University of Reading

Risk aversion in a performativity culture – what can we learn from teachers' curriculum decision making in history?

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY)

Open Access

Harris, R. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8606-5515 (2021) Risk aversion in a performativity culture – what can we learn from teachers' curriculum decision making in history? Journal of Curriculum Studies, 53 (5). pp. 659-674. ISSN 1366-5839 doi: 10.1080/00220272.2021.1884294 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/95885/

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

To link to this article DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1884294

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the End User Agreement.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

University of Reading

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Curriculum Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tcus20

Risk aversion in a performativity culture – what can we learn from teachers' curriculum decision making in history?

Richard Harris

To cite this article: Richard Harris (2021): Risk aversion in a performativity culture – what can we learn from teachers' curriculum decision making in history?, Journal of Curriculum Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2021.1884294

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1884294

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

View supplementary material

Published online: 20 Feb 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 292

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=tcus20

JOURNAL OF CURRICULUM STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1884294

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Risk aversion in a performativity culture – what can we learn from teachers' curriculum decision making in history?

Richard Harris

Institute of Education, University of Reading, Reading, UK

ABSTRACT

Using the notion of risk aversion, this study explores the decisions teachers make when constructing a curriculum. Adopting a qualitative, grounded approach, this study used semi-structured interviews with nine history teachers to examine the decisions they were making during a period of considerable curriculum change in England. Five key categories were identified, which were then defined as risk averse or high risk. The findings show that teachers largely adopt a low-risk approach when constructing a curriculum. In particular choice of content, pedagogical and assessment approaches are affected. Also, changes to the curriculum in high stakes examination courses have a major distorting impact on the curriculum choices for the phase of schooling prior to the examination course. This study would suggest that teachers generally aim to maximize examination outcomes through adopting a low-risk approach to curriculum change. However, according to the literature, these low-risk approaches appear unlikely to improve examination outcomes, whilst at the same time narrowing students' experience of the curriculum.

KEYWORDS

Risk taking; risk aversion; teachers' decision-making; curriculum; curriculum construction

Introduction

> I had to weigh up do I want to teach good history or do I want to teach to the GCSE (main examination in England for 16 year olds) and get better results. So that is sort of the conundrum that I'm facing. (Andy)

This quote from a newly appointed head of history in an English secondary school sets up an interesting dilemma based upon a presumption that teaching 'good' history is incompatible with preparing students for an examination. If these goals are seen as mutually exclusive then teachers face a problematic tension between developing pupils' understanding of a subject, and the need to gain good examination results; this tension between performativity and the quality of the educational experience has been previously recognized (Biesta, 2015; Ball, 2003). Given the centrality of the curriculum (Young, 2008) to students' education, and the position of responsibility teachers have in interpreting and enacting curricula (Counsell, 2011), within a context where accountability measures are strongly embedded (Ball, 2017), exploring how teachers navigate the tensions this promotes is crucial to understanding how reforms are implemented in practice.

Other studies have shown how teachers struggle to engage with reform (Harris & Graham, 2019). This paper contributes to this wider discussion by exploring whether teachers' decision-making about curriculum change can be understood in terms of risk aversion and risk-taking. In particular, this paper seeks to:

CONTACT Richard Harris r.j.harris@reading.ac.uk Institute of Education, University of Reading, London Road Campus, 4 Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX, UK

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed here.

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

(1) explore what might be considered 'risks' when constructing a curriculum;
(2) understand how perceptions of risk might impact on the decisions teachers make in the curriculum-making process.

Literature review

In this study, two concepts are used, namely, performativity and risk, to explore how in combination these shape how teachers engage with curriculum reform, and potentially influence the quality of the curriculum. This literature review highlights the concerns about how teachers engage with educational reforms in a performative culture, and a range of variables that influence this interaction. Risk taking, however, is an area that has been less well explored in the context of educational reforms

Performativity and educational reform

Globally there is a drive towards improving educational systems and their outcomes for students. In part, this is related to the development of a global knowledge economy, where intellectual capital is increasingly valued as a means of ensuring economic success. It is also partly driven by the use of international measures, such as PISA and TIMMS, which rank countries and are seen as indicative of the 'success' of an educational system. In turn, this has seen the emergence of a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003, 2017), where there is growing pressure on teachers and schools for high performance in terms of the outcomes that are measured.

This desire for improvement has led to the introduction of reforms in education systems around the world. These reforms have focused on areas such as pre- and in-service teacher training, curriculum reforms, examination changes, school funding models, use of technology, changes to pedagogy and so on—according to Ball (2017) we are living in the era of a 'policy epidemic', as governments look to education to provide a competitive economic edge in the global environment. To ensure the implementation of and compliance with these series of reforms, governments have introduced a process of 'arms length' governance (Ozga, 2009). For example, a range of accountability measures, such as publication of examination results, have been developed to monitor and judge the success of such reforms. The impact has been to increase pressures on teachers (and students) to 'perform' enforced by a process of 'accountability'.

However, there is evidence that various educational reforms can be greeted with extreme reluctance by some teachers and so fail to bring about the desired change(s) (Berkovich, 2011; Hargreaves, 2005; Mutch, 2012). The reasons for this are complex. Many studies focus on leadership and how change is implemented, highlighting structural issues or the need to manage people more effectively (Bush, 2018; Fullan, 2002). Other studies highlight the role of the individual teacher. For example, the role which teachers' values, attitudes and beliefs play in hindering change (Van Eekelen et al., 2006; Verloop et al., 2001). Some studies focus more on teachers' self-efficacy and their self-belief in their ability to introduce change (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Klassen et al., 2011). Other studies have focused on teachers' agency and their ability to engage with and influence change (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2012). These areas of study do help us to understand a range of factors that can inhibit teachers' willingness and ability to engage constructively with educational change. There are, however, additional issues related to change and teachers' responses to change that are relatively less well researched, but which can potentially provide helpful insights into teachers' actions.

