10 Knowledge, Curriculum and Teaching on Matters That Concern

A Concluding Discussion

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Closing the gap between high- and low-performing schools is an aim of countless local, national and international educational policy documents. However, as demonstrated in the introductory chapters, there is often a great deal of undertheorisation, if not outright conceptual confusion, surrounding theories of knowledge and definitions of *equity* that undergird these policy documents. Given the pressing nature of the problem and the reality that students in low-performing schools are not receiving the educations they deserve, it is tempting to dismiss philosophical and theoretical investigations as irrelevant to addressing a problem that has real and immediate consequences. But this would be a mistake. Even the best-intentioned policy or practice will have unintended negative consequences when key concepts – such as equity – are understood differently by key constituencies tasked with implementing the policies. Those most impacted by the policies – students, parents, communities – may also have different understandings of ideals such as equity than the parties implementing or constructing the policies, and this can lead to further unintended negative consequences, such as a widened performance gap and deepened distrust (Schultz, 2019).

This volume has also emphasised how even good policies can lead to constrained agency, which also often has negative consequences. If we want to close the gap between high- and low-performing schools, then teachers and principals in schools labelled *low performing* must feel like they have a voice and that they can exercise agency. Overzealous policy implementation can silence the insight of experienced school personnel and undercut their agency. This can lead to cycles of distrust and demoralisation that will often only widen the gap between high- and low-performing schools (Santoro, 2018; Schultz, 2019). One way to empower school personnel is to facilitate conversations about the purposes of education so that members of a school community can have a say in how school goals are developed, making it far more likely that these goals will align with their own values and aspirations. Doing this cultivates voice and agency.

Philosophical and theoretical conversations are not sufficient to closing the elusive performance gap, but they are necessary. Given the enormity of the problem, the reality that each child has only one childhood, and many are not receiving an education that will open them to a future of possibility,

it is understandable that we would want to create policies that promote equity before developing a shared understanding of what equity is through debate, dialogue and study. Nonetheless, the significance of this type of dialogue will only become more important. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) most recent work on the Future of Education and Skills for 2030 aims to close gaps in how students experience well-being. As laudable as this goal is, well-being is often under-theorised, and it has conflicting meanings and ways of being cultivated. As Prilleltensky (2020) noted, the social determinants of well-being are often far more powerful than anything an individual can do to promote their own well-being. Unfortunately, many OECD educational policies seem to emphasise the individual's responsibility for promoting their own well-being, which may further jeopardise the well-being of the most vulnerable students. To avoid this outcome, what is meant by *well-being* and how it is best cultivated must be clarified and further developed.

We will not make progress in closing the persistent gaps in educational quality until we devote sustained attention to the intersecting values, practices and ideals that must be theorised, studied, discussed and thought through if we are to make the types of progress that will empower students, teachers, principals, schools and communities to close those gaps. The following sections of this concluding chapter touch on key elements involved in improving outcomes and closing gaps, illuminating the complexity and the importance of the task.

In this concluding chapter, four themes of knowledge, equity, teaching (types of feedback, assessment and classroom discourses) and curriculum are discussed. In the final section, we argue for the necessity of a conscious choice of concepts of knowledge and equity, as well as an awareness of the implications of different meanings, as a basis for both the formation of curricula and for the enacting of actual teaching.

View of Knowledge, Equity, Teaching and Curriculum

The empirical evidence for the project underpinning this volume is classroom studies in school year 8 (14-year-olds) focusing on the recontextualisation of curriculum content into teaching practice. In addition, the insights build on corresponding classroom studies in school year 6 (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018). These studies, conducted within the Swedish school system, reveal that standards-based curricula for compulsory school require a new kind of attention from both teachers and students, compared to previously goal-oriented or content-based curricula. What is 'new' can be stated with the following two arguments. First, while previous curriculum models primarily have functioned as a framework of goals and teaching content as a concern for the teacher, the current standards-based curricula have moved into the classroom to become a matter for both teachers and students. A curriculum is used by the teachers to motivate both the content of their teaching and the assessment of the students' knowledge development. The

students are familiar with the curriculum's function as regulation text and parts of its content. Second, a function of accountability has been added to the teachers' professional role, implicating that a teacher is responsible not only for the content and quality of the teaching but also for the quality of the students' learning, in the sense that all students achieve the requirements for knowledge expressed in the syllabi included in the curriculum (Wahlström, 2018a).

