity and confidentiality cannot be absolutely guaranteed because as a participant you will be identifying particular topics taught in your school and you will be offering views about the research topic which may be identifiable.
- I understand that data will be kept for a period of six years, from the time of interview, after which it will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Name: _____ [please print carefully]

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON

1 August 2014 for (3) years. Reference Number 012370.

Appendix C

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
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Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street
Auckland 1035, New Zealand

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project Title: **TEACHER'S DECISIONS IN SELECTING HISTORICAL TOPICS**

Researcher: Barbara Ormond

Supervisors: Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata and Professor John Morgan

Transcriber:

I agree to transcribe the audiotapes for the above research project. I understand that the information contained within them is confidential and must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor(s).

Signed: _____

Name: _____ [Please print carefully]

Date: _____

Appendix D

Semi-structured Interviews – Questions

Project Title: TEACHER'S DECISIONS IN SELECTING HISTORICAL TOPICS

Researcher: Barbara Ormond

1. Which topics, or aspects of topics, do you teach at each level?
2. What were the most important factors in making the selections?
3. What factors contributed to the decisions you made about which year level the topics would be taught to?
4. How did you, or your department, go about making these decisions? (e.g. meetings, one teacher in charge of developing one year level etc.)
5. How much have your selections of topics changed since 2011 when topics were no longer prescribed for Year 11? (e.g. comparing Level 1 choices for 2011 with this year's Year 11 programme). Explain the reasons for any changes.
6. Explain how the different requirements for external and internal assessment impacted upon your choices of topic.
7. Did you find there were any barriers to making choices about History topics? (e.g. factors such as assessment requirements, time availability, student's capacities, resources)
8. How does teaching the topic content interface with your teaching of the skills for History? Would you say that you placed greater emphasis on skills or on historical content? Explain.
9. What idea of History are you intending your History students to go away with, upon completion of the courses?
10. Do you like the freedom to determine the topics you teach or would you prefer them to be specified? Explain.

Appendix E

Achievement Objectives for History

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
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 historical forces and movements have influenced the *causes and consequences* of events of significance to New Zealanders.	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 people's *perspectives* on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ.	Understand how people's *interpretations* of events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ.	Understand how *trends* over time reflect social, economic, and political forces.

History *achievement objectives,* Levels 6–8, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007)

Appendix F

History Matrix of Achievement Standards

History Matrix **Achievement Standards for The National Certificate of Educational Achievement**		
NCEA Level 1 Aligns with Level 6 of The New Zealand Curriculum Year 11 students	**NCEA Level 2** Aligns with Level 7 of The New Zealand Curriculum Year 12 students	**NCEA Level 3** 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 4 credits	AS91229 Carry out an inquiry of an historical event or place that is of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 4 credits	AS91434 Research an historical event or place of significance to New Zealanders, using primary and secondary sources. Internal 5 credits
AS91002 Demonstrate understanding of an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 4 credits	AS91230 Examine an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 5 credits	AS91435 Analyse an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 5 credits
AS91003 Interpret sources of an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. External 4 credits	AS91231 Examine sources of an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders. External 4 credits	AS91436 Analyse evidence relating to an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. External 4 credits
AS91004 Demonstrate understanding of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 4 credits	AS91232 Interpret different perspectives of people in an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 5 credits	AS91437 Analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders. Internal 5 credits
AS91005 Describe the causes and consequences of an historical event. External 4 credits	AS91233 Examine causes and consequences of a significant historical event. External 5 credits	AS91438 Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event. External 6 credits
AS91006 Describe how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society. External 4 credits	AS91234 Examine how a significant historical event affected New Zealand society. External 5 credits	AS91439 Analyse a significant historical trend and the force(s) that influenced it. External 6 credits

History matrix of achievement standards for the NCEA. (Ministry of Education, 2014a).