Educational reform and risk-taking

Ponticell (2009) argues that understanding teachers' risk-taking behaviours is an area in need of greater exploration, particularly in the context of implementing change. Le Fevre (2014, p. 56) points out '[r]isk and risk-taking have been tightly associated with effective innovation, improvement, and change across many industries and disciplines for many years'. If risk-taking is closely linked to the

effectiveness of any process of change, then it warrants further attention in educational research, especially as little is known about teachers and their risk-taking behaviours (Le Fevre, 2014; Ponticell, 2009). Indeed Barth (2007, p. 212) argues that there is a 'culture of caution' in schools, which may well explain why it has often been so difficult to bring about change in educational settings. Adopting unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning could be seen as risky and the potential harm to students in terms of academic failure (and its subsequent repercussions) matters to the teacher, who are typically ambitious for their students. The consequence of this in a performative culture may be that teachers seek to minimize perceived risk in the belief that this will maximize examination outcomes.

Exploring the psychology of risk does seem to offer potentially new and interesting insights into the difficulties of introducing change. As Le Fevre (2014) explains there are three elements which shape people's perceptions of risk: loss of something that is valued and/or familiar; the significance of that loss; and uncertainty because outcomes of a change are as yet unknown. Often staff have little input into work-based reforms, so they also feel a loss of control, which can make people feel more vulnerable. This feeling can be exacerbated if the changes constitute an attack on values and beliefs that are strongly held (even if they may be problematic in themselves), if there is an overload of initiatives, and where relational trust within a workplace is weak

Le Fevre's (2014) work provides a useful framework for understanding perceptions of risk but focuses more on what teachers consider to be a risk in terms of pedagogy. This paper seeks to extend this, as noted earlier, by developing insights into teachers' understanding of risks involved in constructing a curriculum, and how this perception of risk influences the decisions teachers make.

The focus of this study is on history teachers. The research was conducted in a period that witnessed a succession of curriculum changes in England (as will be explained below) where some of the most far-reaching changes were in the area of history education, often sparking ferocious debate about the nature and content of the history curriculum (Harris & Burn, 2016). A study of history teachers therefore offers an interesting insight into the decisions teachers make when creating a curriculum during a time of extensive change in a culture within which examination results carry high stakes for teachers and students.

The research context

As in other educational systems, teachers in England have been subject to a plethora of reforms. In particular, in recent years, there has been a series of curriculum reforms (see Table 1).

As can be seen in Table 1, secondary school teachers were faced with consecutive and extensive reform of the curriculum (although not necessarily in a logical sequence as changes to the GCSE examinations happened after reforms to other areas of the curriculum). The government's intention was to broaden the range and amount of content studied, and in their view to make the examinations more challenging (Gove, 2014). The data for this study was collected during 2017–18, at a time when teachers were deeply engaged with these changes.

The degree to which the reforms actually changed the history curriculum at each stage of secondary schooling varied. Findings from different studies (Burn & Harris, 2017; Harris & Reynolds, 2018) show that the changes to the lower school curriculum were minimal in many cases and were

Table 1. Implementation of curriculum reforms in England.

Phase of schooling affected	Date of change to curriculum
Lower secondary school curriculum for students aged 11–13/14 (known as Key Stage 3 or KS3)	To be taught from September 2014
Upper school curriculum for students aged 13/14-16 (known as Key Stage 4 or KS4) where students study for examinations known as GCSE	To be officially taught from September 2016 for first examination in 2018
Upper school curriculum for students aged 16–18 where students study for examinations known as A levels	To be taught from September 2015 for first examination in 2017

less of a priority for teachers who were focused on the changes to the examination courses and were expecting to adapt the lower school curriculum in light of changes to the examination courses.

The changes to the A-Level course were generally welcomed (Burn & Harris, 2017). This was because the changes had less impact on teachers' workload, allowing them to continue teaching familiar topics (albeit in greater depth), and so required less extensive change and in Le Fevre's (2014) model could be seen as low risk. The biggest change however related to the 13/14-16 GCSE examination course.

Previously schools could essentially choose from two different history specifications; one covering the twentieth-century world (but effectively focused largely on the 1920s-1940s) and the other, known as the Schools History Project, typically allowing students to undertake a development study of a particular topic through time (such as the history of medicine), a depth study (such as Nazi Germany), as well as examining a local historical site and/or a modern world issue. The new GCSE requirements however meant teachers were faced with extensive change. Official guidance states:

> GCSE specifications should include history:
>
> - from three eras: Medieval (500–1500), Early Modern (1450–1750) and Modern (1700-present day)
> - on three time scales: short (depth study), medium (period study) and long (thematic study)
> - on three geographical contexts: a locality (the historic environment); British; and European and/or wider world settings (DfE, 2014, p. 4)

The nature of the assessments was also due to change. This meant that teachers and students had to cover more historical content, involving a range of different times, places, and scales. This presented a number of challenges for teachers, not least how to cover the amount of content within the timeframe of the course. There were implications for how teachers might adopt different pedagogical and assessment approaches. One way that teachers have been approaching the challenge of teaching the new GCSE has been to look at the lower school curriculum and consider how to make that a more appropriate preparation for the examination course (even if around 60% of students typically do not choose to study history at GCSE) (Burn & Harris, 2017). Hence, it was only following the changes to the GCSE that many teachers started to reconsider the lower school history curriculum (Burn & Harris, 2017).

Overall, it appears clear that the changes to the curriculum, particularly those to the GCSE for students aged 13/14-16, present a risk to teachers. This is because the GCSE is a high stakes test for students, so teachers cannot ignore this reform. Also, within the current performativity culture (Ball, 2003), these examination results are used by the government as a key performance indicator for schools, so they potentially have a major impact on teachers' behaviours. Although most teachers are ambitious for their students, understanding how teachers respond to significant change and what helps or hinders this process is clearly important. Using Le Fevre's (2014) model of risk potentially helps to understand teachers' reactions to the changes to the GCSE as there is a loss in terms of what teachers are familiar with both in content and assessment. Perhaps of more importance is the significance of the loss, given the role of GCSE results as an accountability measure. This links to the final element, namely uncertainty, as at the time the data were gathered students were still preparing for the first of the revised examinations, so teachers had unclear expectations about how best to teach the GCSE to obtain good examination results. The outcomes of the changes to the GCSE were unknown.

