

LESSONS AND ALTERNATIVE DIRECTIONS

Outcomes-Based Qualifications Frameworks as a Failed but Instructive Fad

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

This book is concerned with the relationships between education and the economy. It has looked at three main aspects of these relationships: first, how education has been positioned as a solution to economic problems; second, how neoliberal public sector reform has affected the delivery of education; and third, how the economy, and specifically the market, has come to be used as a model for thinking about education. I have argued that the goals claimed for education in much policy rhetoric today are misguided and unrealistic, and reflect a lack of willingness to tackle structural economic and political problems. The reforms made in the name of that goal have considerable negative consequences for individuals and education systems. I have also argued that neglecting or opposing the acquisition of bodies of knowledge in the form of subjects and disciplines as a key purpose of education and as a starting point of curriculum design facilitates policies which attempt to deepen the marketization of the provision of education, by emptying education of its specificity, and allowing it to be viewed as something open to redefinition by different stakeholders. Further, it leads to curricula which undermine our individual and collective abilities to analyze, criticize, and change the circumstances of our lives.

My study of outcomes-based qualifications frameworks reveals the problems caused by thinking about education from a narrow economic perspective, which ignore broader insights into the structure of society, institutions, and knowledge. It also illuminates the problem of thinking about education as something that can be endlessly redefined and shaped at will. I briefly elaborate these arguments below.

Whilst education is positioned as the only way out of poverty, the rolling back of welfare states in the developed world and the pressure upon poor countries not to build welfare states has decreased public provision of education worldwide. At the same time, unemployment has been positioned by policy makers as an individual problem, and education is seen as part of individual responsibility for their own welfare. In this context outcomes- and competence-based education and training seem to be the perfect policy reform: they are claimed to ensure that education will meet the needs of employers; to facilitate more competitive delivery of education; to assist individuals to acquire the appropriate skills, allowing them to get better jobs or perform better in their current jobs; and, as a result, to assist societies to grow more prosperous.

Neoliberalism has had a dramatic effect not only on how countries manage economic policy but also on how they manage social policy. As described in Fine's and Milonakis' (2009) account of economics imperialism, the basic tools of analysis of neoclassical economics have been extended beyond the boundaries of economic analysis, and have been applied within other disciplines that affect social policy. The idea of individual free agents conducting transactions with each other in their own self-interest now holds sway in many areas of social policy. Neoliberal social public sector reform drives towards increasing profit and commodifying as many aspects of society as possible, including education. Underpinned by competition, it favours contracting out social services to private providers. Even when there is no contracting out it treats units of the state as private contractors to be evaluated against outputs. Neoliberalism, as it has been implemented in economic and social policy in many countries around the world, does not ignore the idea of market failure. As evidenced in the 'post-Washington Consensus' (which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, is sometimes presented as a softening of neoliberal ideology), neoliberal policy has recognized market failure, but, instead of questioning the basic philosophy that the market is the best way of distributing goods and services, it argues that the role of the state is to make markets work better, whilst continuing to expand them to as many areas as possible.

Outcomes-based qualifications frameworks are described within a rhetoric of empowering individuals, improving education, and contributing to economic development. In some instances, they have been explicitly advanced as tools to marketize education, while in others they have been described or viewed as progressive interventions. Either way, their logic fits well within the neoliberal ideology described above. Their advocates often draw on or refer to ideas about education which are supported by many educationalists. I have shown that the vision of empowerment through education presented by advocates of outcomes-based qualifications frameworks is at heart the *power of the consumer*: the learning outcomes specified in qualifications are intended to assist individuals to make better choices about the productive skills that they can invest in, as the learning outcomes in the qualifications specify what it is one is getting when one purchases education. They are also intended to assist employers to make informed choices when hiring prospective workers. By improving the information available to both learners and employers, they can be seen as tools which attempt to improve the functioning of markets. Further, education institutions are supplied with the competences required by employers so that they can 'manufacture' according to standard, and do so in a competitive environment. Governments are supposed to use the qualifications as targets against which to judge the outputs of education institutions, enabling them to regulate provision, hold their own institutions to account, and break down a monopoly on provision, creating the possibility of contracting out to new suppliers. This is based on the assumption that forcing civil servants or educators to function either within markets or *as if* they were within a market will make them more efficient and responsive; if they are not forced to compete, self-interested teachers, ignorant or careless about the needs of

industry and individual learners, tend to teach and run education institutions in their own interests, and try to do the least work possible for the most money, to maximize their individual utility. In contrast, the learner-centered education system proposed through outcomes-based qualifications frameworks becomes a market in which individual learners control what is taught to them by purchasing ‘bits’ of learning as and when they are required. Governments believe they are improving the functioning of labour markets by ensuring that all individuals who have the right skills, and not only those who have purchased them from suppliers, get recognition for this, thus improving the ability of ‘sellers’ to find ‘buyers’.

Outcomes-based qualifications frameworks could be seen as the ultimate policy instrument of Third Way politics: they are supposed to help individuals to attain appropriate skills to improve economies, while assisting governments to improve the functioning of markets and market-like behaviour in the provision of skills, and ensuring that employers can purchase the skills that they require in labour markets.

But there is no clear evidence that qualifications frameworks have improved relationships between education systems and labour markets. The mechanisms by which they claim to do this—by making it clearer to employers what the bearers of qualifications can do, and by making it clearer to education institutions what employers need their graduates to be able to do—do not work. I have shown that competence-based training and outcomes-based qualifications frameworks originally emerged in countries with weak education/ labour market relationships, and have argued that they are more likely to be a symptom of this problem than a solution to it.

I have shown that the epistemology behind this policy intervention is one that sees knowledge as more or less the same as information: something that is of value to the extent that it leads to a particular competence, and which can be derived from the specification of a competence, or measured against such a specification; something that can be, and is likely to be, acquired anywhere. The nature of knowledge, and the importance of the organization of bodies of knowledge with their own internal structure, is ignored or underestimated.

I have demonstrated that the specifics of outcomes-based qualifications as a policy mechanism—the claims that outcomes will be understood in the same way by employers, learners, and educators across countries, sectors, and other boundaries—lead inevitably to over-specification, in a vain attempt to create learning outcomes which refer to a clearly identifiable competence that everyone understands in the same way. This over-specification reinforces the tendency for knowledge to be confused with information, as it leads to narrow specification of bits of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as a commodity comprised of isolatable and measurable discrete objects that can be picked up or dropped at will, as opposed to holistic, connected, and structured bodies of knowledge which are located in structured social relationships.

