

**SAIDE**  
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# Curriculum

Organizing knowledge for the classroom

2ND EDITION

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## Introduction

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### What have we learnt so far?

We have spent a lot of time debating what the word ‘curriculum’ means, and how we go about developing curricula appropriate for schooling. This entailed making decisions about a process to follow, who should be involved, what should be included, and who makes these decisions. We have also found that there is a gap between the curriculum plan and the practices of teachers. This is sometimes problematic, particularly when it is a consequence of teaching inadequacies or rigidities. But at other times, the gap is, in fact, the space in which a teacher innovates and improves a curriculum plan.

It has become increasingly clear, though, that curriculum making and teaching are not simply technical matters. Instead, we have noticed that curriculum, like schooling, is intensely political. We became acutely aware of this in the last section on how the South African curriculum was made. Choices of the plan’s content and form are often made on the basis of the beliefs of certain groups – the state, unions or labour, or academics, for example. Teachers’ beliefs determine how they teach, and which bits of content they emphasize, and, ultimately, the choices made in terms of plan and practices have consequences for learners.

### What will you learn in this section?

In this section we shall begin looking at how curriculum is organized or structured. We are especially interested in this section in *curriculum as the organization of knowledge*.

Remember that a curriculum plan provides a course of learning, and that the course starts and ends somewhere. A good curriculum plan needs to be written in such a way that it makes sense to teachers and can provide guidance for teachers and learners by providing a path for learning. So, when we think about ‘organizing knowledge in a curriculum’, we think about what knowledge is selected for the curriculum, and also the order in which it is placed (its sequence). We are also interested in how the curriculum fits together – in other words how do different subjects, and different topics within a subject fit together?

As in the preceding section, we are also interested in how choices made in South Africa might impact on different groups of people in our country. We saw in the previous section how the South African curriculum has shifted to a more integrated, outcomes-based curriculum. In this section we look at some of the implications of this, and we also consider some theoretical tools that we might use to analyse curriculum.

By the end of Section Six, you should be able to:

- understand some theoretical tools you can use to analyse the curriculum, and the way in which it organizes knowledge;
- explain how the ways in which different curricula organize knowledge might affect different groups of learners differently;

- explain how marginalized learners might be further disadvantaged even by curriculum reforms that are designed to benefit them and redress educational inequality;
- distinguish between everyday knowledge and school knowledge, and explain why this distinction is important for curriculum and classroom practice, especially if the learners are working class;
- consider some of the critiques of the outcomes-based curriculum model.

# Shifting forms of knowledge organization

## 6.2

### How has knowledge organization changed in South Africa's curriculum?

Let's consider for a moment what we know about how knowledge organization in the curriculum has changed in South Africa.

Consider some of the features of the 'old' curriculum in South Africa:

- It was content led, and this content was organized according to separate subject disciplines.
- Content was often abstract and theoretical and unrelated to most learners' experiences of the real world, or the development of their competence to deal with the world.
- Assessment focused on the ability of learners to recall content and, in some cases, to understand the subject.
- Curricula tended to be developed by experts and imposed on teachers and learners from 'above'; teachers and learners had very little say in what they taught and learnt.
- Teaching tended to be teacher-centred, with a focus (in the best classes) on good explanations, question-and-answer sessions, and individual writing by learners.
- Much of the content was biased towards those who held political power offering a white, male point of view and thus tended to serve those who were already privileged.

*Curriculum 2005* was an attempt at radical change to this curriculum form by reorganizing the curriculum. Much of the change came in the way in which knowledge was organized.

Thus the new curriculum:

- was competence based, and organized knowledge in integrated learning areas;
- learning areas attempted to link theory and practice, and relate all learning to the lives of learners so that they could use what they learnt in life and work.

This integration was achieved through:

- replacing vast collections of facts and concepts with broad 'critical' outcomes and specific outcomes, which could be achieved by a variety of routes;
- themes in 'phase organizers' and 'programme organizers', which crossed the divides between school subjects.

Assessment was based on learners demonstrating that they had achieved the specified learning outcomes; there were to be demonstrable competences. The curriculum and learning-area syllabuses were developed by a range of stakeholders, through consultation, and not imposed from above. (However, in practice this often did not occur as planned).

In addition, the curriculum was supposed to be a guide that allowed space for teachers to shape their own learning programmes and even select content, provided they could achieve the specified outcomes.

Teaching was to be learner-centred, allowing space for learners to be active participants in their own learning, and sometimes even in the design of what was to be learnt.

These changes – in aims, content, and pedagogy were supposed to eliminate much of the elitism, and the dominance of the white, male orientation in the curriculum.

The review of *Curriculum 2005*, however, found that there was too much integration in the curriculum, and too little specification of content to be learnt. What was at jeopardy in the curriculum was the learning of concepts at progressively higher levels within subjects. There was also too little specificity around what learners should know at specific points. So, for example, exactly what Mathematics a grade one learner should learn was not clearly stated in the curriculum.

The *National Curriculum Statement* retained the outcomes-based form. It also retained some integration at the GET level. But it specified what outcomes, in terms of both skills and knowledge, needed to be achieved in each grade, rather than in each phase – except in the Natural Sciences where outcomes were grade specific but knowledge was still specified for each phase rather than each grade. It also did away with phase organizers – the themes which guided learning across subjects. At the FET level it re-introduced subjects. Lists of contents were also introduced to specify precisely what should be learnt in different subjects at different grades. The level of specificity varies across subjects. Some attempt was made to focus on ‘vertical demarcation’ – the development of concepts and knowledge within a subject over time.

Teaching was to remain learner-centred as a matter of policy. Assessment was to include continuous assessment and was to be varied.

So we can see that we already know a fair amount about the organization of knowledge in the curriculum. We know that:

- It can be integrated (as in Social Studies) or presented in separate subjects (History and Geography)
- It can be clearly specified (exactly what is to be learnt and when) or left more open
- It can focus on what the teacher must teach (teacher-centred) or on the knowledge that the learners bring into the classroom (learner-centred)
- It can be organized in a sequence, so that one piece of knowledge is ordered to follow another, in increasing complexity (vertical demarcation). Or it can consist of unrelated topics.

In the next section we look at the work of Basil Bernstein, a British sociologist who has written extensively about the different ways in which knowledge can be organized in a curriculum. Reflecting on the changes discussed above, his work helps us to see what the implications of the different forms of organization are.

## Two curriculum approaches: competence and performance curricula

Bernstein describes two distinct types of approaches to curriculum, which he calls the ‘competence’ model and the ‘performance’ model:

Model	Characteristics, according to Bernstein
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characterized by the idea of integration between subjects</li> <li>• makes strong links between school learning and real life</li> </ul>
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stresses the importance of separate subject disciplines</li> <li>• does not draw extensively from real life in order to teach at school</li> </ul>

These two ‘models’ provide us with an ideal type against which we can review the current curriculum debate in South Africa. But remember: ideal types, or models, are ideal. They are, essentially, teaching or analytic tools that help us clarify our thinking. Curriculum in the real world seldom if ever matches the ideal type; it is most often a hybrid of many types.

Let’s look more closely at what characterizes these curriculum models.

### Competence curriculum

The key characteristic of a competence curriculum is named in the title: it is interested in learner’s competences which are believed to be innate. Thus knowledge is not imposed from the outside, but the competences that learners already have are sought on the inside. Thus it encourages teaching that draws from a learner’s own experiences and ‘everyday knowledge’ and, in turn, assists learners in using their new learning in their lives and work.

