8

SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM
ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN
HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a brief discussion of some of the complexities that relate to the South African higher education curriculum. Firstly, the concept of 'curriculum' is theoretically defined, with the purpose of embedding the section to follow, in a theoretical context. Hence six interrelated clusters of current curriculum issues are outlined, namely that of vocational and liberal education, progression from certificate to diploma to degree, mass education compared to selective education, contact and distance education, internationalisation and localisation, and diffusion between disciplinary boundaries. Strong focus is placed on the Africanisation of the curriculum, as part of the cluster on internationalisation and localisation. The enmeshment of the clusters with each other is highlighted and this intertwinedness is illustrated in a table. The value of this chapter lies therein that it could be used as a point of departure for the scholarly review of the South African higher education curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

In the arena of higher education studies and research across the world, the curriculum debate and inquiry are increasingly drawing more attention from various parties. In South Africa, this attention manifests in several ways for several reasons. The *Ministry of Education* has displayed its attention to the curriculum, amongst others, through its official requirements regarding universities' programme and qualification mix (PQM); the registration, accreditation and approval of programmes with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and the Department of Education respectively; by distinguishing between the types of programmes offered by universities of technology, comprehensive universities and the

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

'other' universities, as well as by indicating that there will be only one distance education university (DoE 1999, 2001, 2002, 2007a, 2007b; RSA 1997, 2008; SAQA 1997). *Prospective students and their funders* (e.g. students themselves, parents, financial institutions, providers of bursaries and scholarships, employers) pay attention to the higher education curriculum to determine to what extent it will provide in their education and training needs within their particular contextual constraints. The curriculum of a South African university will therefore often be the deciding factor in students' choice of institution. *Employers* also expect from higher education institutions to provide them with human resources with appropriately specialised training (Beck and Young 2005; Bernstein 2000; Muller 2008). If universities fail to do this, employers are likely to develop their own training programmes. South African *universities* themselves are out of necessity deeply involved with all these external curriculum determinants. They also grapple with their own curricula internally. They need to match their academics to their programmes (which could be a dialectic process), their faculties/schools/departments to their programmes and their students to their programmes. They also need to balance their offerings with those of other universities – either in competition with them, or by offering curriculum alternatives, or both.

In the context outlined above, a number of curriculum issues emerge from the debates in South African higher education; a selection of these issues is presented in this chapter. They are clustered together in an effort to deal with the complexity of their interrelatedness and enmeshment. Each cluster therefore consists of more than one curriculum issue – in many cases the issues are theoretically separate, but in reality they occur inseparably. Due to the nature of the interrelatedness, it would be possible to cluster them together in several ways – the clusters as presented in this chapter are therefore not a unique categorisation. The six clusters that are discussed in this chapter deal with vocational and liberal education, progression from certificate to diploma to degree, mass education compared to selective education, contact and distance education, internationalisation and localisation, as well as diffusion between disciplinary borders.

The intention is not to suggest ways of dealing with the challenges associated with each cluster of issues, but rather to stimulate awareness of the complexity of these challenges, as well as to highlight the need for further investigation into the enmeshed manifestation of the issues and clusters in particular institutions. This chapter is therefore an attempt to paint the landscape of South African curriculum debates and issues that are currently under the magnifying glass in certain sectors of the higher education arena. In some cases, reference is made to a possible connection between a cluster

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

and a particular curriculum paradigm or theory; however, as curriculum theory is not the main thrust of this chapter, these suggested connections are not discussed at all.

For various reasons the discussions of the clusters in this chapter are not equally weighted; some of these relate to the prominence of the current debate, the level at which the debate is taking place or the nature of the debate. An example of a cluster that receives much attention here due to the prominence of the debate is that of internationalisation and localisation, particularly referring to the idea of Africanisation.

To ground this presentation of South African curriculum issues, the concept 'curriculum' is briefly discussed as described in the literature on curriculum theory. This brief exposition of the notion of curriculum is not an analysis, but simply a reflection of how some of the current literature understands curriculum.

Concept clarification of the notion 'curriculum'

The concept 'curriculum', which has its origin in the Latin *curro* (I run) or *currere* (running) (Lovatt and Smith 2003:7), relates to the prominence of the athlete in ancient Greek culture, incorporating features of progress and competition. The conceptualisation of the curriculum varies according to the points of departure: some of them are easier to explain, while others are contrived in a much more complicated fashion.

Marsh (2004) considers various definitions from the literature, identifying the limitation of the definition in each case. This gives rise to 'two sides of the coin', namely that curriculum is

- permanent subjects as compared to the need to accommodate the changing state of knowledge;
- subjects that are most useful for living in contemporary society as compared to more long-lasting knowledge;
- planned learning, thus excluding unplanned learning (also assuming that learning has actually taken place if it was planned);
- the totality of learning experiences, thus leading to a large number of expected learning outcomes, which implies a technicist approach;
- what the learner constructs from electronic resources, thus assuming that what is available from these resources constitutes desired knowledge;
- a questioning of authority and searching complex views of human situations, which could be experienced as general, vague and confused.

(Marsh 2004:3-7)

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

Posner has acknowledged that it is no simple matter to be clear about exactly what the curriculum is, as “definitions are not philosophically or politically neutral” (2004:5). He elaborates on the ends and means of the curriculum and how these co-determine the definition of the curriculum. His thoughts crystallise into seven concepts of the curriculum (Posner 2004:6-12), these being the curriculum as

- *scope and sequence* of intended outcomes, distinguishing between the ends and means of education, guiding instruction and assessment;
- *syllabus*, which is a plan for an entire course, including both ends and means;
- *content outline*, which is relevant in a context where the purpose of education is to transmit information;
- *standards*, which refers mainly to learning outcomes and processes towards achieving these;
- *textbooks*, used as guides to both the ends and the means of the curriculum;
- *course of study*, referring to a “series of courses that the student must get through”;
- *planned experiences*, which includes all such experiences students have to go through, curricular as well as extra-curricular.