I have argued that this approach to knowledge—underestimating the value of bodies of knowledge and their importance in curriculum design—resonates with and finds support from ideas about knowledge and education which have in the past been championed by many left-wing reformers. Specifically, much educational

thinking has opposed the idea of the acquisition of bodies of knowledge as one of the main purposes of education and of subjects as the starting point of curriculum design. Many educationalists have argued that the curriculum should be driven by the needs and interests of learners, and not by subjects as organized bodies of knowledge. Others have argued that the subjects which comprise the curriculum are a representation of the ideas of the ruling class; they are alienating and oppressive for many learners. Others have argued that starting with bodies of knowledge leads to a focus on facts and memorization, and that curriculum design should instead start with a sense of the broader aims of education.

In all of these ideas, the importance of bodies of knowledge, their claims to reliable insight into the social and natural world, and their internal structure and organization, are ignored or underestimated. This has led educationalists to empty education of content; to render it as something vacuous and open to be shaped by relevant interest groups, whether these are government policy makers, community groups, parents, or industry. Learners can choose what they should learn, as can employers, parents, or other groups. Education becomes a malleable activity, a kind of ‘free-for-all’ that can and should simply be defined by in terms of what interest groups want it to be. This, I suggest, has opened education up to colonization by neo-classical economics, and made it easy for policy makers to believe that they can redefine education to fit the needs of the moment, whether these are solving economic problems, reducing road accidents and teen pregnancy, or improving citizens.

Many people who champion qualifications frameworks are not trying to support neoliberal policy. Nor are they neoclassical economists. But the logic of policy instruments derives from ideas which are not apparent on the surface. My analysis derives from a detailed tracking of attempts to implement outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, located in an analytical framework that draws on political economy as well as the sociology of knowledge.

The ideas of learning outcomes and learner centredness, both of which have a long educational history, were readily taken up by policy makers wanting to implement neoliberal public sector reform, because they could fit within the idea of a contractualized state, with an emphasis on individuals and individual responsibility, and would enable policy makers to avoid building and sustaining education institutions.

Neoliberalism is certainly less hegemonic than it was. Many countries have state-led industrial development and others have increased state-led welfare provision and provision of social services, both of which go against the tenets of neoliberalism, particularly China with regard to the former, and many countries in Latin America with regard to the latter. It is widely accepted, even by former proponents, that neoliberalism has not even delivered on its own terms (for example, Sainsbury, 2013). The primary claim made by its adherents was that it would lead to economic growth, and that this would be worth the increased inequality that would also result. While inequality has been spectacularly achieved, economic growth has not. Kurt Bayer (2009) argues that governments increasingly accept that neoliberalism causes more problems than it

solves, and are aware that successful economic development in countries like China took place because neoliberal policies were *not* implemented. He suggests that the international financial institutions and the governments of powerful states are changing their strategies, resulting in a more pragmatic approach to development.

Nonetheless, neoliberalism remains highly influential. Crouch argues that although the 2008 economic crisis has led many to suggest that it is now “in tatters” (2011, p. 163), in fact what remains of neoliberalism after the financial crisis is “virtually everything” (2011, p. 179). Similarly, Harvey (2010, p. 218) writes that:

The existence of cracks in the ideological edifice does not mean it is utterly broken. Nor does it follow that because something is clearly hollow, people will immediately recognize it as such. ... While there is anger at bankers’ duplicity and populist outrage over their bonuses, there seems to be no movement in North America or Europe to embrace radical and far-reaching changes. In the global south, Latin America in particular, the story is rather different. How the politics will play out in China and the rest of Asia, where growth continues and politics turns on different axes, is uncertain.

Whether or not neoliberalism is being, or will be, abandoned by more governments as an approach to economic policy remains to be seen. However, the policies which have been developed under the influence of neoliberalism, in particular the marketization of much social policy, will be difficult to reverse. Inequalities of wealth lead to inequalities of power, and neoliberalism has led to extreme inequalities of wealth. This fundamentally undermines democracy and collective decision-making about social and economic policy, which is aggravated by the tendency for collective spending on public goods to be replaced by private donations, enormously increasing the power of rich individuals over what is prioritized in society. For example, as Ravitch (2010) describes, Bill Gates has become a major influence on education policy in the United States through considerable funds given to the Charter schools movement, to the detriment of public schools. By the same token, because wealth is seen as a measure of success and because of the ability of individuals to donate wealth to specific causes, wealthy individuals have been appointed to influential positions in governments. This means that there remains a strongly inbuilt tendency for perspectives that favour the wealthy to hold sway, and for decisions to be taken which are not in the interests of the majority of the world’s population, and even less in the interests of the population still to be born (Crouch, 2011).

Polanyi (1944, p. 60) demonstrated that liberalism subordinated society to the logic of the market, instead of the historically typical pattern of subordinating the economy to society:

... the control of the economic system by the market is of overwhelming consequence to the whole organization of society: it means no less than the running of society as an adjunct to the market. Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system.

Neoliberalism has extended this. As such, it has been very effective as a hegemonic ideology, infiltrating and changing how many different aspects of society are thought about, and the kinds of policies which are believed to be appropriate. The notion of ‘economics imperialism’ is useful for understanding how, even as neoliberalism has been at least partially discredited internationally, its basic tools of analysis—methodological individualism and utility maximization—continue to dominate ways of thinking about managing and improving education.

Crouch (2011) points out, for example, that neoliberalism placed all institutions in society under an obligation to behave ‘efficiently’, as if they were business corporations, with ‘efficiency’ defined as organizing all activities around the goal of profit maximization. Organizations that, by virtue of their nature, had multiple goals, and many goals that conflicted with profit maximization, were defined as ‘failing’. Judging organizations by their ability to make a profit has become so dominant in social policy that it has become almost common sense. Thus, education has come to be seen by many as something individuals must purchase and sell, and as an investment for individuals.

While neoliberalism as a theory of economic growth has lost plausibility since the economic crisis of 2008, the goals of neoliberalism—competition, profit, commodification of as many aspects of society as possible—have become deeply embedded in the logic of how many policy mechanisms have been developed. Outcomes-based qualifications frameworks are just one example of this; others include the privatization of utilities and public services as well as state owned enterprises, the introduction of user fees for services even when they are provided by public companies, and the expectation that public services should make a profit. Even as the failures of neoliberalism are increasingly well understood internationally, and even as many countries are forging alternative paths, this aspect of neoliberal public policy looks set to continue.