The focus on the learner and everyday experience tends to affirm learners and build their confidence, whatever their background. It also provides the teachers and learners with important ‘ways into’ the formal ‘school knowledge’ that is to be taught, and later with the basis for applying that formal knowledge.

Because a competence curriculum blurs the line between school learning and everyday experience, very specific places for learning – for example school classrooms – aren’t regarded as very important. Learning, it is assumed, does and can take place anywhere: at home, at work, and at school.

Predictably, then, learning tends to be organized around themes and projects and to be based on experience. Learners also have a large measure of control over:

- what they learn (selection);
- when they learn it (sequence);
- how quickly they progress through the learning (pacing).

Bernstein identifies more than one kind of competence approach. You can read about these in B. Bernstein, *Pedagogy, Symbolic control and Identity* (London, Taylor and Francis, 1996).

“Curriculum in the real world seldom, if ever, matches the ideal type; it is most often a hybrid of many types.”

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*The competence approach is learner-centred; learners take control of their own learning and the teacher's role tends to be covert.*

In other words, the competence approach is learner-centred. Learners take control of their own learning, and the teacher's role tends to be covert. Rather than directly transmitting learning, the teacher acts as a guide and facilitator. Pedagogy is personalized and process-orientated.

Knowledge in a competence curriculum is often horizontally organized. It introduces themes, projects and problems which don't necessarily link to each other. In other words, rather than focusing overly on a curriculum that progresses vertically – where new work builds on old work, and becomes increasingly difficult – it organizes teaching around one theme, and then moves to another theme that may not be connected in any way with the first.

In competence approaches, all learners are regarded as essentially competent, and able to arrive at a certain outcome. How they arrive there, and how long it takes them, will vary from learner to learner, and learners may express the outcome in a number of different ways.

As a consequence, the focus in evaluation is on 'presences' – on what the learners know or have achieved rather than what they don't know (absences). For instance, the learner might draw a picture, and the teacher might respond as shown below, rather than comment on the weaknesses in the learner's drawing technique.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

**Stop Think**

Look back at the curriculum excerpts (syllabus A and syllabus B) on pages 73–77 of Section Three. In what ways do these suggest a competence model of curriculum? Would one be more typical of what you now know as a competence approach? Think in particular about who would have control over the selection, sequencing, and pacing of the learning in each syllabus.

**Performance curriculum**

For Bernstein a performance curriculum is characterized by developing high levels of understanding, often in particular subjects. As a consequence, the curriculum tends to:



- be very specific about what content must be learnt, and in what order;
- focus on depersonalized, formal 'school knowledge' rather than on everyday knowledge and experience;
- be more vertically organized than a competence curriculum. In other words, it builds knowledge and understanding in a specific sequence. (Each bit of knowledge becomes more complex than the previous bit of knowledge).

### Stop. Think.

Think briefly about the difference between Life Orientation and Mathematics. Which subject lends itself more to a performance curriculum? In Life Orientation, is it important to know certain bits of knowledge before others? In Mathematics, does it matter what order concepts are introduced in? We'll return to these questions.



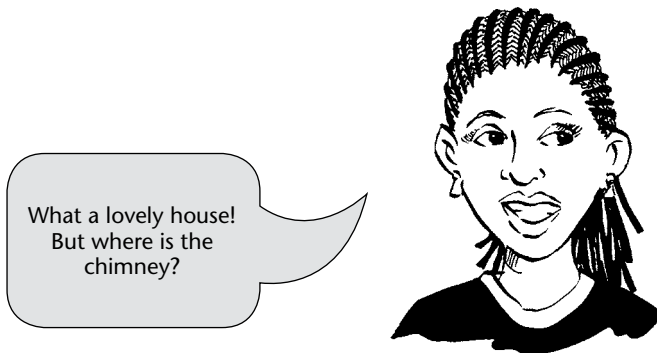
Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

The process of learning in the performance curriculum is more strongly defined and controlled by the teacher. The role of the teacher tends to be overt. He or she has a lot more control over the selection, sequence, and pace of learning than teachers teaching within a competence curriculum model.

Performance approaches are thus more content- and teacher-centred than competence approaches. Consequently, teaching tends to take place in specific learning places – the classroom, lab, or training workshop – where access to formal school knowledge is easier. Learners have less control over the selection, sequence, and pacing of their learning. In performance models of curriculum, there are very definite rules about how to learn, and definite ways of judging right from wrong.

Performance approaches base evaluation on deficits ('absences'), or what is missing. The aim is to develop a clearly defined behaviour or understanding – a performance rather than the more general competence required in a competence model – and so teaching and assessment focus on refining this by pointing out what still needs to be mastered.

For example, in a performance model a learner may draw a picture, and the teacher will respond in the following way.



He or she will point out what is still needed to draw the house in the correct way.

6  
Performance approaches are more content- and teacher-centred; learners have less control over the selection, sequence, and pacing of their learning.



In performance approaches learners may still be active, but their activities are based on an external goal, rather than driven from within. They will also tend to be directly related to the performance that must be attained, and this will be clearly specified in the curriculum.

### Summarizing the differences

That is a very broad summary of Bernstein's ideas about the curriculum. He wants to understand what the implications are of changes in the way curricula are organized over time.

He argues that, over time, the two kinds of curricula, competence and performance, have alternated in popularity. Generally, competence models are supported by people interested in education as an emancipatory act (as Freire was). Progressive education, discussed in the last section, is also located within a competence mode. But, as Bernstein says, differences can be seen within each model. For instance, he argues that the competence model can be used for different kinds of emancipation; a liberal, cognitive emancipation, and a more radical, political emancipation.

In Reading 8.6, Taylor makes reference to these differences as he discusses the competence-based and integrated curriculum, and the relationship between school knowledge and everyday knowledge.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

### Stop. Think.

But before you read this, glance at our table summarizing the two models. Add details where we have missed out on anything. Later, after reading the article and completing this section, come back to this table and add to it.

	<b>Competence (also called an acquisition- competence approach, or an 'integrated' curriculum)</b>	<b>Performance (also called a transmission- performance approach, or a 'collection' curriculum)</b>
Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has control over the selection, sequence, and pace of learning</li> <li>• assumption that all learners can learn but will do so in different ways and at different speeds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has little control over the selection, sequence, and pace of learning</li> <li>• assumption that not all learners can learn at all levels; as learning proceeds vertically, some learners are excluded</li> </ul>
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indirect role as facilitator of learning</li> <li>• control is personally negotiated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct teaching role; transmits knowledge according to defined pedagogical rules</li> <li>• control is hierarchical, the teacher decides</li> </ul>
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learner-centred</li> <li>• integrated 'learning areas'</li> <li>• strong links to learner experience and everyday knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher- and subject-centred</li> <li>• clearly demarcated subject areas</li> <li>• little link between formal school knowledge and everyday knowledge</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general competence criteria</li> <li>• focus on presences; on what learner knows and can do</li> <li>• no failure; only different lengths of time in which to succeed</li> <li>• teacher shares the task of evaluation with the learner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific performance criteria; there are clear rights and wrongs</li> <li>• focus on absences – on what the learner has left out</li> <li>• failure if the learner does not complete things fully or correctly</li> <li>• teacher performs the task of assessment</li> </ul>
Learning sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anywhere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly marked learning sites</li> </ul>

# 6.3

## What is the debate about curriculum integration?

This quotation comes from B. Bernstein, *Class, codes and control – Towards a theory of educational transmission*, (London, Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975).