Posner also refers to the five concurrent curricula, namely the official curriculum (which is documented), operational curriculum (what is taught, how it is communicated to learners and the outcomes for which learners are held responsible), hidden curriculum (associated with norms and values), null curriculum (what is not taught) and the extra-curriculum (planned experiences outside the subjects) (Posner 2004:12-14).

Schiro (2008) believes that the different visions of the curriculum are based on four curriculum ideologies or philosophies, each one requiring a particular purpose and specific methods for fulfilling that purpose. His four ideologies are the scholar academic ideology, social efficiency ideology, learner-centred ideology and social reconstruction ideology.

David Scott (2008) presents the history of the curriculum as ‘episodes’, these being scientific curriculum making, intrinsic worthwhile knowledge, innovative pedagogical experimentation, critical pedagogy, instrumentalism and effectiveness or improvement. He also refers to the four dimensions of the curriculum, namely aims or objectives, content or subject matter, methods or procedures and evaluation or assessment (Scott 2008:19).

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The above-mentioned references to the literature focus on the notion of the curriculum in general. However, as this chapter deals with the curriculum in higher education in particular, it is necessary to draw the line of definition into the latter realm as well. The notion of a higher education curriculum is underpinned by the concept of curriculum and the construct of higher education. The former has been explained above; the latter could be based on the South African Higher Education Act of 1997, and its amendment in 2008. The Act states that higher education means “all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than Grade 12 or its equivalent in terms of the National Qualifications Framework” (RSA 1997:8). This was amended in 2008 to read that higher education means “all learning programmes leading to a qualification that meets the requirements of the HEQF” (RSA 2008:2). For the purpose of this chapter the higher education curriculum is to be understood as being the curriculum of programmes provided in the higher education sector, i.e. beyond the further education and training level (above the National Qualifications Framework level 4).

The above-mentioned viewpoints on what the curriculum actually entails indicate that it is a multi-dimensional concept and its complexity requires that it cannot be approached in a simplistic manner. The context in which a curriculum is considered determines which theoretical understandings are appropriate. Thus, when the higher education curriculum is considered, the context of this multi-dimensionality becomes evident in the current issues and debates around this matter. The rest of this chapter is devoted to some of these issues, presented here as a clustered framework.

SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A number of issues immediately come to mind when current higher education debates in South Africa are considered. Many of these issues seem to be associated with at least one other issue, thus presenting themselves as two extremes of a continuum, or positioned between the two extremes on the continuum. Examples of such issues are vocational/liberal curricula, certificate → diploma → degree, mass education/selective education, contact/distance education, internationalisation/localisation and the extent of diffusion among disciplinary boundaries. The image of a continuum might create the impression that each set of issues is two-dimensional. On the contrary, they are rather multi-dimensional in nature, include many variations on the continuum and are not necessarily bounded. A more appropriate image would then be that of a number of unbounded, multi-dimensional sets that intersect with each other. Due to the intersections, some of the issues can be clustered together and some clusters linked with each other. What follows is such a clustered presentation of some current curriculum issues.

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

Cluster 1: Vocational and liberal education

The first cluster of curriculum issues in South African higher education deals with the continuum regarding *vocational education* and what I will call *liberal education*. The incorporations and mergers that took place among higher education institutions in South Africa late in the previous and early in this century, resulted in three types of institutions, namely universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology (DoE 2001:17). This typology of universities had a significant role to play in bringing the imperative of this curriculum continuum to the fore.

Prior to the incorporations and mergers referred to above, a variety of institutions in South Africa offered post-school education. These were colleges (e.g. teacher training colleges, agricultural colleges, technical colleges, nursing colleges), technikons and universities. It is necessary to note that post-school education in South Africa refers to education offered to school leavers, both those who opt to leave school before completing Grade 12, as well as those who complete Grade 12 – it thus includes formal, non-school education which is not at a higher education level (up to and including NQF level 4), as well as higher education (post-NQF level 4). All public colleges operating at the higher education level were incorporated into technikons and universities; those that remained did not have a mandate to offer higher education programmes. These incorporations were followed by mergers of technikons and universities, reducing the number of public higher education institutions in the country from 35 to 21 (RSA 1997).

Shortly after these mergers, much of the activity around the restructuring of university curricula, focused specifically on the distinction between university-type curricula and technikon-type curricula. The importance of retaining both types of curricula in order to respond appropriately to the social and economic needs of the country was acknowledged (DoE 2002:24). ‘Academic drift’ from technikon-type to university-type programmes had to be avoided in order to serve these needs (DoE 2001:18). Christiansen and Baijnath’s research on curricula of universities of technology has indicated a need for diversity “driven by careful reflections on knowledge production and ‘distribution’, and their politics, history and sociology” (2007:223).

Although the distinction between typical technikon programmes and typical university programmes was not always clear, particular notions of such a distinction have been identified in the South African literature. It is acknowledged that these notions often do not give rise to strong distinctions, but they are nevertheless present in the minds of the curriculumators at universities. These notions are “‘pure’ compared to ‘applied’,

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

disciplinary discourses compared to credit exchange discourses, higher education ‘in’ as compared to ‘for’ society and an expanded understanding of technology” (Christiansen and Baijnath 2007:223-227). The latter understanding indicates a particular feature of technology, namely that of the practical, the application, which could be very useful in curriculum design. Blunt (2005:1030) highlights “democratization of higher education, being engaged institutions, an internationally comparable National Qualifications Framework, bridging arrangements for under-prepared students” and “language issues” as the main challenges in developing appropriate curricula for comprehensive universities. These challenges are clearly not unique to comprehensive universities, but apply to the whole of the higher education sector (and wider), but it would be wise to factor them into curriculum activities in vocational as well as ‘liberal’ programmes.