Research design

This paper is drawn from a wider qualitative and exploratory study, designed to examine a range of issues relating to teachers' curriculum decisions, actions and professional development, and how teachers were dealing with a period of extensive curriculum change. An approach which would elicit deeper insights into teachers' thinking was chosen, hence the decision to use semi-structured

interviews. The data drawn on for this particular paper derive from questions about teachers' choices at GCSE and how they were planning to address issues related to content coverage, as well as assessment and approaches to teaching, and the impact these changes would have (or were having) on their decisions about the lower school, KS3, curriculum (see Appendix A).

In total 12 teachers in England were interviewed, who came from five different areas of the country, and all were in positions with responsibility for planning the history curriculum within their respective schools. The teachers were chosen opportunistically, given their availability and willingness to be interviewed. There was no attempt to establish any form of representative sampling.

The data were analysed using a constructivist grounded approach (Charmaz, 2006). This meant there was a process of open or initial coding to identify what actions teachers were taking in relation to the curriculum. Codes identified in one transcript were applied to another, to see how applicable they were; where codes were modified in this process, earlier transcripts were revisited to ensure the modified codes worked, ensuring a process of constant comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following this stage, the coding became 'focused', relating various codes to key categories (Belgrave & Seide, 2019). It was at this point that risk was identified as a core concept. Once 'risk' had been identified, Le Fevre's (2014) model was used to make theoretical sense of the initial coding process, and the research questions for this paper were devised.

Altogether five main areas were identified: what the teachers saw as the **purpose** of teaching students about the past; what influenced their choice of **examination board**; teachers' **curriculum choices** at KS3 and GCSE (which were divided into a number of sub-themes); **pedagogical approaches** to teaching; and approaches to **assessment**.

Analysing the nature of the teachers' decisions around these five themes more closely, it became possible to see that some decisions could be seen as conservative or risk averse, whereas others showed a greater willingness to experiment and thus take risks. Although Le Fevre's (2014) model focuses on teachers' pedagogy, issues around loss of something valued, significance of a loss and issues around uncertainty seem relevant when applied to curriculum construction. Altering teachers' perception of the **purpose** of teaching affects what is valued. Choices over **examination board** and **curriculum content** could lead to a loss of something that has been valued, could be regarded as a significant loss if it requires an extensive new investment of time, energy and resource into planning and loss of previously utilized knowledge and expertise, whilst creating uncertainty about how effectively new material may be taught. Similarly, changes to **pedagogy** and **assessment** approaches could replace existing ways that are seen as valued, could require additional significant effort in implementing them, whilst creating uncertainty about the efficacy of new approaches.

A framework for analysis (see Table 2) was devised as a means of exploring the extent to which teachers' curriculum decisions were governed by a high or low-risk approach. Clearly, all teachers want their students to be successful in their examinations, and this could potentially be achieved through a low or high-risk approach; however, a focus on achieving this through a narrow application of what is needed to be successful, i.e. a familiarity with the topic, studying only topics that

Table 2. Framework for analysis identifying high and low-risk curriculum decisions.

	Lower risk	Higher risk
Purpose of teaching history	Focus on academic outcomes	Focus on the value of knowing about the past
Choice of exam board	Stay with existing exam board	Move to a new exam board
Curriculum choices	Revisit content from KS3 at GCSE	Avoid content repetition
	Use KS3 topics to contextualize GCSE topics	Offer a broad historical experience of topics beyond GCSE range
	Maintain as much continuity with previously taught topics	Branch out into teaching new topics
	Chronological approach	Thematic/framework approach
Pedagogy	Adapt teaching approach at KS3 to fit with demands of GCSE	Teach 'good' history
Assessment	Replicate GCSE assessment approaches at KS3	Assess KS3 history on its own merits

would be considered necessary for passing the examination, adopting pedagogical and assessment approaches such that students gain extensive practice in how to address examination questions, were seen as low risk. High risk was seen as doing things that were not explicitly required for the examination course; for example, studying a wide range of topics at KS3 unrelated to the examination course, or adopting approaches that might seem counter-intuitive, such as building an understanding of the past by adopting a thematic or framework approach to teaching as opposed to a chronological approach.

Ethical approval was obtained for the project and adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2018). Consent to be interviewed was obtained from all participants, and anonymity has been provided through the use of pseudonyms. Steps have also been taken so it is not possible to identify schools and regions, to ensure views expressed are non-attributable.

Findings

In this section, the focus is on understanding what 'risks' teachers seem to be taken relating to the new examination course in GCSE history. The subsequent discussion section addresses more directly the second research question by examining how teachers construct a curriculum when dealing with the uncertainties raised by examination reforms.

Purpose of teaching history

Participants were asked to indicate what they saw as their main goals for their teaching. Andy saw his role as obtaining good examination results, and of all the teachers was the most adamant about his focus: 'Everything I think about at Key Stage 3 is what is the impact at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)? How does that help Key Stage 4?', and for him teaching 'good' history and getting good results were mutually incompatible: 'When I started teaching it was the moral purpose. I wanted to teach it (history) because I wanted to make kids interested in history. So, in my first year or two years as a subject teacher, that was that. However, being head of the department it's got to be results and achievement in history'. Other teachers were also acutely aware of this quandary:

> you're always trying to teach them to an exam rather than trying to teach them aspirationally [sic] to become a historian or to improve their conceptual understanding, but to an extent as much as I would say that I'm somebody who wants to teach them to be like a historian they have got to pass an exam. So I guess it's difficult isn't it, it's a balancing act. (Sam)

In this sense, the demands of the GCSE examination had narrowed some teachers' aspiration to accountability measures. However, most participants, whilst still conscious of the ultimate need to obtain good examination results, expressed a broader goal for teaching history. These varied in their focus. For some teachers it was purely about getting students to develop an interest and enjoyment in history:

> For them to share my level of enthusiasm. Everyone has to be as passionate as me or I'll be unhappy. (Mark)

> to enthuse students, I want them to go and do it at university (Adam)

> Our main priority has to be interest of the students (John)

Others expressed the purpose of teaching history was to understand the world in which they live:

> to help them understand the wider world, current affairs type stuff but also where they live and how that fits with what's gone on in the past. That history isn't just this bubble that happens to other people. (Erin)

For Sean this also meant providing some form of cultural capital:

> our kids don't really get much of an education at home. And I don't mean this in a kind of slight way but the kids here are really quite ignorant actually. So it's about just building up fundamentals that they need to know, particularly about recent history that maybe the traditional curriculum doesn't really address.