Qualifications frameworks are likely to be abandoned. Like many education reforms, they are likely to be a candle that burns out fast. Given their poor track record, governments are likely to quickly grow disillusioned with them—although once qualifications authorities are created, they have tended to develop a life of their own, irrespective of success or failure. If future qualifications frameworks are anything like those already developed, then countries will set them up, their advocates will claim victory merely on the grounds that they have been established, their claims won’t be achieved, and reformers will move on to the next fad, perhaps leaving the framework intact as a not very important addition to the education policy landscape, perhaps having undermined or damaged the provision of education in the process of the attempted implementation.

In this book, I have discussed the lack of evidence that outcomes-based qualifications frameworks have achieved the grandiose claims made for them. I have also shown that outcomes-based qualifications frameworks have had seriously damaging side effects, and represent a significant waste of time and money, which has particularly tragic effects in poor countries. I have also demonstrated that when the

logic of learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks is unpacked, it is clear that they are inherently unable to achieve the goals stated for them. I have suggested that the difficulties that countries have had in implementing qualifications frameworks are caused by the way their logic clashes with the logic of education, the logic of labour markets, and the logic of economies and societies. At best, qualifications frameworks are a modest policy mechanism that can play a small role in improving communication between education institutions.

Unfortunately, when education policy reforms fail—often due to the unrealistic expectations made of education, and the conflicting aims which are set for it—many people blame education institutions, and begin to feel that nothing that is done to them will make them work.

In order to defend education institutions from these criticisms, it is important to understand the inherent logic that led to, or will in the future lead to, the failure of outcomes-based qualifications frameworks. It is also important to understand why they became popular in the first place, and the ways in which their logic will have a lasting effect on the education system, even once the frameworks themselves have burnt out. These two points have been explored in detail in this book. But I am frequently told by policy makers and their advisors that I can't criticize this policy mechanism unless I have an alternative, and am frequently asked despairingly by government representatives what they should do instead. The simple answer to this is that there is *no* policy mechanism that can simultaneously improve provision, enable evaluation of quality, improve curricula, teaching and assessment, and improve the relationships between education and the economy. There is no magic bullet. And while there may be *some* alternative policy interventions for *some* of the goals of outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, in many cases it is the goals themselves that are wrong. What is needed is not so much alternatives to achieve the goals that qualifications frameworks have failed to achieve, but alternative ways of thinking about the role, and so the goals, of education in society. I turn briefly to some ideas about this task.

EDUCATION AND WORK

One of the goals of outcomes based qualifications frameworks is to certify as many qualities of individuals as possible—in the hope that this will improve their chances of accessing lifelong learning and getting a job, and improve their productivity at work. I have shown that, in the main, qualifications frameworks have not achieved the first, direct goal of facilitating lifelong learning by certifying existing skills. Instead, if governments want to improve access to lifelong learning, then they should support education institutions that offer learning programmes to people already in workplaces, and build more where these don't exist. This would involve assessing individuals, deciding on their existing skills base, and offering the appropriate further education. To ensure that people could access education, institutions would have to offer programmes on flexible time frames, and/or employers would have

to give their employees time off work. Financial support would be required, particularly for unemployed workers or people in badly paid work. This would all, of course, be costly. The more individual attention an education institution provides to learners, the more expensive it is. But this is what real lifelong learning would require. Inadequate provision of education, lack of time, and lack of funds are far more significant barriers to lifelong learning than the fact that individuals don't have certificates for the skills they have obtained in the course of life and work.

Lifelong learning is desirable: people who want to learn should be able to learn, and retraining when jobs become obsolete is useful for the economy, and access to lifelong learning could be improved by increasing provision of education and decreasing the cost for individuals, as well as increasing the time available to them to access it. But the indirect goal of improving individuals' life chances as well as improving economic productivity through lifelong learning is not realistic, even if governments support policies which make access to lifelong learning more realistic. Equally unrealistic is the goal of improving individual life chances as well as general economic productivity by making education more relevant, another claim made for outcomes-based qualifications frameworks. Today more than ever we hear constantly how ill-equipped graduates are for workplaces. But it is surely not plausible that, with most countries having dramatically higher education levels than a generation ago, people can on average be dramatically less prepared for work? As Livingstone and Guile (2012, p. xx) argue:

There is a large contradiction between the widespread assumption in this discourse of skill deficits of current labour forces and their consequent need for lifelong learning and, conversely, the social facts of unprecedented levels of participation in higher education and adult education.

The idea that the labour force has skills deficits at which education policy must be directed does not hold water. Youth unemployment is not an educational phenomenon. It is an economic and political phenomenon. The problem is fewer jobs, more precarious jobs, and less and less collective social support. Today's young people are expected to work for free in 'internships' in order to gain experience that their parents were paid to gain, not because they have fewer skills than their parents had, or are less 'work ready', but because there are more people and fewer jobs.

Of course it would be great if education institutions had more capacity to offer programmes to individuals who were out of work or people who wanted to learn something new. And it would also be great if education institutions could be supported financially to develop better capacity to assess individuals and advise them on appropriate learning programmes. But even if this were the case, education could not provide the way out of structural economic problems—except, perhaps, in the sense predicted by Randall Collins (2013), who argues that the expansion of education will continue because it is the only way of absorbing excess middle class workers as more and more middle class jobs are eradicated, both by delaying their entry into the labour force through long periods as students, and by employing them as teachers.

The assumption behind outcomes-based qualifications frameworks is not only that a deficit of *skills* prevents general economic development and individual advancement, implausible, as I have discussed above, but that a lack of *formal recognition* of existing skills both prevents individuals from getting employment, and prevents them from accessing further education. There is also little evidence that this is the case. There may well be instances where education institutions are very rigid in their entrance criteria, but this is usually as a result of institutions having more applicants than places. Demonstrating that individuals who have gained skills and knowledge at work have the same skills and knowledge as those who have been on formal training programmes will not increase the ratio of places to applicants. And as long as there are more places than applicants, education institutions will accept those whom they believe are most likely to succeed, which are likely to be those who have had formal education. Although in isolated instances it may be correct that it is a lack of certification, and not a lack of appropriate knowledge and skills, that causes individuals to not get jobs, in the main this argument is based on a simplistic idea of how qualifications function in labour markets. It does not take into account the fact that in many instances employers don't use qualifications to provide an indication of the skills that an individual has, but only to judge individuals' attainment *relative* to other individuals—levels of education attained are seen to indicate something about potential, which is also seen as an indicator of their 'trainability' as discussed in Chapter 7. An extreme example of this is Brown *et al.*'s (2011) description of the 'war for talent' mentioned in that chapter, in which top multinational companies say they fiercely compete for the 'best' talent. Brown and colleagues argue that the notion that there is only a tiny handful of individuals who could fulfill the roles which these companies are trying to fill is completely implausible, given how many people have the requisite qualifications and knowledge (Brown *et al.*, 2011; Brown & Tannock, 2009). They argue that the 'war for talent' is simply a justification for recruiting exclusively from a tiny handful of universities, and eliminating most potential applicants.