Meanings of Knowledge

Common to all lessons included in the study underpinning the chapters in this book is a teacher authoring a curriculum content (Doyle, 1992) – together with the students in varying degrees – and a responsibility for the teacher to relate the teaching content to the knowledge requirements stated in the national curriculum so that the students will achieve a basic level of skills or higher. What differs between classrooms are the ways the content is authored, based both on space and form of participation for the students to co-construct the content and on the foundational meaning of the concept of knowledge permeating the teaching (see Chapter 2 for a discussion on different concepts of knowledge). Moreover, there were differences between the structure of the learning environment in terms of disruptions and the possibility for the students to focus on their tasks, ranging from very good to poor. The most noticeable difference arises between teaching based on knowledge concepts such as transactional realism and *Bildung*, on the one hand, and a disciplinary view of knowledge in terms of social realism, on the other. While the former knowledge traditions are based on human existence as a whole, characterised by knowledge developed from relationships embedded in context, the latter assumes knowledge as separate objects outside of human beings and independent of context. The challenge built in transactional realism and *Bildung* is to coordinate the students' attention and interest towards a certain teaching content (Biesta, 2014), while the challenge in social realism is to give the students access to a specific type of knowledge (Young, 2013).

An inference from this study is that it is crucial to make a conceptual distinction between academic disciplines and school subjects. School subjects can be related more or less closely to the disciplines of knowledge, depending on their characteristics and different subject traditions. As Deng (2020) noted, school subjects differ from, but are at the same time related to, academic disciplines because the purpose of schooling is broader than just preparing for academic studies. The teaching content needs to comprise opportunities for students to develop knowledge about the world, to learn to act responsibly in the world and to realise oneself in the world (Wahlström, 2021). Within the framework of teaching content, the students learn to reflect on different viewpoints and consequences, formulate arguments based on knowledge and facts and analyse and compare different texts and the like. These abilities should be developed and assessed in relation to

specific content, rather than being viewed as general ('generic') skills. You need to argue for *something*, and the way you argue needs to be assessed in relation to how well the arguments are built on actual knowledge. Thus, the conclusion is that the encounter between the content, the social learning environment and the student is central to a student's opportunity to develop new knowledge, to take civic responsibility and to develop one's own potential (self-realisation). The teacher's democratic stance in the authoring of teaching content makes a difference for what the student gets the opportunity to co-author and learn. From a perspective of curriculum theory, the teaching content is viewed as crucial for, and integrated between, the three levels of societal policy, the actual curriculum and the teaching practice. One missing point in the perspectives included in curriculum theory is a conceptual perspective of justice.

Two Perspectives on Equity

What the student gets the opportunity to learn can be conceptualised as a matter of equity. In chapter 3 of this book, we suggested that the capability approach, an approach to justice developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum for evaluations at an individual level, and the principle of parity of participation, developed by Nancy Fraser for evaluations at an institutional level, are both fruitful for exploring a school system from a perspective of equity, one at a time or in combination. While the capability approach is focused on investigating what society's offer of compulsory education really means for individual students and how well it corresponds with an individual's own needs, the three-dimensional principle of parity of participation – including redistribution, recognition and representation – examines factors of equal quality and inclusion in the compulsory education system. In contrast to national and international knowledge tests, frameworks of the principle of parity of participation (Fraser, 2004) and the capability approach (Nussbaum, 2007; Sen, 1999) contribute with rich insights on how different social groups may experience very different conditions of teaching up to the day when the final assessments are actually carried out.