Whilst others expressed the benefits of the mindset history can promote:

> it's getting children really to sort of think critically about things that they're told um, really I'm a big fan of getting them to question, question ideas or question preconceptions (Jane)

Overall, it would seem that the majority of the teachers involved in this study are ambitious in their aims for the students they teach and want them to develop an enjoyment for the subject, as well as to appreciate its value, either in terms of developing generic critical thinking or seeing how the past can inform our understanding of the present. But as Jane acknowledged there is often a gap between what a teacher might want to do and what they actually do:

> it's a very difficult, very difficult question to answer because what I would like is probably so divorced from what I do.

It seems that these concerns are more acutely focused on what happens at GCSE, rather than other stages of secondary schooling. As Mark explains: 'the pressure is always on with GCSE . . . . because no matter how good the A-Level results are, the GCSE results are more important, and that's the stress really'.

Choice of examination board

The choice of examination board was largely dictated by issues of familiarity. Erin's comments were typical of those recorded:

> We were with OCR (one of the four examination boards offering GCSE history), and we had a look at what the other exam boards were offering . . . . A lot of the assessment objectives were similar and we felt that we were confident in being able to deliver what they were asking, there were lots of similarities.

This highlights choices being made in terms of 'delivering' good outcomes due to a perceived familiarity with the expectations of the examination board. Overall teachers seemed to be choosing the low-risk option of sticking to what they were comfortable with and which was already resourced, rather than taking into consideration what courses the different examination boards were offering and whether the history course itself was intrinsically robust and historically valuable. In fact, there were few comments that showed a positive choice to go with a particular examination board based on what was offered as a course. Only Erin commented on choosing an examination board for A-Level history because the independent investigation students were required to do allowed students the freedom to choose topics that were of interest to them. Jane was probably the most negative in her reasons for choosing an examination board for the GCSE course, stating: 'I went with Edexcel (another examination board) because it seemed the least hateful of all of them, it's still awful but yeah'.

Curriculum choices

The data revealed four areas relating to curriculum choices about content. Three of the areas relate specifically to content selection, whilst the other looked at overall approaches to structuring content coverage. Firstly, teachers could choose to teach content, which is identical at KS3 and GCSE, or teach completely different topics; revisiting content could be seen as low risk as it is designed to enhance students' familiarity with a topic. Secondly, an alternative approach might be to teach similar topics at KS3 and GCSE but with a different focus at each stage to avoid repeating content directly, i.e. using content choices at KS3 to contextualize what is studied at GCSE. This would be seen as a low-risk strategy to increase examination results, whereas a high risk would be to teach completely unrelated topics at each stage—this would broaden students' historical horizons but would most likely have limited impact on examination outcomes. A third position focused more on teachers' subject knowledge and workload. Content could be chosen with which

teachers were already familiar, as opposed to teaching brand new topics. The former would be a more cautious approach, whereas the latter would require extending teachers' knowledge and teaching the unfamiliar (even if it might be deemed beneficial for students to know about those topics). The fourth area related to curriculum coherence and how content was approached; essentially content could be taught chronologically or thematically or with an emphasis on creating a framework of knowledge. The question of curriculum coherence raises an interesting debate. One of the stated aims of the 2014 history National Curriculum was to provide young people with a coherent, chronological story of the history of Britain (DfE, 2013). This would suggest a chronological approach to teaching the past would be most beneficial but research suggests children's developing understanding of time is complex (Stow & Haydn, 2000), so others advocate an emphasis on teaching the past through a thematic approach (e.g. Dawson, 2008), whereby teachers adopt a layered approach to building young people's understanding of the past, whilst others advocate building flexible and provisional frameworks of knowledge to provide a mental landscape of the past, built around key historical milestones or landmarks (e.g. Shemilt & Howson, 2017). A chronological approach could be seen as a more conventional way of approaching the curriculum and therefore less risky, whereas thematic and framework approaches, which are less traditional, could be perceived as being more risky.

Revisiting content

Three teachers had made specific decisions to plan their curriculum so that content would be revisited. Mark saw this as a positive thing: 'I'm trying to make sure that we touch upon the GCSE content in Key Stage 3 so that if they don't do GCSE History they have got this broad picture of History'. In this sense, it seemed that the overriding concern was for those not doing the examination course rather than helping those who did choose to continue with history. For Sam 'we . . . . see Year 9 as a preparation year so they are in Year 9 doing roughly the same curriculum as they do at Key Stage 4'. In this instance, there is no wholescale revisiting of the lower school curriculum at GCSE, it is more focused on the year prior to starting the history GCSE where there is a deliberate attempt to cover the same ground.

Rose explained how they were planning to adapt a unit on Elizabethan England in Year 8, which would then be covered again at GCSE:

> What do we need to weave in more? What we could do looking at our Elizabeth section, our Year 8's scheme of work to have a look at perhaps we should weave in a bit more about foreign policy under Elizabeth because that's very much part of the unit we teach later on. But it's also about how are we going to really embed that knowledge and concepts in our Key Stage 3 students in an enjoyable, historical manner that will pay off later on so they don't turn around to you and go, "Reformation?"

Most teachers, however, were clear that they did not want to revisit content:

> I don't think students particularly want to look at Hitler and the Nazis in Year 9, in Year 10, at A Level, it's, I think it does them a disservice as well. (June)

> There is one thing that helped us make up our mind is Nazi Germany is an option and we know that that's popular with the children but I didn't want to have a very Hitler heavy curriculum so we do it in depth at Year 9, I didn't want to do it again at GCSE. So that did help inform that decision. (Ellen)

Indeed, Ellen also described how the teachers in her department had chosen to teach topics at GCSE so had then taken them out of the lower school curriculum deliberately to avoid the issue of repetition.