Since the merger dust has started to settle in South Africa, the original distinction between technikon-type and university-type programmes, at some universities has shown a tendency towards a distinction between education for the professions (e.g. engineering, design, architecture, nursing, teaching, law), as compared to education for other reasons, for example to ensure the development of all aspects of the human being (this could include languages, history, philosophy, mathematics, chemistry, geography, human movement science) – from there my labels of ‘vocational’ and ‘liberal’.

Bar the issue of technikon-type and university-type programmes, there are no prescriptions for universities regarding the range and diversity of programmes they offer, thus they need to make such decisions themselves. Universities of technology are therefore likely to be offering mainly technikon-type programmes currently (with the focus on links to industry and some professions), comprehensive universities both technikon-type and university-type programmes (with links to industry and an even wider range of professions) and the remainder of universities, university-type programmes (with links to some professions). All of these institutions are thus offering professionally focused programmes and ‘liberal’-type programmes (see Jansen 2004:5-18). In the chapter *Higher education and the world of Work*, Garraway (this volume) discusses this matter in greater detail when he deals with transferring and integrating work knowledge into university curricula.

During and shortly after the range of South African mergers, the allocation of human resources in institutions as well as recurriculation and restructuring were focused on the integration of the merger partners in all their dimensions, but as this process has now been completed, the focus has changed to other strategic priorities. Institutions

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

therefore need to decide what the balance between professional and 'liberal' programmes will be in their curriculum bouquet. This decision will be based partly on what they are currently offering, the extent to which they desire and are able to change current offerings, as well as the pressure they experience (internally and externally) to make such changes.

The one extreme of the continuum, representing professionally-focused programmes, is receiving much support in South Africa currently. The strong outcry for universities to produce appropriately qualified human resources to serve the economy of the country emphasises the need for professional education. The scarcity of skills in many areas of the labour market highlights the importance of this outcry, as enacted by the South African Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998, and the Skills Development Amendment Act, No. 37 of 2008. The role professional advisory boards play in co-determining university curricula and other quality assurance issues is a manifestation of the symbiotic relationship between many professions and the university. The increase in work-based learning as an integral part of some university curricula, specifically curricula aimed at professional education, is another dimension of this symbiotic relationship. Theoretically, this extreme point on the continuum could be linked to a mode of knowledge production that relates to the postmodern knowledge society, namely that of *promiscuous engagement*. This concept refers to a situation where, in "order to compete and be relevant, academics and academic units enter into all sorts of partnerships and liaisons – mainly with external parties who seek to use science for innovation, enhanced productivity and competitiveness in global markets" (Naudé and Cloete 2003:18). Swartz contends that this engagement needs to go beyond mere linkages, requiring that universities should immerse themselves in a "sea of new relationships in and through which they" need to find their "meaning and existence" (2008:15); this engagement must also not be uni-directional, but should benefit both sides and be initiated from both sides (2008:16).

The other extreme of the continuum sees rapidly dwindling student numbers in fields such as philosophy, history and languages other than English, as well as relatively low student numbers in science, engineering and technology (DoE 1999, 2006). Studies in all of these areas are not necessarily professionally focused; they could thus be perceived as providing the individual with a general education that needs to be taken a step further at some stage in order to produce a trained professional.

The challenge for each South African higher education institution lies in establishing a balance between the two extremes described above or, alternatively, in finding a

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

niche for themselves somewhere along each of these continuums. Where the balance or what the niche will be for each institution depends on its vision and mission, its strategic priorities and its eventual action plans to manifest these priorities.

This cluster could be related to the notion of ‘two sides of the coin’-type of curricula as indicated at the start of this chapter, namely either comprising subjects that are most useful for living in contemporary society (vocational) or subjects that cover more long-lasting knowledge (liberal) (Marsh 2004). Theoretically, the cluster also relates to two of Basil Bernstein’s curriculum models, namely one that is less strongly classified but strongly framed (focusing on an efficient economy), as well as one that is a decentred identity (of which the instrumental variety is market-oriented and locally embedded) (Bernstein 1996).

It is imperative that more research be carried out to develop guidelines for the structuring of vocationally focused as well as ‘liberal’ curricula for South African universities. In the aftermath of the mergers, there are still significant remnants of confusion and tensions around this matter, each institution grappling with it on its own and within its own context. Without any direction to the process, South African universities might lose some of its opportunities in the potential curriculum chaos.

In an effort to meet the needs of the studying public and other parties who have a stake in those studies, universities are also faced with a second cluster of curriculum challenges in South Africa, namely that of progression through the higher education system, with the start of the study path both in history and in the present.

Cluster 2: Progression from certificate to diploma to degree

In the past, a number of South African institutions offered post-school (not necessarily tertiary) education, usually aimed at qualifications for professions. Former teacher training colleges, agricultural colleges, nursing colleges and technical colleges did not include degrees in their programme repertoires; however, teaching, nursing and agriculture programmes were included in university curricula and technical programmes in technikons curricula for a long time. A gradual evolution took place in this situation: teacher training colleges were incorporated into universities and technikons; teaching strove towards becoming a graduate profession, but teacher qualification upgrading required the continued offering of certificates and diplomas (e.g. the Advanced Certificate in Education and the National Professional Diploma in Education); a number of technical colleges became technikons and could subsequently offer degrees; the establishment of further education and training colleges catered

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

for the resulting gap in the education and training world; and some nursing and agricultural colleges continued to offer non-degree programmes alongside degree programmes offered at universities.