Qualification inflation is one of many indicators that there are problems with the ways in which education qualifications are used in labour markets. Qualification inflation has a negative effect on individuals when students have to go into debt to fund their studies—leading to what some researchers describe as a new class of indentured labourers in countries like the United States. Qualification inflation also aggravates the perception that education is inappropriate for the needs of work, because when people have to obtain ever-higher qualifications just to get into the queue for possible jobs, they inevitably end up acquiring qualifications that have no relationship to the work that they will do. The clearer specification of the competences of the bearer of a qualification could not solve this problem, even if the problem of how to specify competences in such a way that everyone would understand them could be solved. There is little, maybe nothing, that can be done within education systems to address qualification inflation, because it is not caused by anything internal to education institutions or education programmes.

If stable well-paid jobs with reasonably short working hours were available, with more-or-less full employment, with collective support for individuals during periods in which they were out of work for whatever reason, qualification inflation would stop being a problem. If jobs were balanced, with a mixture of rewarding, autonomous, and interesting aspects, as well as tedious or onerous aspects, and if those with more of the latter qualities were better rewarded in compensation, qualification inflation would in all likelihood disappear, as the intense competition for certain types of jobs would disappear. People would still need to develop specialist knowledge, and proof of having acquired it would still be necessary to work in many kinds of jobs. Because those areas of work for which expert knowledge was required would be in the public benefit, and because people in specialist work would not be rewarded more than other people, and maybe even less, as unpleasant work should be better compensated than pleasant work, the training required for such areas of work would be undertaken by those with a genuine interest in it.

This is obviously utopian. Although there are countries which have managed to achieve some aspects of what I have described above, there are far more which have not, even more that have not even tried. In general most countries are moving away from this type of vision, towards making work less secure, hence aggravating competition for remaining secure areas of professional work, with all the consequent distorting effects on education systems which are used to sort people for work. It may be asserted that, in the absence of the utopia described above, education is the only way that most individuals can gain some kind of social mobility. However, due to decreasing numbers of jobs and subsequent credential inflation, this also appears increasingly utopian.

The relationships between education systems and labour markets cannot be improved by simply changing education, without changing the labour market and the economy too. To try to do so would be to ignore the extent to which education, specifically vocational and professional education, is shaped by industrial relations, income distribution, production strategies, welfare systems, and social policy. Education reform cannot allow us to short cut history or sidestep structural patterns in economies. I have argued that one of the reasons that vocational and technical education tends to be weak in countries with more liberal labour markets, is that they tend to have more short-term employment, particularly in 'mid-level' occupations. It's easy to blame education institutions for producing graduates with 'irrelevant' knowledge and skills, but any education programme takes time to develop. There is thus a limit to how responsive formal education can be to short-term skills needs. Improving relationships between education and the labour market is complex, and there is certainly no one solution, or even one problem that needs to be solved.

Furthermore, although preparation for work may sometimes be a positive by-product of general education, it is a wrong goal—general education should not be aimed at preparation for work. Even vocational and professional education should not be about narrow preparation for specific jobs. This does not mean that nothing can and should be done to improve education programmes which are specifically

focussed on preparing people for the world of work—a point I will return to in the discussion about the curriculum below. For now, the point is that changes to the functioning of labour markets, and changes in social policy, could improve relationships between education and labour markets. Technical and vocational qualifications will be more likely to be high quality if the needs and conditions of specific sectors and industries are considered; long-term funding for education and training institutions is ensured; education and training institutions are built and sustained over time in such a way that they have a stable core of staff who, on top of offering a stable core of substantial programmes, can respond to short-term needs for certain courses where this becomes necessary; there is funding for general education to ensure that everyone can access education from a young age; and there is reasonably stable and well paid work available. They are also more likely to succeed in the presence of strong professional bodies, strong labour market research, and strong trade unions, and countries could consider policies to support all of these.

Outcomes-based qualifications frameworks implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, see qualifications as devices to regulate life and work, as opposed to devices to signify educational achievement. The central logic of outcomes-based qualifications is that certificates matter, education does not. Outcomes-based qualifications assume that learning can happen anywhere. There is no doubt that in some instances, people without educational qualifications have at least some of the same skills as those with them.

But what would it mean in practice to delink qualifications from learning in education institutions? Let's perform a thought-experiment, and imagine what the alternative could be to the current practice whereby qualifications signify what people have learnt and are awarded by education institutions. In this alternative system, everyone would be able to be tested, and if found competent, given certificates of competence, for the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they have achieved, regardless of how and where they were achieved. There would have to be independent agencies or institutions that issued certificates—perhaps the way drivers' licenses are issued. These bodies, or other independent agencies, would have to be able to conduct assessment against various specified competencies. Perhaps professional bodies could play this kind of role. In some cases they already do license individuals to practice in certain areas of work. However, professional bodies are usually very strongly linked to universities, and their licensing requirements are based on workplace experience and tests conducted after university study. Is it viable to create such bodies in every area of practice and work? They would need to have a substantial body of expertise. Where would this be obtained? In education institutions? Or in the workplace? What kinds of agencies or institutions would these bodies be, and on what basis would they make their judgements? They could be state testing bureaucracies, assessing people on their team-work and critical thinking abilities. Or they could be contracted out—which seems in fact to be the direction in some of the countries we have studied. But there is no plausible reason to believe that either of these alternatives will provide better information about individuals' knowledge

and skills than education institutions offer, and no reason to believe that they will be able to make meaningful judgements about areas that education institutions haven't, according to advocates of qualifications frameworks, made good judgements about. Educational assessments are already imprecise and contested. Imagine how much more contested they would be if they had to test people's ability to work in teams, their temperament, their initiative taking, and so on.