This is interesting to note, as repetition is seen as a negative thing as it narrows students' experience of the past, rather than as a means of deepening understanding. Other curriculum subjects do revisit topics; as Jane forcibly said '[in] English at the moment they start doing "A Christmas Carol" in Year 8, and then they do it every fucking year through to Year 11. Um, it just beggars belief'. In terms of history teaching this could be a reaction to earlier criticisms that students

only ever learnt about the Tudors and the Nazis (e.g. Ferguson, 2010), but, for whatever reason, repetition is clearly something most of these history teachers were keen to avoid.

Contextualizing content

Teaching a topic or a period at KS3 in such a way that it would support learning at GCSE was however seen as a positive way to avoid content repetition whilst supporting examination outcomes; as such it can be seen as a low-risk option. Andy explained how the approach to teaching the Industrial Revolution at KS3 would help students at GCSE:

> We don't teach the units that we teach at Key Stage 4. Instead we teach around the unit. So, we don't teach any of the trials of Crime and Punishment, but instead we teach the industrial period, so that when they're taught Crime and Punishment and Whitechapel (relating to policing at the time of the Jack the Ripper murders) they have a context of what's going on at the time in a more general way.

Other teachers thought it best to broaden students' breadth of topics purely because this was seen as a good thing to do. Seven of the teachers explicitly looked to ensure a broad and varied KS3 curriculum; for example, Rose also felt it was important to ensure students had a broad picture of places and periods in the past:

> students are encountering history, time periods in particular, that they wouldn't necessarily, so it's broadening their horizons. They have quite a bit of modern history in GCSE but they do Britain, democracy, protest and reform, 1700s to 1800s. Then the interpretations in that is on the abolition of the slave trade. Then they do unification of Germany. Civil rights.

To an extent, this element of the analysis highlights bigger questions about approaches to teaching history. Although contextualizing topics can be seen as a low risk, it does have the benefit of helping students to make connections between elements of their knowledge and thus helps to deepen understanding, whereas breadth offers a potentially wider view of the world, but may come across as more superficial and/or with less curriculum coherence if students 'jump' about through time. However, broadening the curriculum would align with the desire of many of the teachers to give students an interesting and enriching curriculum. In this regard, it would appear that several teachers' curriculum decisions are not being driven by examination needs.

Teaching new content

There was however a strong sense that the teachers in this study looked to teach topics, both at GCSE and A Level, with which they were already familiar and had previously taught. This is seen as posing less risk. In some cases, this was purely due to staffing constraints in the schools and what staff (including non-specialists) who were available to teach. In other cases, it was explained in terms of teacher workload and what teachers were comfortable with:

> We chose 'Germany 1890 to 1945', we did 'Conflict and tension 1918 to 39' – I mean they both really overlapped with what we used to do, and also we've got a lot of knowledge and we feel that they go well together. Particularly cos there's a lot of overlap, we do Versailles in both for example. (Mark)

> we did crime and punishment because we'd already done it and we found that the children did like that . . . . we'd already done Vietnam so there was an element there that we could draw on past resources and textbooks for that as well. (Ellen)

> We've always taught medicine and we all quite enjoy teaching that. The Anglo-Saxons, compared to the other three options that none of us felt comfortable doing it, we have previously taught the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans at A Level and we did very well with that so we were quite happy and confident that we had our subject knowledge in place. The American West we've taught before and they've, the boys have always enjoyed it. (June)

Taking on new topics was perceived as potentially risky. As Bob explained, mastering new topics increases demands on teachers:

> I feel like there's quite a lot of pressure on me to become an expert in something that I I'm not.

In terms of maximizing good examination results sticking with familiar content would appear sensible, but also means there is a certain degree of inertia despite radical changes to curriculum policy documents. Interestingly, there was a sense that the needs of the students were not paramount when making these decisions. As Sam said:

> With the Cold War we've done it because the school has traditionally done the Cold War. Um it's something they've always done. Uh, equally it's something that I know quite a lot about as well … we do the Cold War but chiefly because it's been done by the school for a number of years and teachers in the department feel more confident teaching it. I don't think that decision has necessarily been made with the needs of the students in mind.

It is clear that the teachers were searching for topics that were familiar. Given the extent of changes to the examination course, this is understandable, and it appears the teachers are motivated by the desire to teach something they feel would encourage successful outcomes, and which would be enjoyable topics for the students. However, there was little consideration given to the value of the topics being taught and whether they were important in helping the students build a bigger picture of the past or develop their understanding of the world in which they live. Indeed, one of the teachers actually expressed a concern with topics that might be seen as 'too relevant'. Andy was asked about whether he would want to teach a unit on migration through time, especially as immigration was an issue affecting the local area; in response he explained:

> I love it. I would love to do it. I just don't know how well the kids would go with it. I don't know if it would go too much into debates about the morality about it, which is great, don't get me wrong, which would be amazing, but not within the time constraints for GCSE. So we're sort of on turbo-charge at the minute. I set the pace and the other teachers have to keep up. And I'm just worried that with migration through time they would get too much into it rather than getting through it, do you see what I mean? …. my biggest worry is that the discussions would be in the driving seat rather than the content and therefore we would lose time and results would be affected.

There are two distinct sets of decisions being made here, one relating to KS3 and the other relating to GCSE. Some teachers are keen to preserve the integrity of KS3 as a distinct stage of teaching about the past, whereas others see KS3 as a vehicle for supporting GCSE. However, the decisions about content to teach at GCSE are overwhelmingly connected to choosing familiar topics, suggesting a low-risk approach to decision-making.

Curriculum coherence through chronology or themes/frameworks

A chronological approach would seem to be a less risky approach to developing an understanding of the past, compared to the counter-intuitive thematic or framework approach.

The teachers in this study were split in their approach to curriculum coherence, but this actually seemed to relate to their understanding of the new demands of the GCSE. For Mark this meant a move away from a chronological approach:

> we already knew what the GCSE would be, so that's why the Year 7 thing is thematic. The Year 7 one is more thematic because it's Britain, the Year 8 one is more snapshots of power struggles around the world.

Following a thematic approach and one focused on examples focused on a substantive concept (in this case, power struggles) would replicate what was necessary at GCSE. In contrast Andy felt a chronologically structured curriculum would be more beneficial because: 'We need to get the chronology there, the story, because unfortunately that is where GCSE is going'.

