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Taking a Longer View: Processes of Curriculum Development in the Department of Graphic Design at the University of Johannesburg

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Abstract

In the face of the complex array of competing pressures currently faced by higher education, globally, nationally and institutionally (Maistry, 2010; Clegg, 2005) academic staff who are required to reconceptualise their curricula are often tempted to focus on the immediate demands of the classroom rather than the broader knowledge and curriculum-related issues which inform pedagogical practice. In this paper we argue that opportunities should be created for staff to consider knowledge domains and the curriculum in all its dimensions from a distance and in a more nuanced, theoretically informed way (Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, forthcoming; Luckett, 2012; Quinn, 2012). The paper aims to show how a model for curriculum development which mirrors the three tiers of Bernstein's pedagogical device was used in the field of Graphic Design as a means of facilitating a deeper, more explicit understanding of the nature of the discipline and the values underpinning it, the kind of curriculum emerging from it and the student identities associated with it. (Bernstein, 1999, 2000; Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, forthcoming; Maton, 2007). Drawing on staff responses during early curriculum development workshops, examples from the curriculum as well as data emerging from group discussion and individual interviews, it identifies a range of positions about several aspects of the field of Graphic Design (Maton, 2009) and the related curriculum. This reveals both areas of agreement as well as contestation and provides a solid platform for further interrogation and development.

Keywords: Bernstein; curriculum development; discipline; identity; pedagogic device; staff development.

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Introduction: Taking the Longer View

> I teach by industry standards and I am very strict on certain rules and they have to do them the way that it would be required of them in industry (R6[2])
>
> It is my pet peeve when people refer to the industry because it is as if it is this omnipotent, existing thing that everyone knows and agrees to. There is no such thing as industry standards . . .surely we should be exceeding things…experimentation and creativity is important…if we are only preparing students for [powerful players in industry] then it's a problem (R5)

These comments reflect one of the central tensions in the field of Graphic Design that impacts on curriculum development. They speak to the complexity of the process and highlight the importance of critical engagement by staff which addresses these tensions and identifies ways of providing students with epistemological access (Morrow, 1992). Such engagement includes deliberation on what is valued as disciplinary knowledge at university and whose interests it should serve (Luckett, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010), as well as on national and institutional debate about curriculum. This requires staff to take a more holistic view of curriculum development.

However, academic staff in the higher education context in South Africa and internationally repeatedly identify pressure of time as being one of their greatest challenges. This, in combination with ever-increasing administrative roles and an emphasis on an audit culture and performativity (Maistry, 2012) means that the minimal time available for curriculum development initiatives needs to be put to optimal use. How can the time best be used to facilitate the epistemological access our students need in order to achieve academic success? If curricula are to achieve this, the creation of enabling environments which provide the space for staff to step back from classroom practice, take a more holistic view and interrogate their understanding of their disciplines, their curricula and related pedagogical practice, is essential. This enables them to hone theoretical insights within the field of Higher Education Studies before becoming preoccupied with the craft required to facilitate teaching and learning.

[2] R=respondent

One of the contentions here is that academics need to have access to 'powerful knowledge' which Young (2008) defines as knowledge which exists independently of social experience and context and which, although relatively stable, is never completely fixed and is therefore subject to change. In this case it refers to the discourses of Education Studies to which academic staff, as disciplinary specialists, may not have access. Knowledge of these discourses can result in new insights which lead to the reconceptualisation of both the curriculum and associated pedagogical practice.

This article aims to illustrate how a model for curriculum development, which reflects Bernstein's three–tiered pedagogical device, was applied in a Department of Graphic Design (GD) at a South African comprehensive university. Drawing on data from curriculum development workshops, curriculum documents, group discussion and individual interviews, it focuses on emerging debates related to the following themes: the nature of the discipline and the values that underpin it, the way in which the curriculum is constructed, the key differences between a degree and a diploma, the kinds of students associated with it, and the relationship between the discipline and industry. The data and analysis aims to demonstrate that a model which makes educational theory accessible to academic staff can deepen curriculum debates, discussions and initiatives which seek to facilitate epistemological access for students.