Within curriculum research, there is an ongoing discussion on the possibility of integrating the capability approach with the concept of knowledge underpinning curriculum. It is proposed that the capability approach can widen the view of curriculum based on social realism with the development of disciplinary-based capabilities adapted to a broader purpose of schooling (for a discussion, see Deng, 2020). There are, however, strong arguments for keeping conceptualisations of knowledge and equity separate. Combining the capability approach with a specific concept of knowledge risks equating capabilities with competencies, which, in turn, is embedded in a policy language where the concept of knowledge becomes subordinate to the utility of the market needs, and the roots of a tradition of justice in the concept of the capability approach disappears. The theorisations of knowledge and justice have emerged from quite different research traditions and with

different purposes, and they cannot be conflated without risking their underlying ideas being weakened and misinterpreted. Unlike the conceptualisation of knowledge, which constitutes a prerequisite for curriculum construction, theories of justice above all need to be included in the phase of analysis and evaluation of the implications of national school and curriculum reforms.

As has been argued in previous chapters of this book, theories of knowledge are foundational for the forming of curriculum content as text, both in the curriculum documents and in actual teaching practices. The term *knowledge-based curriculum* (Young, 2013) is primarily focused on the idea that teachers are transmitting the specialised knowledge prescribed in a curriculum to the students. Although, we do not subscribe to that assumption, the foundation of knowledge in curricula is nevertheless important, albeit from a different angle. A national or state curriculum expresses the society's view and expectations of compulsory education. Thus, curricula need to be viewed as a framework from which the teacher selects the teaching content and calibrates assessment standards, rather than as an instruction to be implemented (Luke et al., 2013). In a European tradition of *Didaktik*, the teacher is entrusted with the responsibility to make the selection of teaching content and the assessment of the students' knowledge development based on their professional knowledge (Hopmann, 2007; Klafki, 2000) – rather than placing these responsibilities on administrative systems through national or regional authorities. The concepts of knowledge in curricula are significant because they constitute a three-dimensional foundational idea of the subject matter, of human possibilities and of society. The curriculum content forms a common frame of reference for teachers as well as for students, which forms an idea of what a school is. Still, the concepts of knowledge that become visible and mixed in with the teaching activities are not duplications of the written curriculum. At best, the concepts of knowledge that can be traced in actual teaching arise as a consequence of a creative relation between the content taught and the students being taught. In less successful cases, they represent a narrow subject language, incapable of reaching out to the students. An argument in this book is that different conceptualisations of knowledge have different potentials to expand or constrain student learning and growth. Student learning and growth contribute to the citizenship education essential for compulsory school and thus are how we conceptualise knowledge matters for how effectively and deeply students are prepared for citizenship.

Life in Classrooms – Classroom Pedagogies in Current Times

Classroom pedagogies are not easily measured or possible to pinpoint to one issue. Instead, and drawing on the empirical material from this research project, classroom pedagogies are shaped by daily sequences of interaction and communication – sequences of life in classrooms within institutions, which are, as we know, heavily laden by traditions and norms and, increasingly in the past few decades, demands regarding knowledge outcomes in line

with global standards (Wahlström, 2018b). Due to reasons found outside of schools and their classrooms, teaching and learning are more complex than what standardised education leaves room for. Inside a classroom, the complexity of teaching and learning becomes obvious. The complexity is represented in the ways interaction and communication are made possible between the central actors of the classroom (e.g. Lampert, 1985; Fenstermacher, 2001), as well as from the selected content the students are expected to communicate and interact about in order to learn and develop certain knowledge and abilities. These issues make up for a counter story with completely different content, compared to the story of standardisation.