What this does highlight is the importance of perceptions in dictating what teachers may view as a risk. Adopting a thematic approach would appear to be low risk for Mark because that is what he feels students need to do for the new GCSE, whereas Andy feels a chronological approach best fits the new expectations.

Pedagogy

Some of the comments from the teachers suggest there is a perception that the lower school curriculum is an opportunity to provide interesting teaching, which vanishes once the examination courses start. As noted earlier, Andy felt forced to choose between 'good' history and getting good results. To exemplify his comment, he explained how he had been developing what he saw as really positive, intellectually strong approaches to teaching about historical interpretations in the lower school curriculum but had abandoned these once the GCSE specifications were published; as he explained, 'when we looked at the GCSE we didn't see anything like that (good approaches to teaching historical interpretations) and we then questioned, well, what are we doing? It creates great historians, but not great GCSE students. So that's why'. Rose also found the approach to historical interpretations at GCSE was out of kilter with what she was doing at KS3 and what was expected at A Level: 'There's more connectedness between Key Stage 3 interpretations work and the [A Level] coursework than there is with what's in between, which is bizarre'.

This sense of needing to 'dumb down' and being unambitious was also evident in Jane's interview:

> So, with the conflict in the Middle East paper there's no - they don't need to do anything with the information … it's describe 'two consequences of' type of question. So X happens Y is the result, Z is the result. So what are the results - they're Y and Z. Um, that's all you need to do so, the Six Day War meant this happened and that happened … . it doesn't really require any thought.

There was also a sense of helplessness amongst teachers about the demands of the GCSE, especially with what was seen as an excessive amount of content to be covered in the time available; Jane spoke about 'wading' through content, whilst Rose said:

> I was talking to Alison about it, it was like being on a hamster wheel for Year 10s and I genuinely feel very, very sorry for them, and you try not to convey that kind of 'Arrgh' to them. Sometimes it does come out in your frustrations.

Even those that who chose to teach the GCSE course over three years (rather than the expected two years) found that time was tight. Yet interestingly nobody spoke about how to approach teaching the course in a different way to address the issue of content coverage. Instead teachers spoke of sticking to familiar pedagogical approaches or adapting approaches at KS3 to support the needs of the GCSE course.

Assessment

For teachers, understanding assessment requirements is clearly an important element in working out how students could be successful in examinations, especially if there is a perception that certain questions should be answered in particular ways. 'Teaching to the test' is something that many of the teachers in this survey recognized they were doing:

> there are some constraints at Key Stage 4 but particularly teaching to examination questions is my biggest frustration. (Rose)

This has altered the way some departments approach what they assess. In particular the amount of content to has had an impact on what teachers do. For Andy this means:

> we've gone more knowledge-based, so Core Tests where the kids have to write answers to knowledge questions. We've never done that before. And then in terms of every day lessons, my teachers will start their lesson, every lesson, with 1-5 or 1-10 when they quiz kids

In a similar vein Rose has also introduced an emphasis on knowledge retention:

> We've played around with this thing which is the content, 10 tests, and it's having a working framework of knowledge that is not just, "I can retrieve it for a test."

However, what really stands out from the interviews is the way that approaches to assessment at GCSE are being brought into the lower school curriculum, so that students are supposedly better prepared for the type of assessments they will face if they choose to study history beyond the age of 13/14:

> we've also bought down a number of the question streams or question types from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 3 in much pared down versions. All of our test are end of term tests … we do three formal exams every year. They're roughly 40% of that test paper is based on GCSE questions. (Sam)

> we choose to focus on the things that they're going to need to answer GCSE so we do 16-mark questions which is judgement and argument. Having an argument, looking at both sides, reaching a judgement, we focus a lot on what we call our 12 markers which are three PEE (point, example, explain) paragraphs, we do a lot on inference and how useful are sources. They're our main skills that we focus on. A lot of the old fashioned national curriculum, the significance, cause and consequence, those sorts of things, we do still teach those but we don't examine that as discreetly anymore. (Ellen)

> Yes, all our assessments [at KS3] are GCSE style they're just broken down so where they might have to have at the GCSE two consequences or describing two features we're giving them one. We're building up and we're drip feeding them in so that it's not, Year 7 aren't bombarded with everything. (June)

> so what we have done is to change all our assessments so each term they are doing GCSE style questions, they are phrased in the same way so it won't be a surprise to them when it comes to GCSE. (Adam)

This is clearly a low-risk strategy and means that approaches to assessment at GCSE are having a big influence on assessments at KS3—and by inference a big impact on pedagogical approaches to teaching certain concepts. In particular, the way historical interpretations and writing an analytical narrative are assessed at GCSE in shaping the way these are taught in the lower secondary school. Ellen's response is typical of the way GCSE assessment is shaping approaches to teaching:

> we always did a source utility question because that was on the old specification, so we've kept that but yeah, we've made some changes to our inference style questions on our Key Stage 3 assessments and we're still learning, we're just currently teaching the USA which has the interpretation style question. We want to bring that element down in to Key Stage 3 so they're familiar [with it].

This is a significant shift as it means that the lower school curriculum is increasingly becoming an assessment 'training ground' for the examination course. Because we often come to value what we assess, rather than necessarily assessing what we value, the emphasis on GCSE style assessment at KS3 is likely to shape how young people see history. This has been made possible by the government's decision in 2014 to remove the previous assessment measures in the lower school curriculum and not to replace it with anything else. Schools were left to decide for themselves how the lower school curriculum was to be assessed, and were offered very little guidance on alternative approaches. It was also notable that the teachers spoke frequently about 'core' knowledge and 'retrieval' of substantive content as key assessment issues, reflecting a discourse that has grown in recent years that has focused on the importance of substantive knowledge (Taylor, 2020). This would suggest that some changes to assessment regimes are a response to an educational discourse within the subject. However, in many ways, it now seems that the assessment vacuum in the lower school curriculum is being filled by a watered-down version of the GCSE assessment approaches in many cases (see also Burn & Harris, 2017).