Manuel Souto-Otero (2012) points out that if the claim made for learning outcomes—that the same outcomes can be acquired anywhere—are true, then education institutions would only be able to be saved from complete redundancy if they were able to produce the same competences more efficiently than they are produced naturally in the course of life and work. But education institutions do not, cannot, and should not try to develop every conceivable 'useful' competence in individuals. What educational institutions can do well is impart bodies of knowledge: specialist knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, and the kinds of knowledge that are very unlikely to be picked up in the course of everyday life. One of the reasons that educational qualifications are seen as proxies for competence is that, in many areas of work, specialist knowledge is required. It is in education institutions, and not in the course of everyday life, that this specialist knowledge can be acquired. What educational institutions certify is that individuals have obtained this specialist knowledge. This does not mean that the individuals are competent in every aspect of the work—hence, for example, medical graduates have long practical internship periods. It simply means that they have acquired specialist knowledge. This knowledge is the basis of judgements that they will make later. It is essential, it requires educational institutions, but it does not and should not claim to capture every aspect of competence. When specialist knowledge is taken as the basis for judgement and action in the workplace, and this specialist knowledge has been assessed, it is far easier and more efficient to make judgements about competent practice. Because education can do this, and because this is useful, it does not follow that education can and should be expected to produce any skill that is seen to be useful in labour markets.

In terms of establishing equivalence of qualifications across countries, again, there are no easy solutions. Given that official recognition of qualifications between countries is usually largely dominated by political interests, it seems unlikely that official lists of achieved competences will assist the individual bearers of qualifications from other countries, even if the problem of mutual understanding of the lists of competences could be solved. The labour market currency of qualifications in their country of origin is far more likely to be key in this regard than official descriptions of qualifications. Building relationships between professional bodies, or between education institutions, can also facilitate the movement of students. But even if this were done far better than it is at present, it is not plausible that lack of recognition of qualifications is a primary reason for lack of labour market mobility.

None of the above discussion means that we do not need to improve education. Clearly, at all levels of education, we need improvements.

CURRICULUM

We need better insights into professional and occupational knowledge, and how knowledge is developed and used in work. With some notable exceptions, inadequate attention has been paid to this in the past. There is burgeoning interest in this field for good reasons, and it is likely to yield insights which will enable improvements in curriculum development in vocational, occupational, and professional education. But this is different to the idea contained in outcomes-based qualifications that learning outcomes will improve curricula by indicating to education institutions what employers need, or the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that learners should learn.

Any work that requires autonomy and application requires a broad education that teaches bodies of knowledge that allow people to reflect on and critique the world of work, to see it at a distance and in a context. This is why it is important to hold onto the idea of education as separate from everyday experience; where, as argued by Bernard Charlot (2009), the world is treated as an *object* and not as an *environment* or *place of experience*. Charlot explains that it is through the process of distancing and systematization that an epistemic Self¹ emerges, which is able to see the world as an object of thought. The bodies of knowledge which have been developed over the course of human history, and which continue to be developed, enable us to disengage from everyday belief, question taken-for-granted assumptions, and achieve some degree of estrangement from the common and the familiar. This enables us to view our immediate experience with a critical perspective, which is how education can enable individuals and societies to challenge power. This can only be achieved through holistic and in-depth learning that stands back from the immediacy of everyday life.

This idea is equally important at all levels of education. It is the acquisition of bodies of knowledge—not lists of facts—which allows us to move intellectually across different everyday contexts. The acquisition of bodies of knowledge in which concepts, principles, and facts are organized in structured relationships with each other enable us to step in and out of situations, reflect on them, compare them, and analyze them.

I have shown that the outcomes-based qualifications approach does not enable such an approach to curriculum because it implicitly rejects the idea of structured bodies of knowledge. I have discussed the idea of ‘functional analysis’, which has been associated with many outcomes-based qualifications frameworks and competence-based training, and shown how it begins curriculum design from tasks or activities in the real world and then selects ‘bits’ of knowledge to fit into these activities, rather than seeing knowledge as the starting point. The same critique applies to attempts by some progressivists to design curricula based on what are seen as socially desirable aims. Bodies of knowledge contain facts and concepts which take us beyond everyday experience. These concepts are part of bodies of knowledge, and derive their existence and meaning from them. Approaches to

knowledge which do not differentiate ‘information’ from subject or disciplinary knowledge do not reveal concepts or enable people to learn them. This is why the idea of learner-centredness in which education is based on the desires of the learner rather than bodies of knowledge leads to vacuous and superficial curricula, because they are devoid of the concepts and conceptual relationships that exist in bodies of knowledge.

Foregrounding the role of bodies of knowledge in the curriculum also necessarily entails a return to something like the ‘traditional’ curriculum. However, the idea of ‘tradition’, that ‘it’s always been done that way,’ is not a clear criterion for the selection of knowledge. We need criteria both for the selection of bodies of knowledge, as well as for the selection and recontextualization of that knowledge into curricula.

If we start from the approach which accepts and values the fact that knowledge is socially constructed, but argues that some forms of knowledge have intrinsic value for study, we have a starting point for both processes of selection. Moore (2004) argues that decisions about educational knowledge must be concerned with “the relative reliability of the *different* ways in which we produce knowledge” (Moore, p. 164). Young (2008) invokes the idea of ‘powerful knowledge’, as opposed to the idea discussed in Chapter 7 of ‘knowledge of the powerful’, as the starting point for thinking about the curriculum. Knowledge is powerful, he suggests, if it can contribute to freeing those who have access to it to envisage alternative and new possibilities. Science and mathematics enable people to transform, predict, and control aspects of the natural world, although they need the social sciences to understand the social impact of such transformations (Young & Muller, 2013). Gramsci argued that learning history and geography is fundamentally empowering because both subjects teach individuals about other places, ways of life, and courses of events (Entwistle, 1979). Literature is also a powerful way of enabling learners to see beyond their own environments, and experience other epochs, countries, and ways of life. Literature and poetry are not only ‘powerful’ insofar as they enable us to experience the lives of other people, but in that they enable new insights into our own lives. They stimulate the imagination and emotional awareness, allow us to infer meaning, to explore unusual uses of language, and to develop a heightened awareness and command of language (Gillian, 1993). Young and Muller (2013) cite Rosen (2012) to make a similar case for the power of the arts, which provide access to an essentially contemplative aesthetic standpoint. The arts, they argue, speak to the universal, and can enable people to feel part of a larger humanity, allowing the possibility, in Bernstein’s (2000) language, of ‘thinking the un-thinkable’ and the ‘not yet thought’.