The paper begins by identifying challenges facing national higher education and then describes the origins and current profile of the university in which this study is located. It then highlights the key principles of teaching and learning within the institution with particular reference to the institutional teaching and learning philosophy and identifies the theoretical assumptions underpinning the curriculum development workshops developed to facilitate the dissemination of the teaching philosophy in the Faculties and the follow-up discussion. It ends by presenting selected data from GD, which tracks the early implementation of particular programmes and offers some observations about the nature of the discipline, the curricula derived from them and the kinds of student identities they promote.

National and Institutional Context

The broad context for this paper is the South African Higher Education Sector which is facing numerous, complex challenges, which include increasing pressure to address issues of

access and retention, to ensure adequate throughput rates and to respond appropriately to the national skills shortage by developing responsive curricula which will ensure that graduating students are well prepared to contribute to the fast-changing world of work (Barnett, 2000). Linked to this is debate around the possible introduction of a four-year curriculum which is gathering momentum and a growing emphasis on applied, new knowledge and the need to combine work with learning. There is also recognition of the need for sustained research into the development of curricula for an increasing diverse student population. (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007; CHE, 2013).

The institutional context for the paper is the University of Johannesburg (UJ), a large comprehensive university consisting of almost 50,000 students spread over four campuses and offering an extremely wide range of qualifications, including degrees, diplomas and certificates. The enormity of the challenge for the provision of high quality teaching and learning that this alone poses is clear but when considered in combination with recent changes to the school curriculum, the rapid transformation of the demographic profile of the university and uncertainty amongst academic staff about how to respond to changing conditions, the complexities of the task confronting them are thrown into even sharper relief. In response to these challenges, and in order to guide the academic staff, many universities developed teaching and learning policies, frameworks and strategies. At UJ these were enriched and complemented by a position paper (Amory, Gravett and van der Westhuizen, 2008) which emphasised 'learning-to-be' as opposed to the more traditional transmission methods which foreground content and the importance of 'learning about'.

The central argument of the concept document is that students need to be prepared for a complex, fast changing future which requires a different type of learning from that frequently found in traditional classrooms. Following Barnett (2000; 2009), and Bruner (in Candy, 1991), the authors argue that in an unstable world of 'supercomplexity' students need to 'learn to be' rather than simply to 'learn about'. They concede that university students need to learn facts, concepts and procedures but contend that this in itself is not sufficient – in order to 'see' the world as a specific knowledge practitioner, students need to

> learn the practices of the knowledge domain (discipline or profession) which includes the principles, dispositions, attributes, competencies, activities, skills, procedures and values of the knowledge domain. This type of learning also requires how best to utilize the conceptual frameworks to identify and solve problems (Amory, Gravett and van der Westhuizen, 2008:4).

They argue further that that learning should be about understanding and making connections rather than knowing and memorising facts and that this is most effectively achieved through active student engagement in the learning process.

While the concept document is clear on the importance of adhering to several underlying principles, it does not prescribe how disciplines should achieve this – instead it implies flexible, discipline-based implementation and suggests a range of possible learning tasks, which includes lectures, which provide a platform for varying interpretations of content and explanations of procedures, case studies, problem-solving, engaging with experts and developing artefacts. It also makes suggestions about appropriate assessment procedures and emphasises the importance of recognising the students' 'digital vernacular' (Amory et al, 2008: 7) and of integrating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into teaching and learning.

The concept document offers exciting possibilities for both curriculum reform and innovative pedagogy which integrates recent technologies into curriculum development and classroom practice. Its translation into concrete terms however, is not a simple process – its flexibility which is its key strength, also presents a complex and, for those unfamiliar with educational discourses, an extremely daunting task. In addition, as it is currently formulated, the document dichotomises 'learning about' and 'learning-to-be' which stands in sharp contrast to the theoretical position taken here and has had two important consequences in the context of curriculum development processes. First, it has resulted in an undesirable separation of knowledge and disciplinary practices and values which has led to the development of negative perceptions and the undervaluing of knowledge amongst some staff. Second, it has precipitated the reopening of discussion about both the formulation and intent of the document, which is ongoing.

Theoretical Framework

While the primary source informing the framework for the model suggested here is Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device, the questions formulated within each of the three tiers have been shaped by insights drawn from a range of scholars including Amory et al (2008); Barnett (2000, 2009); Barnett and Coates (2005); Bernstein (2000); Gee (2007); Luckett (2011); Maton (2000; 2009); Muller (2008); Shay et al (2011) and Young (2008).

