

**Social Realism Symposium: International perspectives on  
knowledge and the curriculum**

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**Social Realism Symposium:  
International perspectives on  
knowledge and the curriculum**



**Thursday 2nd July 15.00 - 18.00**

**Venue: Cantor 9135, Arundel Street, Sheffield Hallam University**

Sign up for this free event [here](#). All welcome. For further information contact Richard Pountney [r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk)

Social realism is a broad school of thought achieving prominence across a range of national contexts including Australia, New Zealand, France, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Social realism is *social* in arguing that all knowledge is socially produced by communities of knowledge producers, while it is *realist* in arguing that knowledge is about an objective world, one that exists independently of our social constructions of it (Wheelahan, 2010). It distinguishes between knowledge of the powerful and *powerful knowledge* where the latter can provide more reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world and a language for engaging in political, moral and educational debates (Young, 2008). The symposium addresses social realist understandings of the curriculum and discusses the place of knowledge.

### **Programme**

2.30 Arrival and tea and coffee

3.00 - 3.10 Professor Jacqueline Stevenson: Welcome and introduction

3.10 - 3.50 Professor Sue Clegg: *The necessity and possibility of powerful 'regional' knowledge: curriculum change and renewal*

3.50 - 4.30 Dr. Richard Pountney: *Developing the professional curriculum: looking both ways with practice knowledge and theory*

4.30 - 4.45 Break and tea and coffee

4.45 - 5.30 Professor Elizabeth Rata and Dr. Graham McPhail: *Two curriculum models: 'progressive knowledge' and 21st Century Learning*

5.30 - 6.00 Discussion chaired by Professor Jacqueline Stevenson

6.00 Finish

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### **Abstracts**

#### ***The necessity and possibility of powerful 'regional' knowledge: curriculum change and renewal***

Professor Sue Clegg (Leeds Beckett University)

[s.clegg@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:s.clegg@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

The presentation will argue that not only is powerful regional knowledge necessary but that it is also possible and that there are historical precedents which point the way. Regional knowledge is being used in a double sense: the first Bernstein, and the second geopolitical. Both are important for

debates about curriculum in higher education if the debate is not to be confined solely to the global north. In order to think critically about access to higher education we need to consider the sorts of knowledge, engagement, and opportunities that are open to newer actors. This includes recognising the contextual nature of professional practice in meeting the needs of citizens and also that social movements beyond the academy can and do challenge academic knowledge. Drawing on critical realism and paying attention to knowledge questions is important as it avoids judgemental relativism while recognising the necessarily social nature of knowledge making. The presentation will provide a space for colleagues to debate how the curriculum is changing in higher education, whether our students are being well served by these changes, and the nature and scope of agency in making (and sometimes resisting) change.

***Developing the professional curriculum: looking both ways with practice knowledge and theory***

Dr. Richard Pountney (*Sheffield Hallam University*)

[r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk)

This presentation reviews the curricular and pedagogical development of professional courses in higher education, with close attention to understandings of the importance of the professional context as it is realised in the design of the curriculum in the UK. This review is used as the site of analysis to map the research undertaken and the professional practice that has emerged. Issues associated with the role, effects and implications of work related learning in education are examined in the light of this mapping of the professional curriculum. The notions of professional knowledge and professional practice that are prevalent at this time are used to reflect on the 'know-how' and the 'know-what' in professional education and how this delineates the formation of specialist knowledge and expertise. The presentation concludes by considering what response we might make to the need for knowledge building in professional / vocational fields and how to investigate it.

***Two curriculum models: 'progressive knowledge' and 21st Century Learning***

Professor Elizabeth Rata and Dr. Graham McPhail (*Auckland University, New Zealand*)

[e.rata@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:e.rata@auckland.ac.nz)

The presentation describes two curriculum models that we have called 'progressive knowledge' and '21st Century learning'. We developed these models as theoretical tools for an empirical study we are undertaking into a 21st Century secondary school in New Zealand. We will also describe the design of the study; how it is a collaborative project with teachers at the school bringing together the interests of both researchers and the teachers in seeking to understand the relationship between curriculum design and students' conceptual progression. Embedded in the discussion is the issue of the relationship between curriculum and pedagogy that is a central concern to curriculum researchers, curriculum designers, and teaching professionals alike.

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**Bio-notes**

**Sue Clegg** was appointed as Professor of Educational Research and Deputy Director of the Deputy Director of the Learning and Teaching Research Institute at Sheffield Hallam University in 2000. She moved to Leeds Metropolitan University in 2006 and is currently Emeritus Professor of Higher

Education Research at Leeds Beckett University. She was a Mellon Visiting Scholar at the University of Cape Town in 2014, and has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Technology Sydney, and Visiting Honorary Fellow at the University of Auckland. Her research draws on critical realism and feminist theory. In recent work she has interrogated seemingly mundane pedagogical practices, such as those involved in personal development planning, and explored how these are understood by staff and students and how they are reframed in policy discourse. Drawing on this empirical research she has elaborated on importance of theorising temporality and reflexivity. She has also explored issues of academic identity. Most recently she has been involved in theorising the nature of curriculum and researching extracurricular activity and the formation and recognition of social and cultural capital. She is currently working on the significance of theorising powerful knowledge in higher education and the implications for theorising diversity. She was Editor of *Teaching in Higher Education* from 2006 to 2014 and sits on the Editorial Boards of *Studies in Higher Education* and *Higher Education Quarterly*. She plays a major role in the *Society for Research into Higher Education* and chairs their Publications Committee.

**Graham McPhail** has recently taken up a music education lectureship in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland. Graham taught secondary school music for 21 years and worked for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as the national moderator for NCEA music. In the area of music education he has recently published in the *International Journal of Music Education*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, the *British Journal of Music Education*, the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*. He has two papers in-press with the *British Educational Research Journal (BERJ)* and the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* on wider educational issues.

**Richard Pountney** is a principal lecturer in education at Sheffield Hallam University and a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He is a tutor on the Education Doctorate and teaches curriculum studies on the Masters in Education. He has led the international MSc Technology Enhanced Learning, Innovation and Change since 2005. He was curriculum associate to the HEA Subject Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (CSAP), 2008-11. His research is in higher education and the design of the curriculum and he is editor of the *TELIC Journal*. He was awarded a teaching fellowship in 2006 in recognition of his contribution to learning and teaching in the university.

**Elizabeth Rata** is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. She is the author of *The Politics of Knowledge in Education* (a book published by Routledge in 2012) and an article of the same title published in the *British Educational Research Journal (BERJ)* also in 2012. A second article which develops her knowledge and curriculum ideas further is also published by the *BERJ*: *A Pedagogy of Conceptual Progression: The Case for Academic Knowledge* (2015). She has co-edited (with Brian Barrett) *Knowledge and the Future of the Curriculum: International Studies in Social Realism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

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