Organized bodies of knowledge provide insights into the natural world, the social world, and our humanness, and they provide the means to improve our insights into these. One criterion for the selection of bodies of knowledge is that a balance should be attained, especially in the lower levels of education systems and general education, between these different areas of the world; in other words, the traditional balance between some social science, some natural science, some language, and some art subjects. This does not mean it will be straightforward to determine which subjects

should be taught in which kinds of educational institutions. There are constraints of time and resources, and the bodies of knowledge which can be acquired by a given body of learners will depend on what they already know on entering a learning programme. In the early years of schooling, there are also other questions which must inform the curriculum—such as the developmental needs of young learners. At higher levels, particularly in vocational and professional education, the way in which work is organized, and the relationships between the body of knowledge and its application, must be taken into consideration. But in every case, decisions about which bodies of knowledge (packaged into subjects) to teach, and what content to select from them, is a key starting point. This is partly because of the intrinsic logic and organization of disciplines—motor mechanics students will never be able to understand the physics of engines without being introduced to more basic physics first. It might be argued that motor mechanics don't need to understand the physics of engines in order to fix them. In some instances this type of argument is valid—there are many things one can do without understanding how they work. In many cases it is not true. But anyway, education is not just about helping people to survive, but about learning what other humans have learnt about ourselves and the world in which we find ourselves. Vocational education should enable learners to develop insight into what they are doing, but also to distance themselves from the world of work, reflect on it, and critique it. For this, they need to be given the opportunity to acquire some disciplinary knowledge, and not just 'bits' of knowledge isolated from the system of meaning in which those bits of knowledge were originally embedded (Wheelahan, 2010).

If we start from the idea that schools should teach some of the bodies of knowledge developed by humanity, and select these based on achieving a balance between those which provide insight into the natural world, the social world, and human culture, then we are likely to end up with a curriculum which has some similarities with traditional curricula. The traditional school subjects—such as mathematics, science, biology, history, geography, music, art, and literature and language—are drawn from disciplines that provide insight into key aspects of the world. We do not have to resort to the conservative ideas that support these subjects in order to see that there is much of value in them. Traditional subjects were used to groom elites and would-be elites precisely because they provided 'powerful knowledge' to these elites. While, as I discuss below, there are aspects of these subjects that we should challenge—such as the perspectives from which history is taught—rather than dismissing subjects and the powerful knowledge they contain as the knowledge of elites, we should aim to make this powerful knowledge no longer elite.

A key difference between the approach that I am advocating and the 'traditional' curriculum is that the latter is insufficiently sociological; it does not pay enough attention to the way in which knowledge is developed. A sociological approach to analyzing the development of knowledge² insists that we recognize and analyze not only the internal structure of bodies of knowledge, but also their social construction. This means that we should always be aware of the role of power in the development

of bodies of knowledge and in their reconstruction into curricula. We should never ignore instances in which ideology is presented as fact. This is a departure from the interpretation of the traditional curriculum as completely objective, and enables us to question the ‘facts’ it presents—such as that Europe is at the centre of history or that colonialism was a good thing.

Now we move from the question of which subjects should be studied in general, towards the question of how knowledge from broader discipline areas should be selected for curricula within specific subjects at particular levels in particular institutions. As discussed in previous chapters, this process is also located in power struggles and questions of ideology, although some subjects are more open to ideological contestation than others. Rather than suggesting that we don’t need a knowledge-based curriculum at all, educationalists should challenge the substance of the bodies of knowledge selected in the curriculum, debate about which knowledge to include in it, and, where possible, draw learners’ attention to how knowledge is developed and these major debates and differences. Curriculum development is always difficult. Even without ideological contestation, there is always contestation amongst disciplinary experts about the relative importance of particular concepts. Acknowledging that knowledge is constructed and that it changes and develops adds to this complexity, but also ensures that the role of power is taken seriously, and that it is contested and drawn to learners attention where necessary.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a common critique of traditional subject-based curricula is that they lead to the memorization of inert facts, instead of the mastery of concepts. This is less likely to happen if we take seriously the structure of knowledge, the ways in which concepts are related to each other, when designing curricula. Winch (2012) argues that curriculum design requires

introducing novices into the conceptual field that distinguishes the subject. This conceptual field can itself be seen in hierarchical terms with central organising and methodological concepts at its core and derivative concepts at the periphery. It follows that one cannot be introduced in a serious way into a subject unless one starts to acquire at least some grasp of these central concepts.

Winch goes on to argue that systematic knowledge is organised both in terms of the classification of and relationships between its various conceptual elements and also in terms of the procedures required to gain and to validate knowledge. In order to acquire such knowledge, instruction in abstract concepts, description of empirical examples, and acquaintance through experiments may all be pedagogically necessary. It may also be necessary for a teacher to draw to pupils’ attention the relatedness of different concepts, in order to develop their inferential abilities, but also to develop an understanding of concepts in relationships with each other. This is why it is important to take explicit account of how bodies of knowledge are structured, as well as how they are developed, when selecting subjects and designing curricula for subjects.

We also need to take seriously the idea of epistemological access—how individuals actually acquire knowledge. This is something the traditional approach to the curriculum has largely ignored. Morrow (2007) reminds us that access to schools does not necessarily mean access to education, and Crain Soudien (2007) describes the tragedy of schools in South Africa, in which the *form* of school is retained, but no real learning happens. The solutions to providing epistemological access lie neither in a return to tradition, nor in attempts to make education more ‘relevant’ or learner-centred. They lie instead in serious attempts at developing curricula that help learners acquire bodies of knowledge. They also lie in improving society and people’s economic circumstances, to make it viable for them to attend and learn at school.

In short, if education is about the acquisition of bodies of knowledge and if these are to be meaningfully delivered to children and young people, it is essential to have a well designed curriculum that carefully considers the structures of the discipline and makes difficult but clear choices about which content should be selected, and how it should be sequenced. This will only happen with strong education institutions. Learning happens everywhere, but the acquisition of bodies of knowledge requires education institutions.

BUILDING EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

One consistent finding in our research, across most of the 16 countries that we studied, was that educational institutions were seen as ‘offering resistance’, ‘failing to comply’, or otherwise not supporting the move towards outcomes-based qualifications. In many instances, stakeholders interviewed, and even some of our researchers blamed this on the ‘inherent conservatism’ of education institutions. Ironically, however, (as discussed in Chapter 6) in many instances employers felt that the outcomes-based approach was something ‘imposed on them’, and often believed it was being imposed on them by the very education institutions who felt it was an imposition on themselves!