Bernstein, like Freire and many other teachers, is interested in the relation between school and society. One of his best-known statements is:

*How a society selects, classifies ... transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of control (in that society).*

### Powerful knowledge

As we noted earlier, a competence curriculum is often supported by people interested in opening up education to all groups in society, and in using education to emancipate groups that are oppressed and exploited. You may remember that one of the key motivations for *Curriculum 2005* was to create a schooling system that served to redress the inequalities created by apartheid education. But we also saw in Section Five that this type of curriculum can also disadvantage those it intends to serve. *Curriculum 2005* did not provide a clear guide to those teachers and learners who needed more input on how to go about teaching and learning. But more importantly, there is also a strong argument that giving students access to strong discipline-based knowledge, to the special knowledge of schooling, is what is in fact emancipatory. It is this knowledge that will allow them access to positions of power and influence in society. Michael Young, another well-known curriculum theorist, calls this 'powerful knowledge'.

Bernstein's ideas about curriculum help us to talk about these issues at a more general level. A crucial idea that he introduces in relation to powerful knowledge is classification.

### Classification

We now turn to your Reading 8.8 *On the curriculum* by Bernstein. Bernstein points out that one of the most obvious characteristics of any curriculum is that there is a selection of *what* is to be learnt, and this is organized in a particular way. Now, if we have a whole series of 'whats' – say Science, History, Mathematics, Life Skills and Geography, one of the interests is how these different subjects are related to each other. Either they can have strong boundaries around them, and be very separate from one another (in this instance there will be no relationship between History and Geography, and Science and Life Skills will be understood and taught as very different subjects), or the subjects can have weak boundaries – so that they are more integrated. History and Geography might be put together into Social Studies, and specific themes might relate Science to Life Skills – for example, electricity might be dealt with in Science in terms of how it works, and in Life Orientation in terms of safety precautions. In short

then, Bernstein uses the term ‘classification’ to refer to the boundaries between different parcels of content.

Let’s go through this one more time. A strongly classified curriculum is characterized by a subject, for example History, having clear boundaries which distinguish it from another subject, for example Science. These boundaries are established by the fact that each subject deals with very different content and concepts, uses different kinds of language, and investigates the world using different kinds of methods. In short, subjects have different disciplinary rules. A weakly classified curriculum will integrate different subjects, and introduce ways of linking different subjects and topics. The special language, concepts and ways of arguing will be less important, and the *connections* between subjects will be more important.

Now we can go one step further. We can use the term classification to describe the relationship – or the boundary – between our ‘everyday knowledge’ (such as driving a car, tying your shoelaces, cooking rice) and formally taught ‘school knowledge’ (addition, climatology, World War II). A curriculum can be described as strongly classified if clear distinctions are drawn between what is learnt in school and what is learnt in everyday life. School systems that make very little use of everyday life experiences to teach school knowledge, or test the application of knowledge in real life, are strongly classified.

Some subjects tend to be, by their nature, more strongly classified than others. For example:

- Life Orientation would be a weakly classified subject because it doesn’t have many special terms or language which must be understood to understand the subject. It generally uses everyday language, concepts, and content in its teaching. By its nature, Life Orientation draws on the everyday knowledge of learners, and refers to everyday knowledge and practices.
- Mathematics, which can be understood only at higher levels, especially if one understands abstract Mathematical content, concepts, and Mathematical language. For example, we need to understand the words ‘addition’, ‘equation’ etc. to do Mathematics. Mathematics tends to be a strongly classified subject. The boundary between Mathematics and everyday life is strong.

### Stop. Think.

Think back to Bernstein’s distinction between competence and performance curricula. Which do you think would be characterized by strong classification and which by weak classification? Was *Curriculum 2005* strongly or weakly classified? What about the *National Curriculum Statement* – is it strongly classified? Does it vary at different levels?



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

## Collection and integrated curricula

In his article, Bernstein uses the difference between strong and weak classification to introduce a distinction between two types of curriculum models. A curriculum that has strong classification or has strong boundaries

(where the emphasis is on keeping parcels of content apart) would be referred to by Bernstein as a 'collection'-type curriculum. A curriculum which has weaker boundaries between subjects would be referred to as an 'integration'-type curriculum.

And:

- a 'collection' curriculum and a performance curriculum refer to similar sets of curriculum practices;
- an 'integrated' curriculum and a competence curriculum refer to similar sets of curriculum practices.

What do these concepts, 'collection' and 'integrated' curricula, mean in practice? How are these terms related to Bernstein's use of performance and competence approaches to curriculum?

Let's explore the subject History again using these two ideal types of knowledge organization. But remember that in reality there are degrees of integration or collection in all curricula.

## Collection-type, performance curricula

Think back briefly to your own schooling. How did the Mathematics class differ from the History class, and if you had one, the Art class? Were you expected to behave in different ways? Was the way the teacher taught very different? Was the organization of the classroom different?

In a collection type of curriculum, History would have a clearly stipulated amount of time designated to it in the week. The History classroom would be clearly marked out, with wall displays relevant only to that subject. It would be very distinct from subjects such as Mathematics or Geography. Each of these subjects would have its own rules, different ways of teaching and learning, and different ways of assessing and evaluating learning. These would be distinct from the other subjects.



Learners would need to ‘collect’ units of knowledge, which had been clearly specified at different levels, in order to ‘pass’. Assessment would be based on clear, externally determined criteria of what is right and wrong, and would often be formal, for example an examination.

Access to this knowledge, especially at the higher level would not be a right for all, it would be a privilege that learners earned by doing well in their studies (by passing). In a sense knowledge resembles private property, with various kinds of ‘fences’ around it to exclude those who don’t have it or have failed to get it. For instance, learners are carefully screened, by means of streaming or stiff examinations, to establish who belongs and who is to be excluded. Learners are encouraged at higher levels to develop subject loyalty, and they come to identify themselves as ‘historians’, or ‘mathematicians’, etc.

In a collection type of curriculum there is a hierarchical (or ‘vertical’) organization of knowledge. In other words, new knowledge builds on previous knowledge and becomes increasingly complex and abstract. Teachers or lecturers usually have considerable control over content, pace, and sequencing because the teachers are responsible for initiating learners into the mysteries, rules, and understandings of the discipline. Learners have very little control. ‘After all,’ people holding this view would say, ‘how can learners decide what to learn when they don’t yet fully know what History or Mathematics is about?’

This is education for knowledge in depth – a lot of detail, content, and increasingly demanding or difficult concepts within individual disciplines. This kind of knowledge tends to carry high status and prestige, and is usually theoretical, stressing its remoteness from everyday knowledge and life.

A collection type of curriculum is associated with the performance model of curriculum. Subject content, space, and time are strongly classified in both.

### Stop. Think.

At this point add any new information (or queries) you have to the summary on page 179.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

## Integrated, competence-based curricula

Now let’s look at the subject ‘History’ in an integrated type of curriculum. History would probably belong to the Human and Social Sciences learning area. It would also be taught as part of a broader theme or project, most often drawn from everyday life or the learners’ own experiences. It might, for example, be something like ‘My Community’. The decision to explore a theme such as ‘My Community’ was probably made in discussion with a number of teachers of different subjects such as Geography, Music, Languages, and, even, Mathematics. It was probably also either discussed with learners or, at least, decided on after carefully examining who the learners were.



The theme – My Community – would determine the content for all the subjects collaborating on this particular unit of work. The kind of Mathematics or History or Science taught would be determined by the kind of activities that are logically part of a theme such as ‘My Community’. In other words, subjects are no longer defined by their own content, concepts, language, and rules. Instead, they are taught using the everyday language of the theme, and concepts are taught if they can be used by the learner.

