

## Knowledge Based Curriculum

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During the 2019/20 academic year, I had the opportunity to contribute to the design of a curriculum overview pro forma for the Academy. The intention of this was to create uniformity between subjects and create a document that staff and students alike, could understand. The curriculum group began this process by considering the new Ofsted framework and its focus on 'intent, implementation and impact'. We then complimented this understanding with our own reading around the subject of curriculum design.

Firstly, I explored the 'neglect of knowledge', a suggestion by Kirby (2016) that recent pedagogy has focused on 'transferable skills' instead of crucial knowledge. Kirby discusses the fact that "critical-thinking skills require domain specific knowledge" (2016: 17). This lack of focus on knowledge has meant that the gap between the richest and poorest students becomes more entrenched as those from poorer backgrounds miss attaining necessary cultural capital. Kirby goes further to suggest that 'knowledge is a sure avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged children and combating educational inequality'. Christodoulou (2014) suggests that factual knowledge allows many key thinking skills to happen, that is to say it is a facilitator. It therefore becomes clear to see that when students lack knowledge or cultural capital other elements of education and learning become more challenging. Christodoulou points out that too often we present our students with a cognitive load, which means that they struggle with tasks. If we instead focus on committing knowledge to our student's long-term memory, they have more chance of being successful. I therefore began to explore how I could improve my student's retention of key knowledge and attempt to build up their cultural capital.

Kirby discusses many strategies for creating a knowledge led curriculum. It would be naïve to think that they could all be implemented simultaneously; as a result, I have focused on low stakes testing/quizzing. Low stakes knowledge testing has been developed for each unit of work in Geography. This testing/quizzing now forms starter and plenary activities as we try to commit key knowledge to our student's long-term memory. This strategy is a direct attempt to tackle the 'blind spot' of many school curricula (Kirby, 2016). During lockdown, the Geography team have also been able to reproduce these knowledge quizzes on SMHW and Microsoft Forms; this will enable the students to self-test as frequently as they wish. In addition, we have also produced knowledge organisers for each topic so that the students have a reference point and are able to see the knowledge in a bit more context. It will be interesting to see the impact of low stakes quizzing on the performance of our students in end of unit assessments throughout the next academic year.

Christodoulou, D. (2013). *Minding the Knowledge Gap: The Importance of Content in Student Learning*.

Kirby, J. (2016). *Knowledge, Memory and Testing*, in Birbalsingh, K. (ed.) *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers*. John Catt Educational Ltd: pp. 16 – 27.