The enacting of teaching is a process in which the curriculum is interpreted and tried out in various forms of teaching. Not the least, teaching needs to be carried out in relation to the ones who are going to learn. In one way or another, the requirement of knowledge achievement needs to be met by and integrated with the individual student's capacity as a unique person. One way to approach this long-standing pedagogical question is to consider the characteristics of classroom interaction and communication. For all students, it is important to participate with and communicate actively about the content from which they are going to learn (Alexander, 2008). When the students are encouraged to express themselves in their own words, they develop experiences and confidence that can counteract what Freire (1970) termed a *culture of silence* among those who otherwise risk feeling excluded or marginalised in the classroom. Drawing on Dewey (2008), the teacher's task is to support the students in participating in the common teaching tasks by shaping a teaching and learning environment that encourages students to engage in learning activities – to take an interest in the joint learning project and to learn through communication with others (teachers, texts, peers and so on). The educational environment should help students coordinate their interests, understandings and dispositions to social factors and objects in the world. Coordinating the students' interests with the teaching content does not mean building content from the students' personal interests but means coordinating their interests to become, in the broadest sense, members of the world (Hansen, 2002). Creating a teaching and learning environment where every voice is listened to and encouraged to contribute to a common conversation is thus an essential educational aim.

One important result from this research project is the importance of varied teaching and learning repertoires during a lesson. A model can, for example, be an introductory teacher monologue that introduces a new learning task, a short structured talk in student pairs with a clear focus on the target of knowledge, followed by a classroom dialogue drawing on the pair of discussions and ending with collaborative work in groups, creating mind-maps of the learning task, which also include the students' own previous knowledge, thoughts and questions. During the following lessons, the students need to be recurrently invited to participate interactively and communicatively around the teaching content; otherwise, too many of them will not be able to develop the actual target of knowledge. Taking the perspectives

of second-language learners, the importance of contextualisation, structure, high expectations and exploration-based activities will be even more crucial (Cummins, 2001). As illustrated in Chapter 9, teacher-led recitations and instructions, which are solely based on facts and concepts, can result in a superficial understanding of concepts, like voltage and resistance within the subject area of electricity, without any possibility of accessing deeper levels of knowledge of how electricity was invented and how it works, how it is produced today and the role of electricity in modern everyday life. The obvious risk is that the actual knowledge about a subject topic, which the students are to develop, is decontextualised from the students as unique persons and their previous knowledge relations. When this happens, this is to a large extent due to limited spaces for students' interactions and communication around the teaching content, which needs to be based on their starting points for learning. The enactment of teaching, and its counter story emerging from a student perspective, concerns the art of teaching constituted by what selected content, what sequences of interaction and communication and what pace the students are invited to be involved in their own learning. A curriculum is a holistic attempt of holding together several purposes and goals of knowledge. If democratic values are not integrated with the subject-specific content, it will metaphorically be like eating dry bread. The ways that students can participate and represent themselves in relation to the curriculum content are crucial components for equality (Fraser, 1997; Schmidt, 2018).

Moreover, within this research project, the teachers and the students are actors within classrooms that increasingly have become more segregated and that are characterised with an increased complexity, but also uncertainty, regarding basic social institutions such as citizenship and democracy. For these reasons, the enactment of teaching, and the learning it creates, is increasingly important to explore in order to maintain equality in education and to offer equitable opportunities for each student to construct a meaningful pathway through their education.

Teaching for Assessment with a Curriculum Based on Standards

One of the overall implications that can be drawn from the classroom studies is that the idea of standards-based education that manifests itself at the national level in the form of curricular standards comes along with a plethora of pedagogical and didactical consequences at the classroom level. When teachers and students come together in teaching situations in classrooms, the initiated processes and the actions undertaken are far from being equated with simply putting curriculum standards into practice. Rather, processes of teaching and learning need to be understood in terms of pedagogical and didactical translations that occur in the complex relationships between the content, the teacher and the students. In a German tradition, the triadic relationship between the content, the teacher and the students is known as the *Didactic triangle* (Westbury et al., 2000). In an American philosophical tradition, this triad is better known in terms of *I*, *Thou*, and *It*, pointing

at ‘how the “It” enters into the pattern of mutual interest and exchange between the teacher and the child’ (Hawkins, 1974, p. 50). The relationship between the content, the teacher and the students is also framed by the conditional matrix of the classroom. However, when a standards-based curriculum with its imperatives of efficiency and an outcome-focused understanding of equity is recontextualised in concrete pedagogical practices, the underlying rationales of the standards-based curriculum strongly influence students’ and teachers’ perceptions about what education is for, how teaching and learning take shape and, ultimately, what kind of education becomes possible at all in different kinds of classrooms.