Discussion

Returning to the elements that could be defined as lower or higher risk, it appears that most teachers, whilst ambitious for their students in a number of ways, are adopting a low-risk approach to the new curriculum changes at GCSE, and are also starting to manipulate the lower school curriculum to support later examination success. Drawing on Le Fevre's (2014) model, it would seem that teachers, faced with the loss of familiar content and teaching approaches, whilst being

acutely aware of the significance of GCSE outcomes, are adopting largely low-risk approaches to their curriculum decision-making, due to the large degree of uncertainty created by curriculum reform. Text in bold, highlighted in Table 3, shows the position adopted by most of the teachers.

The findings reveal some tensions. For example, most of the teachers see teaching history as valuable in its own right—either providing students with a particular set of tools to engage critically with the world in which they live, or to help understand contemporary society—and do not see their overriding objective as simply getting good results. But ultimately much of their professional practice is dictated by the need for students to 'perform' successfully in the examinations (Ball, 2003, 2017; Hall & McGinity, 2015; 2003). This is understandable in terms of how the actual examination course is taught, but such is the pressure on teachers sssssssssto obtain good results that their decisions about the lower school curriculum are being impacted by this need for examination success, which aligns with other studies (Burn & Harris, 2018). Although a number of teachers are choosing to offer students a breadth of historical topics at KS3, others' content choices are shaped by what they believe will help students in the examination course and/or by teachers wishing to stick to tried and tested topics and therefore looking for some degree of certainty in their practice. Whether the best way to approach this content is in a chronological or thematic way, or with the deliberate intention of creating a framework of knowledge, is unclear, but the choices teachers are making are influenced by their perception of the demands of the new examination, so again looking to maximize examination outcomes. Many teachers also feel compelled to adapt their pedagogical approaches and how they assess students at KS3 to fall in line with the perceived requirements of the examination course. It would therefore seem that the significance of the examination outcomes, combined with the uncertainties associated with teaching a radically different examination specification, do not encourage teachers to take many risks in their approach to curriculum planning.

If the examination course was seen as 'good' history then this would be less of a concern; however, this is not how these teachers view the courses. Andy stated: 'GCSE narrows'. This is an interesting comment given the changes to the courses were designed to broaden students' access to historical content and contexts, but from Andy's perspective the GCSE is seen as a straitjacket, especially as it is seem as impacting on the breadth of content in the KS3 curriculum—teachers are concerned about content coverage at GCSE and preparing students for the way they are to be assessed. This reflects Biesta's (2015) concern of a tension between educational outcomes and educational values. The responses of teachers in this study is to adopt low-risk strategies in the belief that this will support educational outcomes, rather than placing the educational value of what students learn as the main priority. Yet if the intention of the curriculum reforms are to

Table 3. Positions adopted by the majority of teachers (where both high and low risks are highlighted indicates an even split between teachers).

	Lower risk	Higher risk
Purpose of teaching history	Focus on academic outcomes	**Focus on the value of knowing about the past**
Choice of exam board	**Stay with existing exam board**	Move to a new exam board
Curriculum choices	Revisit content from KS3 at GCSE	**Avoid content repetition**
	Use KS3 topics to contextualize GCSE topics	**Offer a broad historical experience of topics beyond GCSE range**
	Maintain as much continuity with previously taught topics	Branch out into teaching new topics
	Chronological approach	**Thematic/framework approach**
Pedagogy	**Adapt teaching approach at KS3 to fit with demands of GCSE**	Teach 'good' history (NB there was some sense that 'good' pedagogy was incompatible with exam teaching)
Assessment	**Replicate GCSE assessment approaches at KS3 (to 'drill' students)**	Assess KS3 history on its own merits

improve outcomes then there appears to be a sticking point. As Le Fevre (2014) has noted, effective change is often linked to risk-taking, and that school leaders need to foster an environment in which taking risks is perceived as something positive; yet teachers in this study are opting for low-risk responses to meet the challenges of change. It seems that the accountability measures, against which schools and teachers are judged, act as a constraint on the risks they are willing to take. The introduction of unfamiliar content and the degree of uncertainty about new expectations mean teachers try to hold onto familiar content, and assessment and teaching approaches as much as they can to provide some degree of stability. Parsons et al. (2016, p. 334) noted that, when faced with change, teachers need to know and understand new content and new curricula arrangements, but also need to understand 'different pedagogical approaches to instruction'. In other words, teachers may need to find new ways to teach—in this instance teachers might need to find different approaches to how they could cover content, which might be seen as high risk because it goes beyond what teachers know and with which they are comfortable. Yet support for this has been largely non-existent. At the moment there are few incentives for teachers to take risks in their planning and pedagogy. For example, where teachers had planned to do things in different ways, such as Andy's approach to teaching about historical interpretations, which he felt was more interesting and historically rigorous, such changes have been nullified by the need to meet examination success.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight important issues about risk-taking and the accountability culture in schools. An accountability culture has been constructed, in part, as a means of ensuring that teachers engage with educational reforms. And to an extent this appears to be working—teachers feel the pressure to perform and have responded accordingly. However, this appears to create a situation where the hoped-for outcomes of changes are hampered by the very presence of the accountability culture. Teachers have not been able to step back and rethink how the new curriculum could be implemented effectively (and in potentially different ways). The changes to the GCSE history are radical compared to the previous course specifications—they require students to learn a wider range of history in terms of content, geographical place and temporal scale, yet teachers' approaches are often less ambitious in practice. Their decisions largely reflect a desire to stick to the familiar and where necessary to 'tweak' things. Assessment is the one area where there has been more substantial change but the impact of this seems to be to encourage less inspiring pedagogical approaches and is effectively creating a five-year approach to preparing students for an examination. A similar pattern can be discerned in other educational contexts. Ormond's (2016) study in New Zealand shows how teachers have responded to changes in the assessment regime; although history teachers in New Zealand have considerable freedom to select content their decisions are constrained by the assessment environment and teachers overwhelmingly focus on what is necessary to be successful in the examinations. This is not to blame the teachers—many of them express frustrations at the constraints within which they feel they have to work—but the existence of such a pervasive accountability system has generated a low-risk culture. Instead of thinking about the purpose of the curriculum and its educational value to students, teachers' thoughts seem to be largely dominated by the pressures of the examination, which is then having a 'backwash' effect on the lower school curriculum. This is a worrying development. As Counsell (2000, p. 61) claims, '[t]o decide what history is to be taught, at school … is to exercise phenomenal power'. Teachers, of any subject, have an important responsibility for the educational value of a student's curriculum experience, but the strength of the accountability culture appears to significantly hinder the execution of this role, with the decisions of teachers being dictated to by the prevailing emphasis on performativity. Ideally, the current educational climate needs to change to emphasize more strongly the value of what should be

learned.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Dr Katharine Burn and Dr Jason Todd from the Department of Education at Oxford University, Dr Mary Woolley from the School of Childhood and Education Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University and Julia Huber from the Institute of Education, University College London for their role in data collection and feedback on the analysis. I would also like to thank Dr Naomi Flynn at the Institute of Education, University of Reading for her helpful feedback on this paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Richard Harris is a Professor of Education at the University of Reading. His interests are mainly related to history education, especially issues relating to the curriculum, as well as the place of diversity within the history curriculum and the public and political discourse around history education.