In an integrated type of curriculum, then, subjects stand in an ‘open relation’ to one another. They are weakly classified.

The classroom walls would probably reflect broader themes, rather than focusing specifically on History. Since there is more room in integrated curricula for a greater degree of learner participation, learners would also probably be encouraged to express their own understandings and experiences, and bring various relevant articles into the classroom. Teaching and learning are less likely to be teacher-driven and more likely to allow some space for learners to decide on what they learn, in what order and at what level of depth.

We can see that in the integrated curriculum contents of different subjects are blurred in relation to each other. This is education in breadth. There is less focus on detailed understanding of specific subjects, and much more emphasis on ‘horizontal’ or ‘lateral’ links across a greater range of subjects.

An integrated curriculum is associated with the competence model we outlined earlier. Both are characterized by weak classification, both in terms of boundaries between subjects and boundaries between everyday knowledge and school knowledge.

## Applying Bernstein’s concepts to describe SA curriculum

*Curriculum 2005* was, largely, an integrated and competence-based curriculum, while the old South African curriculum tended to be a collection-type, performance-based curriculum. The *National Curriculum Statement*



is a hybrid or mixed model. It is more strongly classified and less integrated than *Curriculum 2005*, but it keeps many aspects of a competence model of curriculum, such as a learner-centred pedagogy. At the GET level classification between subjects is weaker (and we get Natural Sciences instead of Physical Sciences and Life Sciences), but at the FET level, traditional subjects have been reintroduced and classification between subjects is strong. The specification of outcomes and content also make the *National Curriculum Statement* more performance-like in relation to knowledge. Can you see how the concepts introduced allow us to describe and compare the curricula? They also give us some indications of the implications of different models. For example, given the mixed model of the *National Curriculum Statement*, there is likely to be some confusion and contradiction in how it is implemented.

In the next activity we will see how Bernstein's concepts were used to analyse *Curriculum 2005* in the Ministerial review of *Curriculum 2005* in 2000. The review, you will remember, gave rise to the *National Curriculum Statement*, our current national curriculum.

### Activity 30

Read the first excerpt from the Report of the Review Committee on *Curriculum 2005* (Reading 8.2), then answer the following questions in your workbook:

1. How do 'lateral demarcation' and 'vertical demarcation' relate to Bernstein's concepts of 'integrated curricula' and 'collection curricula'?
2. What does the Review Committee claim was the major problem caused by *Curriculum 2005*'s emphasis on integration?
3. Why is this problem a particularly serious obstacle in learning areas such as Mathematics, Science, and Languages?
4. Why is it also important in learning areas such as Life Orientation or Human and Social Sciences, where it is not always so vital to teach content in a particular sequence?

### What did we learn?

The *Curriculum 2005* Review Report makes it quite clear that this curriculum's overriding emphasis on integration – across disciplines, and between school knowledge and the learners' experience of everyday life – was introduced at the expense of giving attention to progression within specific disciplines and to systematic conceptual coherence within subjects. In other words, they pointed to the need for building up the knowledge of a subject by organizing concepts so that they relate to each other, and move towards increasing levels of difficulty.

The Review Committee did not reject integration itself, nor did it say that the curriculum designers ignored progression. The problem was that because the main organizing principle was integration, there wasn't enough other specification in the curriculum to make sure that learners would be able to make systematic conceptual progress. This was particularly the case in Mathematics and Science, where such progress is crucial, and in which the logical sequence of learning steps allows only limited variation. In

Curriculum 2005's overriding emphasis on integration was introduced at the expense of giving attention to progression within specific disciplines and to systematic conceptual coherence.



Spend about one hour on this activity.

The quote above is from the Review Committee on *Curriculum 2005*

other words, in these subjects, certain concepts have to be learnt before others, and the curriculum did not show teachers what these concepts were and in what order they should be taught. But the Committee found in all subjects that the conceptual sequence was not clear. They argued that it was important that this be addressed to ensure that learners actually progress, moving on to higher levels of complexity, without unduly repeating some items of content, or missing out entirely on others that might be important.

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*The Curriculum 2005 Review Committee members found that the prescription of an integrated curriculum did not work for most learners.*

The Review Committee's criticism was thus based on the need for more balance in the subjects between horizontal and vertical organization. In other words, they were saying that the curriculum had swung too far to an integrated curriculum, and needed to rescue features associated with a collection curriculum.

If the Review Committee is right, then it is clear that the curriculum had shifted too far towards integration. The Committee argues that there is a need for an emphasis on systematic conceptual progression – a hallmark of a collection, performance curriculum – but it doesn't imply a return to the rigid collection/performance curriculum of apartheid. The *National Curriculum Statement* attempts to achieve a balance between these different approaches. It is uneven across subjects in how it does this. Whereas in Mathematics, for example, the *National Curriculum Statement* leans more towards a strongly classified, performance-type curriculum with a vertical organisation of knowledge, subjects such as Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, and to a certain extent Social Sciences are still very integrated, with content less well specified within grades.

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You will find that the review makes a similar argument to the one we introduced earlier around powerful knowledge. Committee members found that the prescription of an integrated curriculum did not work for most learners. They point out (on page 242) that 'social transformation can only be successfully pursued through widespread access to high level skills and knowledge'. They argue that 'a high knowledge and skill curriculum thus becomes the means to promote social justice, growth and development', and that the learners who would lose out most heavily would be those whom the new curriculum was designed to benefit. In other words, they are arguing that if schools increasingly teach everyday knowledge and neglect conceptual knowledge – as a radically integrated curriculum tends to do – then those who most need to escape from poverty, and find or create work for themselves in the increasingly demanding work environment of a global economy, will not be given the specialized skills and knowledge required to do this.

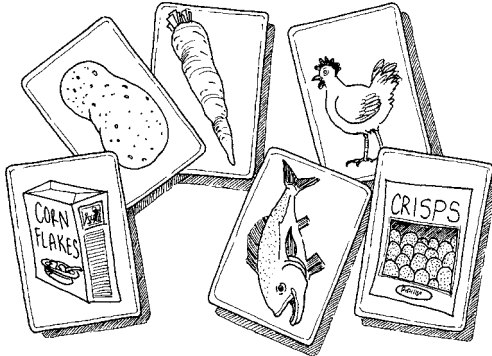
In the next section we return to the issue of school knowledge and everyday knowledge. It is a key distinction in thinking about the curriculum as an organization of knowledge. Blurring the distinction between everyday and school knowledge is supposed to give a greater number of learners access to the curriculum, by drawing on their own experiences and understandings. But does it in fact achieve its aims?

# School knowledge and everyday knowledge

# 6.4

## Activity 31: Looking at how we sort knowledge

1. Look at the pictures below:



Spend about 20 minutes on this activity.

2. Sort the pictures into two groups, in any way that you like.

Group One	Group Two

3. Now write down a reason why you sorted the pictures in this way.  
 4. Look at the pictures again. Sort them into groups once again. You may sort them in any way you wish, but do so differently from the way you did it the first time.

Group One	Group Two

5. Now write down a reason why you sorted the pictures in this way.  
 6. Now look at the two reasons that you gave for sorting the groups. Think carefully: what is the difference between the reason you gave for the first sorting and that you gave for the second sorting? Write down the difference.

These tasks were originally presented by Bernstein to two groups of seven-year-old children from the same school. One group came from middle-class homes, and the other group from working-class homes. Both groups were given a number of cards showing different kinds of food. The children were asked to group the food in any way they pleased, and then to explain why they had grouped them in this way. The children gave the following kinds of reasons.