Appendix G Teachers' Selections of History Topics

Name Pseudonym	**NCEA Level 1**		**NCEA Level 2**		**NCEA Level 3**	
	AS91001		**AS91229**		**AS91434**	
Linda	Battle in WWI – Somme or Passchendale		Choose a Revolution		2014 – Early Contact Period in Northland	2015 – Choose a woman who made an impact in History
Bianca	Women on the home front during WWII		Rise of the Nazis		Womenhood in Victorian England	
Matthew	Open topic – students guided to choose WWI or WWII		Area of protest		Select a contested event	
Stephen	Treaty of Versailles to the League of Nations		Choice within the Rise of Hitler to the Holocaust		2014 - Waikato Wars or sovereignty issues	2015 – Choice within the New Zealand Wars
Suzanne	2014 – Migration	2015 – Influenza Epidemic	2014 - WWI Research on a soldier from WWI *(refers to the topic as Origins of WWI)*	2015 – Range of WWI battles - lower band directed to do Gallipoli.	Choice of NZ topic – e.g. Tangiwai Disaster, Springbok Tour, NZ War battle	
Karen	Choice within WWII – encouraged to do the Pacific War		Māori Protest Movement		2014 - New Zealand Wars	2016 – Investigate person signing the Treaty of Waitangi
	AS91002		**AS91230**		**AS91435**	
Linda	Battle in WWI – Somme or Passchendaele		Choose a Revolution		x	
Bianca	Women on the home front - WWII		Rise of the Nazis		Womenhood in Victorian England	
Matthew	Open topic – guided to WWI or WWII		Vietnam War – American involvement		Same contested event as AS91334	
Stephen	Treaty of Versailles to League of Nations		Choice within Rise of Hitler to Holocaust		2014 - Waikato Wars or sovereignty issues	
Suzanne	Rainbow Warrior		WWI – Researching a soldier	2015 – Gallipoli	Choice of NZ topic - Tangiwai Disaster, Springbok Tour, NZ War battle	
Karen	Choice within WWII – encouraged to do Pacific War		Māori Protest Movement		New Zealand Wars	2016 – Person signing the Treaty of Waitangi

	AS91004		**AS91232**		**AS91437**	
Linda	2014 Springbok Tour (*and Bastion Point if have time*)	2015 Springbok Tour	NZ's Involvement in the Vietnam War – NZ Veteran vs Protestor		2014 - Parihaka	2015 – Women's Suffrage in Britain
Bianca	2014 – Birmingham Campaign	2015 – Conscientious Objectors in WWII	2014 – Mau Movement	2015 – Salem Witch Trials	My Lai Massacre	
Matthew	Rainbow Warrior Bombing 2014 - A few students also did Long March to Freedom as a catch-up achievement standard.		My Lai Massacre		Same contested event as AS91434 2014 - A few students did NZ Suffrage	
Stephen	Birmingham Campaign		2014 – 9/11	2015 – Formation of Israel	Hiroshima	
Suzanne	Black Civil Rights		2014 - October Revolution (Upper band)	2015 – October revolution *(Upper band) Holocaust (Middle band)*	Gunpowder Plot 1605 (a few students did the English Civil War)	
Karen	Springbok Tour		x		2014 - Allied bombing of Germany	2015 - Execution of Charles I
	AS91005		**AS91233**		**AS91438**	
Linda	Causes of WWII Event – Abyssinian Crisis and Kristallnacht		October Revolution		Treaty of Waitangi to 1860s.	
Bianca	Polynesian Panthers		2014 – Mau Movement	2015 – Salem Witch trials	My Lai Massacre	
Matthew	2014 – Montgomery Bus Boycott or Origins of WWII	2015 - Origins of WWII	2014 – Origins of WWI *or* American Involvement in the Vietnam War	2015 - American Involvement in the Vietnam War	2014 – Role of Women in England and Suffrage in New Zealand	2015 – The Whitechapel Murders
Stephen	Birmingham Campaign		Kristallnacht		Hiroshima	
Suzanne	2014 – Treaty of Versailles	2015 – Choices of Little Rock,	Russian Revolution *(upper band)* – most do October		x	

		March on Washington, Rainbow Warrior, Treaty of Versailles	Revolution – some do Bloody Sunday. Gallipoli *(lower band)*			
Karen	Manchurian Crisis (with the alternative of Abyssinian Crisis and alternative for struggling students doing Origins of WWII more broadly)		Johnson's decision to escalate the Vietnam War (some do Defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu)		Some sit this using Treaty of Waitangi – default essay -most just do AS91439.	
	AS91006		**AS91234**		**AS91439**	
Linda	x		NZ's Involvement in the Vietnam War		x	2015 – Changing role of women in America
Bianca	x		x		x	
Matthew	Rainbow Warrior		2014 - Gallipoli	2015- undecided – might be Vietnam	2014 – Role of Women and Suffrage in NZ	2015 – Punishment in England 1450 -1900
Stephen	x		x		x	
Suzanne	2014 Rainbow Warrior and Springbok Tour	2015 Influenza Epidemic	2014 - NZ's Involvement in the Vietnam War	2015 – Rainbow Warrior and Springbok Tour	2014 - English Civil War or BCR and the French Revolution *Note: two different teachers' programmes*	2016 x
Karen	Springbok Tour		Second Indo-China War i.e. Vietnam War from time of US intervention		2014 – Colonisation	x

Notes: AS91003, AS91231, and AS91436 do not appear on this table of contents as the 'topics' for the interpretation of sources achievement standards are determined by the examiner.

An 'x' indicates where teachers are not including the achievement standard in their programmes.

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