The above-mentioned situation gave rise to an ever-increasing demand for South African universities to recognise parts of or whole previously completed certificates and diplomas, by giving credit for such subjects/modules/qualifications towards part of an appropriate university degree. Many universities have some rules about exemptions and/or credits relevant to completed teacher college qualifications; similar arrangements apply regarding some other college qualifications. In some cases, however, people who have to deal with applications for admission to university programmes are often not sure whether or how to recognise such qualifications. To be able to address this situation, it is necessary to analyse both the college and the university curriculum, to determine whether and how a sub-set of the former could dovetail into the latter. When this kind of situation arises very often at a particular institution, it would be wise to accommodate it in the curriculum process from its initial stages.

Two factors that further contributed to the complexity and importance of this matter were the institutional mergers in South Africa and the concept and encouragement of life-long learning. The mergers brought technikon-type programmes and university-type programmes much closer to each other than ever before: they are now both offered by universities and even exist in the same institution in the case of comprehensive universities. This increased the need to consider whether and how credit can be given for work completed for one type of programme, towards the other type of programme (the demand for this is overwhelmingly – although not necessarily exclusively – in one direction: namely recognition for work done in a technikon-type programme towards a university-type programme). The debate around this articulation issue rages on, especially in relation to 'B Tech to non-M Tech Master's' and 'M Tech to non-D Tech Doctoral' studies.

The linking of technikon-type, college-type and university-type programmes to each other has been facilitated by the National Qualifications Framework and the envisaged Higher Education Qualification Framework (DoE 2007a), positioning certificates, diplomas and degrees in relation to each other. The successful implementation of the HEQF will be facilitated by, *inter alia*, the alignment of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DoE 2007b). This issue remains a contentious one and there is no easy solution. Many universities deal with

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

this internally in the Faculties, acknowledging that a blanket rule cannot apply to all situations.

In line with the concept of *life-long learning*, mature prospective students started knocking at the doors of the universities in South Africa with requests to further their studies there; such a request was usually accompanied by the need to obtain some form of recognition of previously obtained qualifications, often not from a university. Added to this, and infinitely more complex in nature, is the need that arose to acknowledge knowledge and skills gained through experience, without any formal qualification to certify this. The accreditation or assessment of prior learning can cater for such situations, as indicated in the White Paper on Higher Education and in documentation from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA 1997:16). This approach was actively embraced by some institutions at the time, but many pitfalls, such as the required rigidity, time and labour intensiveness and hidden costs eroded the initial enthusiasm with which the recognition of prior learning (RPL) was welcomed. Currently, most institutions will consider RPL only for admission into a programme of study but not for awarding a qualification, and even then it remains a very difficult matter to execute. If the application of RPL is to become a permanent feature of the South African higher education system, more research needs to be done on its implementation, funding and processes.

Regarding a link between this cluster of curriculum issues on the one hand, and notions of the curriculum as indicated at the start of the chapter on the other: a clear association could be found between the certificate → diploma → degree progression and one of Posner's (2004) conceptions, namely that the curriculum is the scope and sequence of intended outcomes, distinguishing between the end and means of the curriculum, thus guiding instruction and assessment.

The concepts of life-long learning and RPL have both been developed primarily to address the skills backlog in this country and to afford people who could historically not gain reasonable access to formal higher education the opportunity for both of these. This brings us to the third cluster of curriculum issues, namely the tension between mass higher education on the one hand, and the services that universities are able to render on the other.

Cluster 3: Mass education and selective education

One of the results of the progression from minority rule to a democratically elected government in South Africa in 1994 was the awareness of the need for increased access

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

to higher education. This was prioritised in the National Plan for Higher Education as part of the five strategic objectives (DoE 2001:4), namely:

- to provide increased access to higher education and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the resource needs of the country; [and]
- to promote equity of access and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that the student and staff profiles progressively reflect the demographic realities of SA society.

The position a university occupies on this continuum will influence the nature of the institution's programme and qualification mix, thus co-determining all curriculum matters of the institution. The balance or niche that each university in South Africa must find for itself with regard to this issue cluster also revolves around a number of factors that form the pivots of the mass education debate. Some of the main pivots of this debate are briefly highlighted below.

1. Free higher education

This issue needs to be seen in the context of financial resources for higher education, as the ability of this sector to offer free education depends on the funding available. Universities derive their income from study fees, subsidy from the National Department of Education, donations and income generated through their own entrepreneurial activities (third-stream income). Each of these income sources has been heavily debated. Student fees are an annual issue: university authorities try to align increased funding required to offer programmes with the fee students are required to pay for this service, while students demand that such fees must not be increased. The subsidy paid by the Department of Education is an ever-decreasing percentage of universities' income and they have to turn to other means of generating sufficient income to remain financially viable. It is also a fact that the funding of this departmental subsidy is sourced from the government's tax income, therefore the subsidy can only increase if there is an increase in the country's tax base. Lubisi (2008:15) points out that it "is inescapable to either levy special taxes or redirect expenditure from other areas of spending", if we want to realise this dream. He also refers to the question of free (higher) education for all or whether this should only be for the poor (2008:12). If these dilemmas cannot be solved, free higher education will remain no more than a pipe dream.