	Working-class children	Middle-class children
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'It's what we have for breakfast.'</li> <li>• 'It's what Mum makes.'</li> <li>• 'I don't like those'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'They're vegetables.'</li> <li>• 'They've got butter in them.'</li> <li>• 'They come from the sea.'</li> </ul>



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

**Stop. Think.**

- In what ways are the kinds of reasons given by the two groups different?
- What experiences do the groups use to explain the way in which they grouped the food?

To sort the cards, the working-class children, on the one hand, mainly used criteria which were based on the context of their everyday lives. They referred to people and events in their homes, and they expressed personal emotions. Their principles for sorting the cards were related specifically to the local contexts of their lives.

The middle-class children, on the other hand, did not use personal, localized principles for sorting the cards. Their responses were more indirect and abstract, and did not reflect their own experiences so directly.

The experiment continued. The cards were mixed up again and the two groups were asked to sort them in a different way.

Can you do it a second time? Can you put them together in a different way?



This time, the middle-class children grouped them according to their everyday experiences, using personal and localized categories. The working-class children sorted the cards in much the same way as they had done before. The middle-class group were able to change their principles for classifying the cards, but the working-class group did not show an ability to do this.

**What does this tell us?**

Nick Taylor's remarks here are taken from N. Taylor and P. Vinjevold, *Getting Learning Right: Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project* (Johannesburg, JET, 1999.)



... middle-class children have access to two principles of classification [here he means sorting, not classification in Bernstein's sense of the term]: one formal and specialized (a system learnt at school and associated with school knowledge) and the other personal and localized (a system learnt informally and associated with everyday knowledge).

In the school context, where the research was conducted, the first classification principle (school knowledge) is preferred by the middle-class children. Working-class children, who have access only to non-specialized principles of classification, sorted according to their personal experience.

### What do we mean by ‘specialized’?

Specialized here refers to the particular knowledge, skills, and language that apply to a specific area of activity. Specialized, formal knowledge usually has special language and concepts that make it specific. For example, you may complain that you have a sore stomach. You will use the term ‘sore tummy’. Your doctor will use quite different terms – he or she applies a specialized language to describe your problem, which is based on specialized knowledge. So the doctor might refer to your ‘sore tummy’ as ‘gastroenteritis’, or even, ‘appendicitis’.

How would this operate in ‘specialized school knowledge’? In everyday terms you might say: ‘I have an apple, then someone gives me another apple, so I have two apples.’

But in terms of school knowledge you might say: ‘One plus one equals two.’ Here the knowledge is specialized through language (‘plus’ and ‘equals’) and concepts (addition). It is a more formal, abstract, and specialized way of thinking and speaking about things. It tends to be distanced from the personal and the local (for example your particular stomach ache, or apples).

But what does the above experiment with middle- and working-class children mean for teaching? This is what Taylor says:



The problem raised by this research is obvious: middle-class children, because of factors such as the kinds of conversations which they experience in their homes and social circles, and their access to books, computers, travel and other sources of information and experience, have ready entry into and are familiar with the principles which underlie school knowledge. Consequently, education tends to reinforce the codes which these children bring to school, and it provides more opportunities to the middle classes for success, greater access to higher education and to the professions and other higher-earning occupations.

*codes:* in this instance, code refers to the conventional ways of thinking and speaking that children bring to school

Working-class children have a greater distance to travel to acquire the elaborated language codes and specialized principles of classification which structure formal school knowledge.

Taylor is saying that there is a significant difference between the home contexts of working-class children and the context of the school. In some ways the middle-class children’s experiences at home (what they see, do, and talk about) have a closer match with what they learn at school. But what has this to do with curriculum?

In South Africa, after the demise of apartheid, curriculum reform tried to address the very big differences between learners by introducing everyday knowledge into the curriculum. It was hoped that, in this way, the experiences of all learners would be recognized, and that all cultures and ways of life would be affirmed. However, such shifts, when they have been made in other countries as well as in South Africa, seem to produce unanticipated outcomes. Earlier we spoke about powerful knowledge. Strong classification between everyday knowledge and school knowledge means a greater chance of being inducted into specialized knowledge. We live in a society which is based on expertise, experts, specialists. Everyone needs to be specialized to do something particular. This is partly why to be specialized means to have access to powerful knowledge. And powerful knowledge provides greater opportunities and better chances in life and in work. We have to question then, whether introducing more everyday knowledge into the curriculum will help, especially working-class learners, to access better life chances. In the next activity, the implications will become clearer. Before that look at the text box below which summarizes the differences between everyday knowledge and school knowledge.

### What do we mean by ‘everyday’ and ‘school’ knowledge?

- 
- Everyday knowledge is randomly acquired – from conversations overheard, from the TV or radio, from watching the parents, from punishments or praise.
- 
- Everyday knowledge is unsystematic – it is picked up in bits and pieces.
- 
- Everyday knowledge is oral – it is difficult to hold on to and repeat.
- 
- Everyday knowledge is based on opinion – it is personal and local.
- 
- Everyday knowledge is practical and concrete – it belongs to and talks about a particular context.
- 
- The type of everyday knowledge that is acquired depends on family and community context and culture.
- 
- School knowledge is grouped into particular subject disciplines – like Mathematics, Science, Geography, which develop their own language.
- 
- School knowledge is taught systematically, with simpler concepts or tasks coming first and more complex concepts or tasks building on that later.
- 
- School knowledge generalizes, puts ideas together into concepts and becomes increasingly abstract – it makes statements that claim to be true for many different contexts.
- 
- Disciplinary knowledge is based on evidence – it comes from a long tradition of research and debates about what counts as important knowledge.
- 
- School knowledge is written, which gives it more continuity over time.
- 
- School knowledge depends on a national curriculum that is the same for all children.
-

## Activity 32

Now read the following transcript of an actual grade one lesson, conducted after the introduction of the new curriculum reforms that emphasized everyday knowledge. Then respond to the questions that follow it. The teacher's name is John.



Spend about 30 minutes on this activity.

<b>Transcript of an actual grade one lesson</b>	
<b>John:</b>	I want us to talk about milk. What do we do with milk?
<b>Learner:</b>	We pour it on cereal. And on tea.
<b>John:</b>	Who drank milk this morning?
<b>There is no response from the learners.</b>	
<b>John:</b>	Where do we get milk?
<b>Learner:</b>	In oats.
<b>Learner:</b>	Cornflakes.
<b>Learner:</b>	In tea.
<b>Learner:</b>	From a cow.
<b>John:</b>	Let us brainstorm a cow.
<b>John sticks a picture of a cow on the board, over the word 'cow'. He writes the word 'milk' on the board. Although there are real cows milling about all over the township in which the school is situated, John continues:</b>	
<b>John:</b>	Let me show you a cow. Some of you don't know a cow.
<b>Learners:</b>	We do.
<b>John:</b>	Show me where we get meat in the cow.
<b>A learner goes to the board and points to the cow's udders. John leads the learners in singing a song about milking a cow. The learners all know the song, and sing enthusiastically.</b>	
<b>John:</b>	You said we get meat from the cow. Who doesn't eat meat?
<b>There is no response from the learners. John writes the word 'meat' on the board.</b>	
<b>John:</b>	What colour is a cow's meat?
<b>Learners:</b>	Brown.
<b>John:</b>	We don't say it is brown, we say it is red. What else do we get from a cow?
<b>Learners:</b>	Fur.
<b>John writes the word 'fur' on the board.</b>	
<b>John:</b>	How many things do we get from a cow?
<b>Learners:</b>	Three.
<b>John:</b>	Count them.
<b>John points to the three words as the learners count.</b>	
<b>Learners:</b>	One, two, three.
<b>John:</b>	Name things we get from milk.
<b>Learner:</b>	Cheese.
<b>Learner:</b>	Amasi.
<b>Learner:</b>	Butter.
<b>John:</b>	What else do we get from milk?
<b>Learner:</b>	Long life.