We also found that the more ‘successful’ qualifications frameworks seemed to be those which worked with the qualification systems of education institutions. They described and aligned existing qualifications, making relationships which were previously implicit more explicit, and sometimes opening up the space for debate and dialogue about these relationships. They were not seen as systems through which new qualifications were to be designed, or which would inform institutions on the basis for curriculum design.

Where outcomes-based qualifications frameworks are introduced as mechanisms for governments to regulate provision, *à la* neoliberal public sector reform, the state focuses on outcomes and outputs, and is not interested in inputs, rules, and processes. It contracts out for the delivery of outcomes wherever possible, and, where not possible, it treats parts of the state like contractors, operating within their logic. This focus on outputs is supposed to enable flexibility and dynamism within the state, and

to address the problem of the inflexibility of bureaucracies, as well as their alleged tendency to be self-serving. In general—not just in education—this places more weight on outcomes, outputs, or targets than they can bear. Because contractors or parts of the state are evaluated in terms of numbers, they end up ‘gaming’ to reach targets: to meet the target of fewer queues, patients are shifted around hospitals; to build as many houses as possible, poor quality houses are built; to increase the numbers of qualifications, one three-year qualification is changed into three one-year qualifications; and so on. What’s more, competences, like other outcome statements, are not transparent. Much as a ‘house’ can be interpreted to mean a palace or a hut, competences can also be interpreted strongly or weakly. Thus sharkish providers can claim to have taught a competence in a weekend. And whereas the size of a house, and to some extent the quality of a house, is fairly easy to see, the state has to have incredibly extensive regulatory capacity to catch out those providing weak curricula. This leads to a large regulatory state. But institutions, both regulatory and providing, take time and effort to develop. As Raymond Callahan (1962, p. 264) argued over 50 years ago in his critique of the efficiency movement in education: “We must face the fact that there is no cheap, easy way to educate a human being and that a free society cannot endure without educated men”.

Not only do qualifications frameworks not provide a basis for building and supporting education institutions, and, in fact, support or facilitate funding models that make it difficult to build institutions because funding is linked to short-term course delivery, they also cause other difficulties for education institutions. Designing curricula against learning outcomes is tedious and restrictive, unless providers comply with the outcomes only cosmetically. Even then, as has been seen in higher education in South Africa, it adds an unnecessary administrative burden to people designing courses. This is a particular problem in poor countries where institutions are few and weak, and in weaker parts of education systems, such as vocational education. The South African case demonstrates how weaker providers, more dependent on short-term funds, with fewer professional educators, and weaker traditions and institutionalized systems, are most likely to attempt to voluntarily comply with the outcomes model. They are also more vulnerable to being forced to design their curricula against learning outcomes by regulatory agencies. The South African example also shows that strong providers such as universities and school systems with either strong central curricula or highly trained professional teachers are more likely to ignore learning outcomes, or comply with them only superficially. It also shows that where provision is weak, such as in vocational education, the end result of a system focused on developing outcomes-based qualifications and institutions to regulate provision against these qualifications is huge regulatory system with a tiny provision system.

Poor countries should instead focus on developing their education systems—building, equipping, and supporting their providing institutions. Policies that would support the success of education systems include giving teachers good quality education and training, and paying them well. Educating teachers in their discipline,

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in the pedagogy of their subject, as well as in the sociology and philosophy of education, will build their sense of professional and moral purpose, and enable, as I have been arguing above, an empowered sense of judgement that does not leave them trapped in their day-to-day experiences. They need autonomy over key aspects of their practice, particularly pedagogy, and need to be able to contribute to the curriculum. They need to be able to freely join professional associations, including unions.

If education is to be a common good, delivery cannot be left to the market. It cannot be seen as a simple service that can be bought or contracted for. The only people who would benefit from such a system are the elites who have access to the huge resources necessary to attend the top private schools. Educational systems will always fail to provide a quality education for all if they are judged as profit-making businesses, or judged in terms of their contribution towards the economy.

COLLECTIVITY

Building strong education institutions which are accessible to all, not only those who can pay, implies the need for collective politics, and to return to the state as the representative of the collective, and as the central authority for educational delivery. This does not mean that there are no problems with reliance on the state. For a start, states can fail, or be made up of extractive elites captured by business interests, whose interests lie in removing wealth from the country in question for personal gain, instead of building wealth within the country. As I write this, the South African government is being taken to court for its failure to ensure delivery of textbooks to schools. 20 years after liberation, children are still learning in mud schools, under trees, and without toilets. Many African states are considered to have failed to deliver education, which has meant that many people have turned to private provision, giving further ammunition to the proponents of marketization and of charter schools and vouchers-type systems whereby governments allocate funds to individuals and let them select which institution to attend or enrol their children in. This book is not the place for addressing the problem with voucher systems and charter schools (see Ravitch, 2010 for a detailed discussion of the problems they have caused in the United States). But I will briefly note two problems with the idea of privately run schools as the solution to the problems experienced with public provision. Firstly, it is based on the assumption that it is easy to set up a private school that will succeed in poor communities. This book presents some insights into why this is not the case: institutions require long-term investment which is unlikely to be achieved for poor people in market-based systems which tend to be short-term in their orientation. Further, it is well established that poverty makes it very difficult for learners to achieve in education, which is a major reason for the failure of public provision, and will only be aggravated if education is harder to afford. Secondly, even if the state isn't providing education, if it is funding it through vouchers or other mechanisms that follow individuals and don't

support institutions, there still have to be some checks on schools and regulation of what learners learn, which governments are funding. This is the conundrum of a regulatory state, as opposed to both a welfare-based state and an extreme neoliberal state in which the market is simply allowed to function on its own. Either the regulatory function will be outsourced, potentially leading to a future in which children are taught only what is in the immediate interests of the businesses doing the checks and regulation, or we will have to rely on states to do this—the same states that are considered to have ‘failed’ to deliver education. Furthermore, actually investigating and evaluating education institutions is very costly and difficult, and so, whether the regulation is done through private providers or through the state, it is most likely to be carried out through the cheaper and simpler method of assessments. This will lead to an increase in the use of tests in schools. The problems of over-dependence on tests are well documented in the United States (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Ravitch, 2010), where schools have to spend most of their time prepping for multiple choice tests, resulting in an incredible narrowing of the curriculum.