Performance standards that are set at a national curriculum level, prescribing uniform knowledge expectations that the students are supposed to achieve, turn out to play a central role in the classroom context. In the Swedish curriculum for compulsory school, these performance standards represent a kind of detailed criteria for assessment (the so-called knowledge requirements), which teachers must use when assigning grades by the end of the semester. In the last curriculum reform in Sweden that took place in 2011, one of the main justifications for the implementation of detailed criteria in terms of ‘knowledge requirements’ in curricula was that the criteria would help strengthen the equivalence of teachers’ grading-relevant assessments and thereby contribute to improved educational equity (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 2008). However, what becomes visible in classroom studies is that the criteria, originally intended to support teachers’ grading, become a vital part of the everyday teaching and learning in the classroom. Expressed in a more illustrative way, teachers remind students of the assessment criteria linked to a specific task and clarify the specific qualities that need to be reached in the students’ accomplishment of the task in order to reach a certain grade level, while the students, in turn, endeavour to deliver in line with the expected criteria to achieve the desired grade, also known as ‘teaching to the test.’

This kind of outcome focus in teaching processes seems to be exacerbated when a results-based curriculum such as the Swedish one (Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012) is recontextualised in a highly performance-oriented classroom environment. Here, teaching and learning can easily tend to be dominated by an emphasis on assessments, grading criteria, achievement levels and results. Formative assessment strategies are, in this context, perceived to provide an effective toolkit for optimising the conditions for a high-level student performance and are seamlessly blended into the classroom’s performance orientation (Vogt, 2021). However, such a performance orientation seems to not exclusively apply to high-performing classrooms but is also present in classrooms characterised by a considerably lower achievement level. This means that the same pattern also becomes observable in lower-performing teaching environments, but due to different conditions for teaching and learning, it does so in a somewhat different way. In lower-performance teaching contexts, the aim is not to achieve the highest grade levels but to enable the students at least to pass the next test and to make it possible

for the students to reach the basic level of the knowledge required for grades offering access to upper secondary education. These strategies of knowledge represent a strong focus on student performance as something that can and must be measured to serve the external demands of selection procedures that society poses to schools. It refers, so to speak, to a performance principle that is merely directed towards externally set standards and excludes more pedagogically justifiable performance principles (Klafki, 2007). A too one-sided emphasis on the kind of students' results that are mostly relevant outside the walls of the classroom, but which dominate teachers' and students' experiences of what education actually is about, inevitably leads to didactical and pedagogical limitations in teaching and learning. When the didactical space in the classroom becomes reduced to the effective achievement of standards and when the knowledge content that is taught does not transcend itself beyond its direct utility, then students in both high- and low-performing classrooms are excluded from learning opportunities with the potential to support young people's broader personal and social growth, as well as the widening of their views of the world.

Structures of Curricula and Their Implications

Standardisation of curricula can, in international terms, be understood as the displacement from a content-centred focus on the 'input side' of curriculum-making during the 1960s by creating a specified language about education for a common understanding of the school's role for the development of the nation, to a performance-centred focus on the 'output side' of curriculum by putting technical and instrumental vocabularies at the forefront for international comparisons of the delivery of curricula and the measurement of pupils' academic skills during the 2000s (Sundberg, 2019).

Curriculum coherence has been targeted as a key factor for standardisation in education and as a lever for improved student knowledge achievement in terms of international tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Core assumptions have been that a strengthened link between goals, content, assessment criteria, textbooks and teachers' professional development in accordance with set standards of knowledge and skills in curricula will improve goal attainment and student performance. According to the policy rhetoric, clear, precise and detailed performance standards will promote equality and equity because of a levelling effect on differences in student achievement. Curriculum reforms, therefore, tend to promote a formal standardisation. However, these assumptions ignore the basic sociopolitical conditions for the enactment of the curriculum in different schools and classrooms, as well as some critical factors identified in educational research.