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION**2. RPL alongside formal admission requirements**

RPL could be used as a mechanism to increase access to universities. However, this route will require that it is established and expanded, for at least some time to come. As indicated in the description of the previous cluster, this will require additional funding, curriculum analysis and the alignment of university rules to manifest this strategic priority.

3. 'Level of acceptance' and 'level of expectance'

Within the context of South Africa being a developing country with the concomitant economy, mass education and excellence in higher education will not necessarily always be compatible. A much higher level of funding for universities will be required to reconcile the latter two. Until that happens, universities will have to find a balance between the excellence level at which their academic offerings will be regarded as acceptable and the excellence level which is expected from their programmes.

4. Function and role of a South African university

Several questions need to be answered regarding this factor before the issue of mass or selective education can be adequately addressed, for example: 'Should/could the skills needs of a country be addressed mainly through higher education?' 'Should/could everybody benefit from a university education?' 'What about postgraduate degrees: should everybody have one/two/three? Why? Why not?'

5. Under-preparedness, bridging/foundation programmes

Many potential students can benefit from university programmes only if they receive additional assistance before and/or during their study career. This applies to both under-and postgraduate programmes. Once again, this is a curriculum issue that demands either separate pre-programmes or additional support during the programme, and, once again, it can only be adequately addressed if sufficient funding is available.

6. Mass education and large classes

Mass contact education in the higher education sector initially results in increasing class sizes. Class sizes can only be reduced if additional physical and human resources become available. If this does not happen, different teaching and learning strategies need to be devised and different delivery modes must be implemented. In this process, the aim of higher education must still be served optimally.

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

This cluster could be linked with two of Schiro's ideologies (2008) as mentioned at the start of the chapter: selective education can be interpreted as being based on the scholar academic ideology, while mass education can be viewed as underpinned by the social reconstruction ideology.

The numbered factors mentioned above all have a profound influence on the nature and outcome of the debate around mass education in South Africa; in each case further research is required. The last-mentioned factor, in particular, refers to the most appropriate delivery model that would bring education to the masses – bring it to where they live and work. This leads us to the idea of providing education away from the main site of a university, or what could be called 'distance education' or 'off-campus education' in all its variations. This leads to the next cluster.

Cluster 4: Contact and distance education

At the time of the mergers, the South African national Department of Education indicated that there would be only one distance education university, namely the new University of South Africa, merged with Technikon South Africa and the distance education campus of Vista University (DoE 2002). In spite of this, some of the so-called contact universities in the country involved themselves to some extent with distance education at the time and are still doing so. The drive by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to carry out evaluations of selected university programmes through a combination of evidence-based self-evaluation reports and on-site visits, which have resulted in the re-accreditation, conditional accreditation or de-accreditation of such programmes, had a very specific focus on distance delivery as well. The HEQC evaluation requirements for such distance delivery were as stringent as those for contact delivery and this highlighted the need for quality in all modes of programme delivery. The fact that the departmental subsidy formula funds distance programmes at a lower rate than contact programmes, could be interpreted as a confirmation that the government (similar to the universities) viewed distance programmes as requiring a less budget-intensive delivery than contact programmes. Of course, this lower funding also serves as a disincentive for the contact universities to become overly involved with distance delivery.

The previous paragraph might create the impression that the sole or main reason for South African contact universities to be involved with distance delivery is that it provides greater economies of scale. This is, of course, not the case. Participants in this activity will agree that this type of delivery has its own unique challenges and costs and also serves its own noble purposes.

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Several variations of programme delivery can be identified, ranging from full contact, reduced contact, increased self-study, block release, satellite delivery and tutor delivery to technology delivery and e-learning. Each one of these has its own unique demands and impact on the curriculum and quality assurance – timetabling, venues, coordination, tutor/lecturer training, assessment, materials, access to library holdings and the Internet are only some of the factors that need adaptation as the delivery intensity varies. Herselman and Hay (2005:394) state that “today’s learners live all over the world and they are reached on remote campuses; in government and business workplaces; and most probably directly in their homes”. E-learning is increasingly used by education and training providers for both on- and off-campus learners (Carlner 1999:40).

Related to the issue around contact and distance education is that of part-time master’s and doctoral studies. When considering the nature of research studies as undertaken by such students, the matter of distance or off-campus education as compared to contact education becomes rather diffuse. In South Africa, students in these programmes are usually not required to attend frequent contact sessions, either in groups or as individuals. Contact is scheduled according to need and for both monitoring and guiding purposes. If regular seminars or lectures form part of the delivery mode, these are by far less frequent and rigid than at undergraduate and honours level. The student’s geographical proximity to the study supervisor is much less of a factor than for lower-level programmes. This mode of delivery could thus be perceived to be closer to the distance education extreme on the continuum than the extreme of full contact delivery. Against the background of under-preparedness and increased access, it might be regarded as necessary to move closer to the contact extreme on the continuum, especially when skills in independent research and self-motivated enquiry are considered. Whichever position a university or faculty decides to take up on this continuum in relation to postgraduate research studies, there are significant curriculum implications resulting from such a decision. Such decisions should be underpinned by sound research, which ought to be contextualised to enhance the chosen delivery model.

Schiro’s (2008) idea of the curriculum being underpinned by an ideology (see start of this chapter), could be applied in this cluster as well: the learner-centred ideology and the social reconstruction ideology could both be viewed as relevant to this cluster.

When the concept of distance education is applied in higher education in its most extreme form, it is true that, assisted by technology, a South African university would

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

be able to render a service to a student anywhere in the world. In addition, the imperatives of the first cluster, which indicate that the university must provide skilled human resources to the labour market (this not necessarily being local and national only), imply that alumni of the university will take their place in the work force where their skills are required. This notion points to the next cluster of curriculum issues in South African higher education to be highlighted in this chapter, namely that of internationalisation of our higher education sector.