Nonetheless, relying on the state for provision of education is a complicated matter. The modern state arose in conjunction with capitalism, and has become more and more entwined with it; “... the state, seen for so long by the left as the source of countervailing power against markets and corporations, is today likely to be the committed ally of giant corporations, whatever the ideological origins of the parties governing the state” (Crouch, 2011, p. 145). However, the achievements of welfare states show us that social good can be achieved through the state. And, as discussed in Chapter 7, human beings are more than just buyers and sellers in markets; as social creatures, our lives are entwined, and we are “enmeshed in our needs for collective and public goods” (Crouch, 2011, p. 180). Education is a quintessentially collective good. Collectively, societies make it possible for their young people to acquire some of the knowledge about the social and natural world that humanity has developed over the course of history, in institutions dedicated to this purpose, through social interaction with those who have acquired various bodies of knowledge.

Harvey (2010, p. 197) points out that

... states are produced out of social relations and through technologies of governance. To the degree, for example, that states are reifications of mental conceptions, so theories of state formation must pay careful attention to what it is that people were and are thinking that the state should be in relation to them. [...] The neoliberal movement that began in the 1970s, for example, constituted a radical ideological assault upon what the state should be about. To the degree that it was successful (and often it was not) it led to wide-ranging state-sponsored changes in daily life (the promotion of individualism and an ethic of personal responsibility against the background of diminishing state provision), as well as in the dynamics of capital accumulation.

The neoliberal conception of the state is not inevitable, and can and has been challenged. A major reason why I have argued that outcomes-based qualifications frameworks are a negative phenomenon is because they operate within and reinforce a neoliberal notion of the state and society, and an approach to governance that promotes individualism and personal responsibility instead of collective welfare and state provision of public services. If we want all people to be educated, we need governments that build and support education institutions which are made accessible to all, and we need to collectively fund and support this endeavour.

This means ongoing struggles to make states democratic and accountable, and to rebuild a sense of collective responsibility. It means not only depending on the state, but also building a strong progressive civil society—those areas of life in which people organize and interact which are separate in various ways from the state. For example, one way in which we could counteract the vested interest of the rich within state would be to ensure a stronger role for professional bodies. For, while the professions are to various degrees influenced by the market and concerned with profit, as well as controlled by the state and dominated by bureaucratic rules, there is, as I discussed in Chapter 5, a logic to professional work which is different to both the state and market. Professional work is based on judgements rooted in specialized knowledge. This knowledge base enables, to varying degrees, professionals to control their own labour, and protect themselves from the dictates of both consumers and managers. That does not mean that professional bodies are exempt from being coopted or dominated, but that they are areas of society which have the potential for a degree of autonomy. Their relationship to bodies of knowledge, as well as this relative degree of separation from the state and the market, could be used to strengthen education systems. Professional bodies of teachers could play a strong role in education systems, and other professional bodies could contribute to thinking about curricula in areas related to their work. Universities have traditionally been involved in conceptualizing the school curriculum; this is an example of how professionals can play a constructive role in education systems, and, although it is not without difficulties, it is useful for the curricula of subjects taught at schools to be designed at least in part by experts in particular bodies of knowledge, in addition to expert teachers who have insight into the abilities of children. These two examples both demonstrate how individuals who have expert knowledge, and who are organized in professional bodies, and who have some autonomy from both the state and the market, can contribute to building education systems.

REALISTIC AIMS

Society needs to be equalized if all children are to succeed at education. But this equalization cannot be done through education itself. If work is decreasingly a source of security for most people, then welfarist policies must be adopted to support individuals (Barchiesi, 2011; Marais, 2011; Standing, 2011). Short-term policies will succeed in tackling inequality if they attack it head-on through social income

grants. Longer-term solutions lie in a fundamental rethinking of the organization of countries, economies, and international organizations. Inequalities are reproduced and deepened by capitalist economies, which education cannot remove. Pretending that it can do so only means that what education really is or could be will continue to be eroded.

Education reform will fare better with far more limited goals. Rather than hurriedly rushing from one faddish revamp to the next, education reform should be based on what education actually is, what education institutions can plausibly do, and how they can be supported. The outcomes-based approach, which starts from the idea of defining things that people do or need to be able to do in the world of work, and the aims-based approach favoured by some progressive educationalists, as discussed in Chapter 6, both start from thinking about what we want people to do in society, and supplying the relevant goals to education systems. From here they move to defining the various social and economic problems which education should solve.

This is not only unrealistic, but results in education being blamed for economic and social problems. In response to this perceived failure, institutions have their funding cut, are marketized or privatized, educators criticized and targeted for various performance-improvement policies, and so on. The ever-growing list of expectations for education, particularly for vocational education, can only contribute to the ever-growing list of criticisms of education, educational institutions, and educators. Much as we want more money given to education, we should be realistic in our claims about its importance to society. David Labaree (2012, p. 156) writes:

Schools are able to do some things well, so it pays to focus on these kinds of efforts. They can provide students with a broad set of basic skills (reading, writing, calculating, analysing, reasoning) and a broad understanding of major aspects of the natural and social world, the kinds of broad capacities we tend to consider part of a liberal education.

His point, also made by many other educationalists, is that, by accepting that education can play only a limited role, we will increase its chances of success. Egan (2002, 135–6) makes the same argument:

Schools can be quite good institutions when they concentrate sensibly on intellectual education, but they are less good at developing the whole person or producing good citizens or ensuring parenting skills. [...] That so many problems that the young face today are urgent and desperate still doesn't make the school an adequate institution to deal with them, but in trying to deal with them, however ineffectually, schools guarantee that they will not accomplish the traditional academic job adequately either.

Clearly there are all sorts of important roles that education plays in society and the economy, from the basics of ensuring that people are literate and numerate, to the development of research and innovation. However, and apparently paradoxically, it is more likely that education will be able to play these and other important roles

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in society and the economy if it is valued not for playing these roles but *in itself* as education. The acquisition of bodies of knowledge is the basis for the integrity and intelligibility of education: this knowledge has its own internal justification separate from the economy and the short-term needs of society, and exists at the core of our common humanity.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This does not imply the detached, asocial, disembodied epistemic agent which is the target of post-modernists, but simply the self as engaged in the act of thinking and learning about the world as an object through sets of concepts which have been developed to make sense of this world.
- ² As developed, for example, in the works of Gamble (2004a, 2004b, 2011), Moore (2004, 2009, 2011), Muller (2000, 2009), Young (2008, 2009a), and Wheelahan (2010).