The empirical results in this book suggest that in the interplay between the intended and the locally enacted curriculum, crucial dimensions of curriculum policy enactment are generally underestimated (see Newmann et al., 2001). The dominating discourse of coordinative alignment is primarily

about linking learning materials, teacher preparation, monitoring and supervision to national curricula, which, in turn, promotes some teaching and learning repertoires while others become subordinated. The Swedish standards-based curriculum reform follows in several aspects the transnational and European policy trend focusing on uniform and specified standards and knowledge requirements in the curriculum to obtain measurable results, performance and performance indicators (i.e. a coordinative discourse of curriculum coherence) (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018).

To meet the challenges of the elusive teaching gap and the increasing knowledge segregation in policymaking and teaching practices, an alternative ‘integrative approach’ to curricula is necessary, relating to how goals, content and knowledge requirements and assessments are consistent across the intended and enacted curricula. To address integrative dimensions of curriculum coherence and to understand differences in goal attainment in schools and achievements between schools and classrooms, three analytical levels are central: a coherence between classroom activities and the students’ lives and experiences, a coherence between the pedagogy of the local school and the activity in the individual classroom (Tikkanen et al., 2019) and, third, coherence in the discourse of curriculum-making from teaching practices in the classroom context to the national level of curriculum-making.

From Powerful Knowledge to Meaningful Knowledge: Teaching on Matters of Concern

The question that the chapters in this book have revolved around is a genuine *educational* question related to the factors that affect knowledge segregation in school beyond the socio-economic and residential factors. We are interested in how different classroom discourses and concepts of knowledge affect students’ encounters with the school’s subject knowledge. Within a framework of standards-based curricula, patterns of classroom discourses characterising the teaching offered to students in high-performance and low-performance classrooms and the knowledge considered of most worth in different classroom environments have been explored. In relation to the empirical findings and the ongoing debate on knowledge within the curriculum theory field (Deng, 2020, 2021; Rasmussen et al., 2021; Young & Muller, 2010), our main argument is that a conceptualisation of the concepts of knowledge and equity is necessary, albeit not sufficient, for the formation of the curriculum for compulsory school. Different concepts of knowledge allow for different approaches to the selection of teaching content and for different approaches to pedagogy. While a starting point in scientific rationalism priorities an essentialist view of curricula and a pedagogical focus on the question of *how* to teach, a logic of social efficiency instead implies an emphasis on performance-based curricula and a focus on competences as transferable skills. If the public philosophy instead pivots around social reconstructionism, curricula will rather emphasise the connection between democracy and knowledge, focusing on the pedagogical question of *why*, whereas

a more individual-based tradition of humanism may lead to a curriculum based on the ideals of *Bildung* and a focus on the pedagogical question of *what* (Deng & Luke, 2008; Wahlström, 2016). Evaluations of existing curricula seem to be a neglected area. Evaluations of curricula through national or international knowledge tests do not answer the important question of the most favourable curriculum to arouse students' interest in learning new knowledge and skills. How does curriculum content speak to the individual student so that he or she feels included in the project of knowing and learning? The empirical results show that grades can be an important motivation for students to learn in high-performing classes but that a focus on grades also implicates a narrow view of learning and has less to offer concerning the 'joy of learning' in itself. In other learning environments, the students' feelings of being excluded from the possibility of getting in touch with the different school subjects have been palpable. These students do not think that they belong to the group that the teaching addresses – those 'who learn.' A conclusion is that the much-debated concept of *powerful* in connection to knowledge is inadequate as a basis for curricula and teaching. In the context of sociology of knowledge, *powerful knowledge* implies an opportunity for social mobility for underprivileged social classes by learning to master the language spoken by those with access to power (Rasmussen et al., 2021). From a classroom-level perspective within curriculum theory, the main question instead is: 'In what ways can this content concern the students?' What is missing in the curriculum theory discussion on knowledge is the need for a displacement from matters of fact to matters of concern (Latour, 2004).