Cluster 5: Internationalisation and localisation

This cluster deals with the related concepts of internationalisation, localisation and Africanisation in the South African higher education context. For the purpose of this chapter, ‘internationalisation’ refers to the all the dimensions of the process whereby a university engages with another university situated in another country in order to achieve certain academic, economic, political and cultural aims (Knight 2001). The concept of localisation in this context can thus be viewed as the opposite of internationalisation, namely as involving all the dimensions of the process whereby a university endeavours to retain its local character in order to achieve certain academic, economic, political and cultural aims. An example of localisation is Africanisation – this has been written about extensively in academic literature in recent years, particularly by South African academics. As this issue can be regarded as one of the most important contemporary curriculum debates in the country, it is discussed much more extensively in this chapter than any of the other issues.

The call towards internationalisation and globalisation has become a strong trend in economies and societies worldwide and specifically in Africa. Wa-Thiong’o (2004:2) said that thought should be given “as to how Africa can extricate itself from the seeming quagmire it finds itself in, by taking advantage of the enormous opportunities offered by the Global Village”. This trend towards internationalisation and globalisation has also impacted on higher education institutions. Initially this was evident in a small way, for example by hosting conference presenters from abroad and inviting foreign academics for short visits to campuses. The trend has grown to include many other manifestations of internationalisation, such as an increase in the number of agreements and joint projects involving sister institutions across our borders on the continent, as well as across the oceans; also an ever-growing component of registered foreign students and academic staff from other countries on our campuses.

Some of the benefits and purposes of internationalisation are the following:

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

- For students: securing a place in the job market; best most up-to-date and relevant training; multiple skills developed and maintained to cope with ever-increasing changes; skills that are transferable across cultures, climates, contexts (Neale-Shutte and Fourie 2006:119);
- For academics: expanded research and lecturing horizons through international links; generating income;
- For the institution: servicing a diverse student body with different cultures; also servicing students that are geographically situated outside the country's borders (this links with one of the previously-mentioned clusters on distance education);
- Strengthening government links relevant to trade, agriculture, development and the military.

Parallel to the need for internationalisation, the call for Africanising the higher education curriculum in South Africa has emerged very strongly and this can no longer be ignored. Local and foreign African students and academics on campuses have a strong influence on this imperative. The presence of a significant number of foreign African students on South African university campuses in 2003, is evident from the fact that 58% of all foreign students in the South African higher education sector originated from Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia (Futuse 2004:7), with 72% of all foreign students coming from the SADC region (Kotecha 2004:11). The need for an African approach to the internationalisation of South African higher education is illustrated in what Kotecha (2004:11) refers to as the responsible approach "that aligns the international dimension of the sector to the enhancement of national, regional and continental development imperatives".

Le Roux (2001:35) has identified the "centralisation of a unique South African identity and culture" as one of the challenges for transformation and Africanisation of South African education. This challenge has much to do with the question whether such an identity could indeed be identified at all (Goduka 1999; Makgoba 1998; Mbeki 1998). Several voices have answered in the affirmative, such as those of Fhulu (1999), Le Roux (2001) and Luggya (1999). A strong belief in the existence of this identity is reflected in the statements that the "process for translating the African identity and vision in education is called Africanisation" (Seepe 2004:40) and "the African subject would be allowed to construct his or her own identity" (Williams 2000:74), while it has also been recognised that the notion of a unique South African educational identity "is beset with difficulties" (Viljoen 2005:5).

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

Two strains of the current concept of 'Africanisation' developed, namely those of the 'negritude' movement and of the original conceptualisation of 'Africanisation'. The origins of these two strains can be traced back to the Pan-African movement (Urch 1968:4-5). The former flourished among people of African origin living in the United States of America and Europe and placed "African ideals in the centre of any analysis that involves African culture" (Asante 1987:6). Africanisation developed from the negritude movement, focusing on the rights of blacks against the claims of white supremacy (Urch 1968:5). The dominance of Western supremacy in the past and the resistance against it play a major role in the epistemology of Africanisation.

Coetzee (1999:130-131) contends that the concept 'to Africanise' developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from its origins (as set out in the previous paragraph) to becoming connected to political, social and cultural transformation. This development took place in South Africa as well as in some other countries.

Vorster (1995:9) indicates that Africanisation can be synthesised as an appeal, in the first place to Africans and, in the second place, to Europeans and non-Africans. The first appeal relates to Africans upholding African aspirations; descent; cultural heritage; own ideas, rights, interests and ideals; self-concept and own rationality in intercultural context. The second appeal relates to non-Africans to respect and accommodate Africans' efforts to manifest the first.

Ramose (1998:iv) highlights the role of Africans in Africanisation, by describing it as follows:

Africanisation holds that the African experience in its totality is simultaneously the foundation and the source for the construction of all forms of knowledge. On this basis, it maintains that the African experience is by definition non-transferable but nonetheless communicable. Accordingly, it is the African who is and must be the primary and principle communicator of the African experience ... Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more or less than the right to be African.

Mngadi (1997:18) sees Africanisation as not being a necessary process for decolonisation. He contends that one of the problems associated with Africanisation is that there exists "a simple binarism: ... an insulated, consensual black Africa versus an equally insulated and consensual white Europe". The viewpoint of Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2004) is exactly the opposite: "One of the most important instruments for socio-cultural decolonisation especially within civil bureaucracy, in the African experience, has been the policy of Africanization" (Sseepe 2004:99).