<b>Transcript of an actual grade one lesson</b>	
<b>John:</b>	Long life is milk.
<b>There is silence.</b>	
<b>John:</b>	Have we finished? Maybe we will remember it later, Let's go to meat. What do we get from meat?
<b>Learners:</b>	Bones.
<b>Learner:</b>	Fat.
<b>Learner:</b>	Lean meat.
<b>Learner:</b>	Biltong.
<b>John:</b>	Let's move on to fur. What do we get from it?
<b>Learners:</b>	Shoes.
<b>Learners (shout):</b>	Belts. Leather. Jackets.
<b>Learner:</b>	A pillow.
<b>Learners:</b>	Shirt, school bag.
<b>John:</b>	What I want us to do is to draw a cow. You must keep quiet because you will make mistakes if you talk.

1. In the light of what Taylor says, why is this lesson problematic? Do you think the children from disadvantaged homes will benefit from the significant amount of everyday knowledge used in this classroom? Briefly sketch your argument in your workbook.
2. Do you think that the learners have learnt anything new in this lesson? Are they able to respond appropriately to most of John's questions? To what do the questions relate?
3. Can you identify any new concepts that are introduced in this lesson?

In John's lesson there is no systematic building up of knowledge. The teacher does not move from the everyday to more formal concepts. The discussion stays rooted in the everyday, and the learners are not given an opportunity to arrive at new concepts on the basis of their experiences. The form of the discussion is unsystematic, and resembles everyday ways of speaking. When we talk, we tend to 'jump' around. We link concepts by the associations we make spontaneously in our minds, such as milk, a cow, things you get from a cow – beef, and horns. John conducts the classroom discussion in much the same way, and the content – if one can call it that – draws predominantly on everyday knowledge. John uses only concepts and content that are familiar to his learners – he makes no systematic attempt to extend their knowledge, or to take them into a deeper understanding of processes, for instance how milk comes from a cow to their tables or how leather goods are different from plastic.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

### **Stop. Think.**

Think about this lesson for a few minutes.

- How could John have guided the learners to move beyond their everyday experiences?
- How could he have taught them something new in this lesson?
- What new concepts could have been introduced?
- What resources could he have used that were easily available?



The lesson illustrates the overwhelming predominance of everyday knowledge, which sweeps across a bewildering mix of concepts: dairy products, materials derived from cattle, meat products, to mention a few. It would seem unlikely that learners will develop a systematic understanding of any of these ideas under such conditions. Indeed, the lesson seems designed to encourage the most superficial approach to learning, most of which could be related to the personal experiences of the learners, but which are unlikely to result in solid conceptual development. This is perhaps why the lesson concludes with the simple activity of drawing a cow.

This is not to say that there is no room for everyday knowledge. Concepts can be derived from real-life situations where appropriate, and concepts can be illustrated by drawing from the experience of learners. But John's lesson is not designed to encourage or facilitate any systematic conceptual development. As Nick Taylor says in the Reading on p. 276: *In the hands of teachers whose own conceptual frames are not strong, the results are likely to be disastrous where school knowledge is totally submerged in an unorganized confusion of contrived realism.*

To sum up what Taylor is saying: everyday knowledge (and discourse) is unsystematic, and tends to be disordered. It is appropriate in its context (everyday life), and as a 'ground' from which to draw examples or in which to apply learning – to make concepts accessible to learners. By starting with everyday examples and then moving on to broader concepts, we are inducting learners into formal school knowledge. But there is a danger of using everyday knowledge at the expense of conceptual development. If teachers never move learners beyond everyday knowledge, they are unlikely to develop the ability to think with more advanced concepts, or to order their knowledge in tune with the requirements of today's world.

But what about the issue that we raised earlier, that middle-class children have greater access to school knowledge than working-class children? Does a predominance of everyday knowledge in the classroom help learners from working-class families to learn better? It could be argued that it in fact achieves the opposite. A curriculum crowded with everyday knowledge does little to develop more flexible ways of knowing amongst working-class learners. The result is likely to be failure to gain access to the forms of knowledge and discourse that will open up higher levels of learning and provide gateways to the increasingly technical nature of work today.

This is how the radical thinker Antonio Gramsci put it:

*[The job of the school is to] accustom the students to reason, to think abstractly and schematically while remaining able to plunge back from abstract to real and immediate life, to see in each fact or datum what is general and what is particular, to distinguish the concept from the particular instance. ... It remains the teacher's pre-eminent obligation to accelerate the child's formation in conformity with the former [concepts] and in conflict with the latter [the particular].*

(Gramsci, 1986, quoted in Muller, 2001, p. 66)

We don't want to restrict any learners to the particular and the local, and in the name of equal opportunities all learners should be given access to the general and more universal forms of knowledge that mean greater access to thinking and to life beyond the here and now.



Spend about two and a half hours on this activity.

### Activity 33

Now turn to Reading 8.6 by Nick Taylor entitled *Curriculum 2005: Finding a balance between school and everyday knowledges*.

In this extract, Taylor expands on the points we have raised in looking at knowledge and the curriculum. Taylor asserts that education generally has moved towards a competence model of curriculum. In the article he differentiates between a number of different competence models, and looks at *Curriculum 2005* in terms of radical competence and progressive competence modes. Think about these questions as you read the article.

1. What is the difference between the two models in terms of their approaches to the distinction between everyday knowledge and school knowledge?
2. What are the implications of adopting a competence model of curriculum for teachers?

### Using these ideal types to analyse two lessons

Brett, another teacher at Goniwe, and Marge have very different ways of teaching. Look at the following pages to see the transcripts of them teaching literacy to grade three learners.



Spend about one and a half hours on the activity.

### Activity 34

1. Read the following two transcripts carefully. Then answer the following questions:
  - a. Write a few sentences on how knowledge is classified in the two lessons. Is there a strong boundary between school knowledge and everyday knowledge or a weak boundary? Answer separately for each lesson, and try to give a few reasons for your answers.
  - b. What do the learners in Brett's class learn?
  - c. What do the learners in Marge's class learn?
  - d. On the scale below, how would you rate the teacher and learners in Marge's and Brett's classes?

*closed questions:* questions that require simple, factual answers of the sort that are either right or wrong ('open' questions require learners to think about their answers).

Scale showing differences in approach from least learner centred to most learner centred				
1	2	3	4	5
Learners totally passive: respond automatically' to teacher's closed questions, which are aimed only at checking that they are paying attention. Teacher's main function is to instruct and impose structure and control.	Learners more involved: some of the activities and teacher's questions require responses from learners, but these are focused narrowly on the teaching content. Only the teacher's input is recognized as having authority.	Learners required to solve some problems, and encouraged to relate work to their own experiences and interests. Teacher is in control of lesson focus, pace, and sequence, and is the main source of information.	Learners participate actively in class: expected to take a lot of the responsibility for their own learning, they often work in groups. Teacher provides structure for groupwork, and holds back from always being the main source of information.	Learners fully active and responsible for own learning: expected to initiate many activities, solve problems, investigate, and do research – individually or in groups. Teacher a guide: suggests resources and provides necessary structure only.