ORCID

Richard Harris http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8606-5515

References

Ball, S. J. (2017). *The education debate* (3rd ed.). Policy Press.
Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065
Barth, R. S. (2007). Risk. In M. Fullan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 211–218). Jossey-Bass.
Belgrave, L. L., & Seide, K. (2019). Coding for grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of current developments in grounded theory* (pp. 167–185). SAGE.
BERA. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.).
Berkovich, I. (2011). No we won't! Teachers' resistance to educational reform. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *49* (5), 563–578. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111159548
Biesta, G. (2015). What is education for? On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, *50*(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109
Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching*, *21*(6), 624–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325
Burn, K., & Harris, R. (2017). *Historical association survey of history in schools in England 2017*. The Historical Association.
Burn, K., & Harris, R. (2018). *Historical association survey of history in schools in England 2018*. The Historical Association.
Bush, T. (2018). Research on educational leadership and management: Broadening the base. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *46*(3), 359–361. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218758555
Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE.
Counsell, C. (2000). Historical knowledge and historical skills: A distracting dichotomy. In J. Arthur & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Issues in history teaching* (pp. 54–71). Routledge.
Counsell, C. (2011). Disciplinary knowledge for all, the secondary history curriculum and history teachers' achievement. *The Curriculum Journal*,*22*(2), 201–225.
Dawson, I. (2008). Thinking across time: Planning and teaching the story of power and democracy at Key Stage 3. *Teaching History*, *130*, 14–21. https://www.history.org.uk/secondary/resource/1046/thinking-across-time-planning-and-teaching-the-st
DfE. (2013). History programmes of study: Key stage 3 national curriculum in England. Retrieved https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study
DfE. (2014). *History GCSE subject content*. Retrieved www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-history
Ferguson, N. (2010, April 9). Too much Hitler and the Henrys. *The Financial Times*. Retrieved https://www.ft.com/content/d52db78a-435a-11df-833f-00144feab49a

Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, *59*(8), 16–21. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may02/vol59/num08/The-Change-Leader.aspx

Gove, M. (2014). *GCSE and A Level reform*. Retrieved https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gcse-and-a-level-reform

Hall, D., & McGinity, R. (2015). Conceptualizing teacher professional identity in neoliberal times: Resistance, compliance and reform. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *23*(88), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.2092

Hargreaves, A. (2005). Educational change takes ages: Life, career and generational factors in teachers' emotional responses to educational change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *21*(8), 967–983. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.007

Harris, R., & Burn, K. (2016). English history teachers' views on what substantive content young people should be taught. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *48*(4), 518–546. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2015.1122091

Harris, R. & Graham, S. (2019). Engaging with curriculum reform: insights from English history teachers' willingness to support curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*,*51*(1), 43–61.

Harris, R., & Reynolds, R. (2018). Exploring teachers' curriculum decision making: Insights from history education. *Oxford Review of Education*, *44*(2), 139–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1352498

Klassen, R. M., & Tze, V. M. C. (2014). Teachers' self-efficacy, personality, and teaching effectiveness: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, *12*, 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2014.06.001

Klassen, R. M., Tze, V. M. C., Betts, S. M., & Gordon, K. A. (2011). Teacher efficacy research 1998–2009: Signs of progress or unfulfilled promise? *Educational Psychology Review*, *23*(1), 21–43. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-010-9141-8

Le Fevre, D. (2014). Barriers to implementing pedagogical change: The role of teachers' perceptions of risk. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *38*, 56–64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.11.007

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Mutch, C. (2012). Editorial: Curriculum change and teacher resistance. *Curriculum Matters*, *8*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0145

Ormond, B. M. (2016). Curriculum decisions – the challenges of teacher autonomy over knowledge selection for history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*,*49*(5), 599–619.

Ozga, J. (2009). Governing education through data in England: From regulation to self-evaluation. *Journal of Education Policy*, *24*(2), 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930902733121

Parsons, A., Parsons, S., Morewood, A., & Ankrum, J. (2016). Barriers to change: Findings from three literacy professional learning initiatives. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *55*(4), 331–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2016.1193575

Ponticell, J. A. (2009). Enhancers and inhibitors of teacher risk-taking: A case study. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *78*(3), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327930PJE7803_02

Priestley, M., Edwards, R., Priestley, A., & Miller, K. (2012). Teacher agency in curriculum making: Agents of change and spaces for manoeuvre. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *42*(2), 191–214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00588.x

Shemilt, D., & Howson, J. (2017). Frameworks of knowledge: Dilemas and debates. In I. Davies (Ed.), *Debates in history teaching* (2nd ed., pp. 66–79). Routledge.

Stow, W., & Haydn, T. (2000). Issues in the teaching of chronology. In J. Arthur & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Issues in history teaching* (pp. 83–97). Routledge.

Taylor, M. (2020). Training for the marathon: History at Michaela. *Teaching History*, *178*, 20–27. https://www.history.org.uk/publications/resource/9777/training-for-the-marathon-history-at-michaela

Van Eekelen, I. M., Vermunt, J. D., & Boshuizen, H. P. A. (2006). Exploring teachers` will to learn. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*(4), 408–423. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.12.001

Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meyer, P. (2001). Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *35*(5), 441–461. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(02)00003-4

Young, M. (2008). *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. Abingdon: Routledge.