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Botha (2007:206) the “concept of Africanisation has been dynamic in the past (as indicated above) and it can reasonably be assumed that it is currently still dynamic. This assumption implies that it is likely that the interpretation of the concept has developed further and additional nuances in the past decade in South Africa, mainly as a result of the influence of the abolishment of apartheid. These new nuances need to be explored intensively in further research.” Botha (2007:214) identifies in such further exploratory research, a sequenced set of themes, namely the need to:

- recognise the complexity of the issue of Africanising the curriculum and hence identify the key issues of complexity relevant to the specific context in which the curriculum is to be Africanised;
- investigate lessons from the past as identified by information-rich people in the specific context;
- investigate and analyse the dissonance between, on the one hand, regarding the self as being African and, on the other hand, identifying with what is accepted to be African; then determine how this would influence Africanising of the curriculum in the specific context;
- carry out a conceptual analysis of Africanising the curriculum in the specific context;
- investigate the fear of Africanising in the specific context and its possible influence on Africanising the curriculum; then identify appropriate measures to accommodate this fear;
- interrogate the balance between the African and the non-African in the curriculum as it emerged from the data described above;
- interrogate the ‘add-on’ and the ‘integrated’ Africanised curriculum; hence identify other models and interrogate these as well;
- use the information and insights flowing from all of the above to create a content and process model for Africanising the curriculum in the specific context.

It is imperative that universities will find a balance between internationalisation and Africanisation: “In order to be competitors in internationalisation, African universities need to establish their own identities and develop their own niche” (Neale-Shutte and Fourie 2006:121) – in other words, if you do not know who you are, you do not have much to offer your international counterpart/partner.

Zezeza (2005) indicates that three levels of mutual exchange are necessary to ensure effective internationalisation, namely through students and staff, through

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

institutional policies and collaboration, and through curriculum. This also holds true for Africanisation.

Scott (2008:137) refers to “a distaste for universalising modes of thought and global narratives” as one of the principles of postmodernism. By using this statement as a point of departure for further enquiry into the trends of internationalisation, globalisation and Africanisation in South African higher education, the discourse around this cluster could be further enriched.

The conception of curriculum as the totality of learning experiences as presented by Marsh (2004), as well as the curriculum as planned experiences, including all experiences students have to go through, curricular as well as extra-curricular (Posner 2004), could be viewed as relevant to this cluster.

Michel Foucault’s view of knowledge being relative, with power having a strong relationship to knowledge, relates to this cluster. He contends that “the expression of any universal truth, in a curriculum for example, takes a particular form which is historically specific, and it is the determination of these forms that is of concern to curriculum theorists” (Scott 2008:54). He also argues that it is important to “take into account the underlying but changing social and political assumptions” (Marsh 2004:225). Further research on this relationship would greatly enrich the discourse on Africanisation.

While the virtual borders of countries are becoming increasingly penetrable due to technology, globalisation and internationalisation, a similar trend is developing within universities, namely the diffusion of disciplinary boundaries, but for different reasons.

Cluster 6: Diffusion of disciplinary boundaries

This cluster of curriculum-related issues deals with the matter of an ever-growing blurring of disciplinary boundaries. This blurring or diffusion, which occurs both incidentally and intentionally, has been induced by at least three developments. Two of these developments emanated from the South African national Department of Education, namely the notion of academic programmes and the creation of comprehensive universities. The third development arose from societal and labour market needs in South Africa that called for a shift from strict disciplinary boundaries to working in a more cross-disciplinary way. Soehnge (2004:105) recommends, amongst others, that academics should reflect critically on questions such as whether curriculum discourses function only within disciplinary boundaries or outside these boundaries as well.

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The notion of ‘programmes’ instead of ‘courses’ was advocated by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), including in its definition that a programme should be “a coherent, planned and integrated sequence of learning activities” and that it is “almost invariably trans-, inter- or multi-disciplinary” (1996:84). It was not as though this would necessarily lead to entirely different offerings at universities, but it required a new way of thinking about the formal learning experiences available to students. Many of the then existing curricula complied with the idea of a programme, especially at undergraduate level where a much lower degree of specialisation is usually required than at postgraduate level.

The establishment of comprehensive universities as a result of the implementation of the national plan for higher education (DoE 2001; 2002), required a rethink of the curricula of these institutions. This has been highlighted before in this chapter in the clusters on vocational and liberal education, as well as in the cluster dealing with progression from certificate to diploma to degree.

While universities in South Africa were getting used to the new terminology and ways of doing, as relevant to programmes and modules, another imperative was emerging from a different source. The need for interdisciplinary knowledge, competences, experiences, insights and applications grew from the new types of challenges that developed in the economic, political and social spheres of South African life – the needs of the ‘real’ world. Appropriately qualified people who were equipped to address these challenges became much sought-after and universities had to rise to the challenge to produce such graduands.

To illustrate the above idea, an example would be a BA curriculum that includes languages, history, geography and mathematics. Where such a curriculum would previously rather be aimed at developing several dimensions of the human being, the new mindset would require that it be aimed outwardly at addressing some of the needs of society – in this case perhaps to gain the competences, skills and knowledge required of a tour guide. Another example would be a BA with psychology, sociology, languages and some health science modules, that could be a preferred curriculum for someone who will work in HIV or AIDS counselling. Where previously a BSc in marine biology would secure a position in the labour market in exactly that, it is likely that today a similar position would require not only the marine biology knowledge, but also some economic, legal, psychology and social knowledge. This curriculum will straddle a number of disciplinary boundaries to optimally service the societal needs.