2. Complete the following table in relation to the lessons. (You will find this a fairly easy task if you use the lists provided in Activity 15, pages 87–88 as a guide.)

Assumptions about	Marge' lesson	Brett's lesson
Teachers and learning		
Learners and learning		
Resources		
Knowledge		
Evaluation (try to infer this from the teacher's general approach)		
Social change		

4. Now, how would you describe each lesson in terms of competence and performance models? Give reasons for your answers.

BRETT'S LESSON	
<b>T:</b>	We are completing the story we were doing yesterday about the seasons of the year.
<b>T:</b>	Let's not make a noise. We are completing yesterday's story. Have we all turned to the correct page?
<b>Ls:</b>	Yes, Sir
<b>T:</b>	We have to. We really have to complete it. We can't start a new thing without finishing it.
<b>T:</b>	Have we all turned to page 20?
<b>L:</b>	Page 22, Sir
<b>T:</b>	I said page 20. We are going to read it again.
<b>T:</b>	Let's look at our books so that we can explain some of the things that we didn't explain yesterday. So that we can explain some of the things that we didn't explain yesterday.
<b>T reads same story as they read yesterday about the seasons of the year. He stands in front of the class.</b>	
<b>T:</b>	[reading] In spring animals and birds breed and it's warmer than winter. This time is the beginning of summer. In some places it rains a lot. Autumn is a period when people harvest what they've sown and they reap vegetables [same as yesterday]. Leaves ... winter ... dry ...
<b>T:</b>	That is the end of the story. They have been well explained. We have to move onto something else. There are four seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. How many?
<b>Ls:</b>	Four
<b>T:</b>	You can see clearly the order in the picture. Autumn then winter, spring, these times follow each other my children. They start with summer, then autumn, then winter, then spring. Ehlotyeni is summer in English. It is what?
<b>Ls:</b>	It is summer
<b>T:</b>	Ehlotyeni is summer in English. It is what?
<b>Ls:</b>	Summer
<b>T:</b>	Summer in what?
<b>Ls:</b>	In English

<b>T:</b>	Summer in English
<b>T:</b>	Ukwindla is autumn in English. It is what?
<b>Ls:</b>	Autumn
<b>T:</b>	Ubusika is winter in English. It is what?
<b>Ls:</b>	Winter
<b>T:</b>	Intwasahlobo is spring in English. It is spring in English. I confuse autumn and spring. There is no need to write these down, we will do that later. There are certain things that happen in each season and that is why seasons are named like that. There is a reason why we call that period before summer spring. What I want to tell you. In summer it's warmer than winter, leaves turn green, and it rains in other areas. For example, in summer it rains in the Eastern Cape, where some of us come from. I said in summer it rains in some places, for example the Eastern Cape. But here where we are it rains in winter. In the Eastern Cape it rains in summer. Here it rains in winter, because we are in the Western Cape. Where are we?
<b>Ls:</b>	Western Cape
<b>T:</b>	So Western Cape is an example of where it rains in winter. It is said that leaves get beautiful in summer, they turn green. It is the time when we plant our food in the Eastern Cape because it rains. But here in urban areas we don't plant, except in summer, in areas set aside for that, like farms. But in the Eastern Cape we have fields where we plant. Mothers and fathers stand at that time ploughing the fields, and maybe that is why God had a plan as to why the rains have to come in summer there. The rain there is heavy and is different from the winter rain here. It is heavy because of the fact that it is hot. The rain there is heavy. Our rain here is fine. Yesterday we touched on autumn, we said it's a cool time, people start eating fresh vegetables. People work hard in the Eastern Cape. They plant vegetables. Some of you don't know imithwane [first veggies that come up] but do know about pumpkins and butternuts. The women who sell outside sell them. Those who live in the Eastern Cape know imithwane. Now I have read and I also want you to read. Sonto read for us. Stand in front. Please don't make a noise so we can all hear Sonto read. Sonto will read and then someone will read after her, but it must be a boy.
<b>Sonto:</b>	[reads] In spring animals and birds breed and it's warmer than winter. This time is the beginning of summer. In some places it rains a lot. Autumn is a period when people harvest what they've sown and they reap vegetables.
<b>T:</b>	Thank you Sonto. Sit down.

**MARGE'S LESSON**

<b>T:</b>	I want the Joeys on the mat.
<b>Ls start unpacking sets of cards from small Tupperware containers in their book bags</b>	
<b>T:</b>	Quickly.
<b>T:</b>	Brandon, let's see if you can be first for a change, not last. Well done Candi, you can begin as soon as you've finished putting them out.
<b>L:</b>	Start, market, startle, spark, chart, sharpener, sparkle
<b>T:</b>	Sorry, I need a sentence for startle.
<b>L:</b>	Brandon startled me, like scared, surprised or scared.
<b>T:</b>	Brandon startled me doesn't actually tell me what it means. I walked down the passage and Brandon came into the room and startled me. Something you weren't expecting. That's what startled means. Read.
<b>L:</b>	Crown, drown, flower, power, powder, shower, trowel, tr...
<b>T:</b>	Trowel yes.
<b>L:</b>	Trowel, vowel, towel

<b>T:</b>	I need a sentence for trowel.
<b>L:</b>	Trowel
<b>T:</b>	We spoke a lot about it at the beginning of the year. We even watched the builders with their trowels.
<b>L:</b>	Oh. They use trowels to put the cement on the walls.
<b>T:</b>	A trowel is a tool. Um, tie your shoelaces please Brandon. Other Brandon.
<b>L:</b>	Short, porter, reporter, order, report, perform, shorten
<b>T:</b>	Shorten. I need a sentence for shorten.
<b>L:</b>	Last night we had to shorten my tracksuit pants.
<b>T:</b>	Because?
<b>L:</b>	Because it was too long.
<b>T:</b>	They were too long. Yes.
<b>L:</b>	Mouth, Loud, about, trout, south, ground.
<b>T:</b>	Well done. Shoo. Give me a sentence for trout.
<b>L:</b>	Me and my brother went trout fishing at the river.
<b>T:</b>	Mmm. Why didn't you go to the sea for trout fishing?
<b>L:</b>	Because trout don't swim in the sea.
<b>T:</b>	You say my brother and I went trout fishing at the river. Well done.
<b>L:</b>	Purchase, curtain, disturb, survive, surface
<b>T:</b>	Surface. Did you practice these words?
<b>L:</b>	Yes
<b>T:</b>	But with whom? Mmm? Alone?
<b>L:</b>	No with my big brother.
<b>T:</b>	With your big brother, with your mother or father next time, hey. Read this one again.
<b>L:</b>	Surface
<b>T:</b>	Surface. Purpose. Now give me a sentence for surface.
<b>L:</b>	I surf in the sea.
<b>T:</b>	You surf in the sea. Okay. You surf in the sea. That's good. That means you ride along the waves. Do you swim right under the sea or do you swim on top of the water?
<b>L:</b>	On top
<b>T:</b>	You swim on the ...
<b>LS:</b>	Surface
<b>T:</b>	Okay. You swim on the surface, on the top. Surface. You must do homework with your mom or your dad please.
<b>T:</b>	Good. Put your cards away.
<b>T:</b>	And what are we reading?
<b>L:</b>	Atlantis' race.
<b>T:</b>	Okay. Move into me. Right in. So what was the story about yesterday?
<b>L:</b>	The day they found out that the worm is used for cloth.
<b>T:</b>	Yes, and what's it called? What kind of cloth do they make from those worms? It starts with a 'ssss'.
<b>L:</b>	Silk

<b>T:</b>	Silk. Absolutely. Silk. Atalanta's Race. Atalanta's Race. Page 42. Candi do you want to begin?
<b>L:</b>	Atalanta was the swi...
<b>T:</b>	Swiftest
<b>L:</b>	Swiftest runner in the world.