As Latour (2004) argued, '[t]he question was never to get *away* from facts but *closer* to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism' (p. 231). Drawing on the 'stubbornly realist attitude' (p. 231) of William James, Latour (2004) claimed that a thing is never only an object out there; on the contrary, 'the word *thing* designates matters of fact and matters of concern' (p. 233). An object represents a gathering of different non-human and human aspects that defines the characteristics of the object. A displacement of emphasis from matters of fact to matters of concern recognises the need for exploring the web of perspectives in terms of 'societies' or 'associations' for a deeper understanding of the objects. With a displacement towards matters of concern, knowledge of objects and phenomena as a collective affair are emphasised, implying that knowledge is a 'common concern' that affects all of society. It is a realism that does not view facts as separated from man but as related to man – facts as a concern for man. A shift to matters of concern underlines the need for teaching content to be related to critical reflections on the consequences for society regarding living conditions for different social groups, ranging from the perspective of local communities to a global perspective. A transactional realism – or matters of concern – has the potential to make the teaching content in itself important to students. Thus, an *educational* assumption is that the term *powerful* in relation to a knowledge-based curriculum (Deng, 2020; Young, 2013) should be replaced by the concept of *meaningful knowledge* as the basis of curriculum if we really

want different groups of students to direct their interest towards the teaching content and become involved in their own education on matters of concern. *Meaningful* can be defined as an authoring of the teaching content in the classroom in a way that clarifies the relationships and consequences between objects of facts and human actions, which at the same time opens up for possibilities of change of current conditions. Meaningful knowledge should not be interpreted in terms of the students' personal interests but in relation to common concerns of citizens in society and a civic responsibility. Or to put it short, '[m]atters of concern have to *matter*' (Latour, 2008, p. 47). Issues of relevance become paramount. In her work on culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings (2014) claimed three factors to be of specific relevance for successful teaching of all students in the class and not just for those who are already included in the school culture: academic success in terms of students' intellectual growth; cultural competence, including cultural awareness and knowledge of both one's own and others' cultures; and, finally, a sociopolitical consciousness viewing school knowledge as a basis for reflections on real-world problems and dilemmas. The third factor, in particular, critical perspectives on issues concerning students' lives and society, is rarely included in teaching content according to Ladson-Billings (2014).

To illustrate how the concept of knowledge underpinning curricula influences the characteristics of teaching in different ways, the following figure distinguishes between two types of knowledge realism. While the first concept of knowledge realism emphasises the relationships between humans and the knowledge of the world, the second concept instead emphasises knowledge as separate from man (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Two different types of concepts of knowledge and their implications for curricula and teaching

<i>Purposes of schooling:</i>	<i>Transactional realism opens the door for ...</i>	<i>Social realism opens the door for ...</i>
Knowledge	Matters of concern – related to human conditions	Matters of fact – separated from human conditions
Learning	A deepening of the students' experiences	The students' access to given knowledge
Society	Prerequisite for knowledge and change	Making use of knowledge
Assessment	Professional responsibility within the learning process	Externally administrated evaluations
Equity	Coordinating the students' interest towards meaningful knowledge	Getting access to powerful knowledge

The connection between knowledge and justice is linked to evaluation of what a student has the opportunity to learn at school. From the principle of parity of participation (Fraser, 2004), we argue that recognition is a precondition for participation in the common learning processes taking place in the classroom. It is the recognition of the individual student as an included member in society with rights and obligations that becomes central to the insistence for the need and opportunity for each individual student to participate in the development of meaningful knowledge in the classroom environment. For knowledge to be meaningful, it needs to matter to the individual student, as well as to society as a whole. The significance of recognition for equity in curriculum, thus, gives prominence to the importance of pluralism in the selection of the teaching content and that each individual is given the opportunity to participate in meaningful knowledge processes offering different perspectives on matters of concern. As curriculum goals are set at national and international levels, and as these goals are enacted in classrooms, *matters of concern* need to be at the centre of thinking and conceptualisation, not shouldered out by standardisation and ideals of efficiency. In this way, schools can serve the broader purpose of preparing for citizenship and a life of learning.

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