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

Muller's (2008:35) report on the curriculum of the comprehensive university indicates some dangers in diffusing disciplinary boundaries, namely muddying the mission; identity confusion among students and employers; over-inclusion of programmes across the spectrum; lack of intellectual and social cohesion; difficulty in managing such a curriculum; emerging of differential criteria, standards and procedures; and the forming of sub-institutional silos that will undermine unity in the institution.

This cluster on diffusion of disciplinary boundaries relates well to the notions of a curriculum as consisting of subjects that accommodate the changing state of knowledge, subjects that are most useful for living in contemporary society (Marsh 2004), based on the ideology of social efficiency (Posner 2004), as well as Scott's (2008) idea that the current episode in the history of the curriculum reflects effectiveness or improvement.

The diffusion of disciplinary boundaries in the South African curriculum discourse is typical of postmodernism (Naudé and Cloete 2003:211) and is strongly related to the idea of "holistic inquiry" in postmodernism (Marsh 2004:229-230). Further research on these relationships will provide useful information towards the discourse and practice related to this curriculum cluster.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The previous sections broadly sketched some of the complexities that relate to the higher education curriculum in South Africa. Six interrelated clusters of curriculum issues were briefly outlined, namely that of vocational and liberal education, progression from certificate to diploma to degree, mass education compared to selective education, contact and distance education, internationalisation and localisation, and the diffusion between disciplinary borders.

The dialectic tensions that emerge from each of the clusters very strongly presents the post-modernist approach that enters into dialogue about what seems to be illogical, contradictory, domineering, of concern and uncertain in the traditional context. Another identifiable trend within the clusters is the movement away from what Bernstein (1975:103-106) called the collection code type of curriculum towards the integrated code type. Typical of this is the diffusion between disciplinary borders, the wider choice of curricula on offer to students, the wide variety of assessment modes employed (such as portfolios, presentations and research projects) and academics working as teams rather than individuals. When considering the curriculum in South African higher education, for whatever purpose, the strong enmeshment of many of the curriculum issue clusters referred to in this chapter, cannot be ignored. The intertwinedness of

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

each cluster with one or more of the others increases the complexity of this dimension of South African higher education and highlights the circumspection with which it must be approached. Reference is also made to this enmeshment by Chritiansen and Baijnath (2007:223) when they indicate that the need for diversity in the curricula of universities of technology, comprehensive universities and other universities (cluster 1 above), might imply Africanisation of higher education (cluster 5 above) and narrowing of the distinction between disciplines (cluster 6 above), because, in the South African context, the latter two are likely to result from reflections on knowledge production and distribution, as well as on their politics, history and sociology.

Some aspects of the enmeshment of the clusters of curriculum issues referred to above are illustrated in Figure 8.1. The figure shows, for example, that mergers and academic drift are dimensions of four of the six clusters (vocational/liberal, certificate → diploma → degree, contact/distance and diffusion of disciplinary boundaries). This illustrates the enmeshment of these four clusters in these areas. When the higher education curriculum is revised after a merger or with the purpose of addressing academic drift, it is likely that there will be implications in all four of these clusters that need to be considered to facilitate successful rearticulation. Another example presented in the figure is that of human resources as an area of enmeshment of all the clusters, thus illustrating that all curriculum planning or revision will impact on human resources.

It is evident that the figure is not a definitive representation of the realities of all higher education institutions: when reconsidering its curriculum, an institution might want to adapt the figure by adding or omitting some of the areas of enmeshment, by rethinking which of the clusters are relevant to its own circumstances, by identifying whether and how each cluster is enmeshed with other clusters, or even find other ways of representing its own situation. In all cases, an adapted figure could then become a useful tool to guide curriculum planning and revision in such institutions.

PART THREE • TEACHING, LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

CLUSTERS AREAS OF ENMESHMENT	Vocational/ Liberal	Certificate Diploma Degree	Mass/ Select	Contact/ Distance	Internat/ Local	Diffusion of disciplinary boundaries
Mergers	X	X		X		X
Academic drift	X	X				X
University types (technology, comprehensive, distance, other)	X	X		X		X
Professions	X	X			X	X
Professional advisory boards	X					
Industry	X					X
Human resources	X	X	X	X	X	X
Labour market	X				X	X
Economy	X				X	
Skills shortage	X	X			X	X
Work-based learning	X	X			X	X
RPL		X	X		X	
Life-long learning		X		X	X	
Access		X	X	X	X	
Free higher education			X			
Under-preparedness			X	X		
Bridging/foundation programmes			X			
Large classes			X			
Delivery models			X	X	X	
E-learning				X	X	
Technology				X	X	
Master's and doctoral students				X	X	X
Africanisation					X	X
Localisation	X					X
Globalisation				X	X	X
Cross-disciplinary						X
Inter-disciplinary						X
Knowledge						
'Real' world	X			X		X
Engaged institution	X				X	X
Programmes		X				X
Articulation		X				

FIGURE 8.1 Enmeshment of curriculum issue clusters

CHAPTER 8 • SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Breier (2001:ix) states that the “restructuring of higher education curricula was not a priority in the flurry of education proposals that accompanied the historic political transformation of South Africa”. This situation has gradually changed and debates on this matter have emerged. At the start of a new chapter in South African democracy, the time is here to deal with higher education curriculum restructuring. Le Grange (2006:193) reiterates: “Curriculum is a neglected area in discourses on higher education.” He advocates that higher education curricularators need to consider the curriculum implications of all debates and activities in this arena. This chapter could serve as a point of departure for the scholarly review of the South African higher education curriculum, with the purpose of stimulating further questions and debate for higher education researchers, as well as developing guidelines for dealing with the challenges associated with each curriculum cluster.

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