### What did we learn?

In both lessons the object of the lesson is literacy – that is teaching how words sound and mean and are put together. But the lessons differ. In Brett's class, there is very weak classification between school knowledge and everyday knowledge. The teacher focuses on knowledge that is familiar to the learners, and that many of them know. There is also weak classification in that it is not always clear whether this is a literacy lesson or a Geography lesson, with a focus on climate and place. The learners in Brett's class are not required to produce new knowledge themselves, but answer simple questions from the teacher. In both lessons the teachers seem to act on certain assumptions about learners and their roles in classrooms; about whose knowledge is valid in classrooms; about evaluation; about classroom interaction, and so on. We also noticed that these lessons seem to cross the boundary, which is often the case in reality, between Bernstein's ideal types.

In Brett's lesson, the teacher does not encourage the learners to offer their own knowledge. They do very little talking.

In Marge's lesson, although the teacher controls the selection, sequence, and pace of the lesson carefully, she directs the learners in offering their own productions. In Marge's lesson there is strong classification of the subject literacy. Although drawing on everyday examples, the focus is strictly on how words sound, how they are put together grammatically, and the meaning of words. In neither lesson are learners given very much opportunity to bring their own knowledge and experiences into the classroom.

Marge presents the learners with corrections to what they produce, which she assumes should not be open to debate. Hers approximates more of a performance type of pedagogy – where absences in learners' productions are identified and corrected. In Brett's lesson, no correction of learners is made, and no time is spent finding out what various learners already know. The teacher does not enable them to make links between the rather remote content that they are about to be taught and their own experiences.

It's not hard to imagine that in Marge's lesson the learners will probably have to work individually, and will be marked according to their ability to reproduce the knowledge that the teacher has given them. In Brett's lesson, the learners might be given a chance to work in groups to discuss particular questions, but it is unlikely that any formal evaluation will take place.

Marge has full control over the selection of content, sequence, and pacing of her lesson. Both lessons are relatively teacher-centred.

It is difficult to classify Brett's lesson as either competence or performance. However, in at least one sense Brett's lesson does not conform to the competence approach: in the excerpt that we read, he is still pretty much

in control of the pacing and sequence of the lesson, if not of the selection of knowledge and ideas coming from the learners. He has not opened up this part of the lesson to group discussion, for instance.

So, in both lessons we can detect some mixing of approaches, though Bernstein's 'performance/competence' analysis provides a useful framework for identifying the assumptions and curriculum approaches adopted by the two teachers.

## Pulling it all together

### Stop. Think.

Now, using the above descriptions of the competence and performance models of curriculum, think about whether Tyler's, Stenhouse's and Freire's ideas about the curriculum are closer to performance or competence models.

We can see once again that Bernstein's models or ideal-types provide us with a way of categorizing the assumptions that underlie different approaches to the curriculum. In terms of these categories, we can broadly classify the assumptions that we have come across so far in the following way.

Competence/Integrated	Performance/Collection
Ben's views (pages 27, 64)	Rose's views (page 27)
Freire, Stenhouse	Tyler
	Marge's lesson
Syllabus A (page 73)	Syllabus B (page 76)
<i>Curriculum 2005</i>	<i>National Curriculum Statement (hybrid)</i>

Remember that these are broad distinctions, but we can say that the above table reflects that which the various views on curriculum most closely approximate. Thus, we can say that Stenhouse's and Freire's proposed ways of producing curriculum are closer to a competence model of curriculum, and that Tyler's way of producing curriculum suggests a performance model. However, Freire's competence approach is more learner-centred and politically radical than Stenhouse's.

What the theory allows us to do is to identify these differences, and then explore their implications.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

# 6.5

## Conclusion

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### Key learning points

- 1 In previous sections we established that ‘curriculum’ refers to more than the intentions of planners. We found that teachers and learners ‘reinterpret’ the plan, and that conditions, for example the availability of resources or the backgrounds of teachers and learners, influence this ‘reinterpretation’.
- 2 We have also seen indications that the same curriculum plan serves different social groups differently and unequally. This suggests that education, rather than being a process that equalizes society, could be a process that entrenches inequalities.
- 3 This also suggests that curriculum choices are value choices with political implications, rather than value-free, technical choices. We examined South Africa’s move to outcomes-based education to see what values underpinned this choice, and the implications it may have for South African society.
- 4 In this section we further explored the move towards an integrated, competence-based curriculum. Using Bernstein’s analysis, we found that the new curriculum shares characteristics with new curricula elsewhere in the world. Bernstein called this a move away from performance (or collection) curricula towards competence (or integrated) curricula.
- 5 Some of the key characteristics of this shift were moves away from:
  - abstract and content-heavy subjects towards learning that drew strongly from the contexts of learning, and focused on developing the competence to operate in that context;
  - strictly segregated and discipline-based subjects towards integrated theme-based, or issue-based learning areas;
  - teacher-centred transmission of important knowledge towards learner-centred acquisition of knowledge and skills through active learning;
  - a strict separation of school knowledge and everyday knowledge towards a pedagogy in which this separation is blurred.
- 6 We found that these changes in how knowledge is organized in the curriculum have different implications for different learners. In the South African context, Taylor argues that working-class learners might be excluded from the promised benefits of the prescribed curriculum by the rigid application of an ‘integrated’ curriculum. He argues that the ‘radical’ integration and over-focus on everyday knowledge means that the curriculum has the unwanted consequence of denying working-class and poor learners access to the higher-level thinking skills, specialized knowledge, and conceptual development associated with school knowledge and performance curricula.



- 7 We used Bernstein's ideal types as a lens to analyse the enacted curriculum in two classrooms, helping us to see more clearly how teachers work with knowledge.
- 8 We concluded the section by warning that, like other theoretical models, these were also ideal-types and should not be simplistically imposed on the real world. However, we also emphasized that ideal-types – theoretical models – were important tools that enabled us to understand better changes in curricula. We tried to show how Bernstein's models mirrored, in some ways, the curriculum models we'd examined earlier.

### Curriculum-analysis assignment – thinking about outcomes

Not much has been written yet about the *National Curriculum Statement*. One ardent critic of outcomes-based education, however, is Stephanie Allais. She has written extensively about the National Qualifications Framework and Outcomes-Based Education.

- 1 Turn to the *National Curriculum Statement* extract on page 237 and find the definition of what an outcome is. Does this definition make clear to you what an outcome is? What questions do you still have regarding outcomes? Write these down.
- 2 Turn to Reading 8.9, Stephanie Allais' article, '*Problems with qualification reform in senior secondary education in South Africa*' on page 292. In this extract Stephanie identifies a number of problems with outcomes. Read carefully through the extract and write down at least four problems that she identifies with outcomes.
- 3 Now find the *National Curriculum Statement* for your own subject/learning area. Look carefully at the outcomes. Using examples, explain why you think Stephanie Allais is correct or incorrect in her criticisms of outcomes. From your own practice, can you think of any strengths or weaknesses in using outcomes to organize your teaching? Are there any other criticisms that you can think of that Stephanie has not mentioned? Do you think there are some advantages to the outcomes approach that have not been mentioned?

Imagine that you are writing your answers in order to present them to teachers at your school. Make sure your ideas are well stated in your own words, and your examples are clear.



Spend about three hours on this assignment.