The key concepts which shaped the framework can be understood using Bernstein's (1999) terminology which distinguishes between vertically and hierarchically structured knowledge. The former, which Maton (2000) refers to as the 'epistemic relation', is typically dominant in the Sciences where the knowledge itself and the possession of decontextualised, specialised knowledge and skills are emphasised. The latter, which frequently characterises the Humanities and Social Sciences, is referred to by Maton as the 'social relation', is context-dependent knowledge which focuses more on the identities and dispositions of the knowers as a way of measuring success and less on the possession of specialised knowledge. Importantly, however, although one relation or curriculum type is dominant, the two aspects are not mutually exclusive and all curricula should be viewed as a combination of both.

Within this, Bernstein's concept of the 'pedagogic device' (2000: 38) is central and has been used here to structure the theoretical framework and to provide an understanding of how academic staff mediate access to knowledge through curriculum development. Bernstein (2000) distinguishes between the ways in which knowledge is produced, recontextualised and evaluated in the curriculum and conceptualises these processes as three hierarchically structured, yet interrelated fields of practice, each with its own set of rules:

- the field of knowledge production where new knowledge is generated. This is underpinned by specific sets of values and associated knowledge claims.
- the field of recontextualisation which is a process of selection and transformation of knowledge into educational knowledge or curriculum which in turn promotes particular student identities
- the field of reproduction of knowledge as specific pedagogical and assessment practices

Using the pedagogic device as a broad framework a number of key concepts that can be mapped onto to each of the fields were identified. These concepts shape the selection of knowledge and skills from the field in which they were developed and inform the way in which they are recontextualised in the process of curriculum development and reproduced in the pedagogical context (Wheelahan, 2010). They also serve to inform the formulation of the questions that were posed during the curriculum development workshops.

Knowledge production

Given the diverse nature of the comprehensive university in terms of the range of programmes offered, the first set of ideas informing the model acknowledges the different qualification types that co-exist within a differentiated higher education system (Muller, 2008). These qualification types have different purposes; different conditions for acquisition are driven by different practices and epistemological values and draw on different knowledge types (Muller, 2008; Young, 2008). For example, diplomas and degrees within the same knowledge domain are designed for different contexts and therefore have different purposes and draw on different knowledge types.

Within knowledge domains there is also differentiation between knowledge types (Muller, 2008) ranging from theoretical to practical knowledge. Most disciplines are a combination of the two. Different knowledge types are differentially valued in the social world and it is important for students to be given access to 'powerful knowledges' which Young (2008: 14) argues 'provides more reliable explanations and new ways about thinking about the world and acquiring it can provide learners with a language for engaging in political, moral and other kinds of debate'. He also distinguishes between 'powerful knowledges' and 'knowledge of the powerful' which is defined in terms of the ruling class in a society which had privileged access to knowledge. This idea has its roots in Marxist thought which asserts that the dominant ideas at any time are those of the ruling class (2008: 14). In vocationally oriented qualifications knowledge that is valued is often determined by industry as well as by the academy. Prevailing social and political norms and values as well as contestation for legitimacy in the field also impact on the kinds on knowledge that are valued in disciplines in higher education. It is important for academic staff to reach a common understanding of their disciplinary knowledge domain, of the conventions and values that underpin it and of the ways in which this impacts on the development and nature of the curriculum.

Re-contextualisation

Access to disciplinary knowledge is the means by which students are provided with access to the complexity of the world (Wheelahan, 2010) and the curriculum is the vehicle used to provide access to this knowledge. Students' access to different domains of knowledge should be facilitated in such a way that the implicit underlying conventions, procedures, attributes and values are made explicit so that they can actively engage with them and act purposefully

in relation to them in a range of different situations. Desired student identities associated with different domains, should be clearly identified, aligned with and integrated into the curriculum and module purpose and outcomes.

In order to ensure that students have access to disciplines, academics need to have an in-depth understanding of their knowledge domains and conceptualise the distinctions between knowledge types – fields, occupations, knowledges and induction practices within their specific disciplines and to locate their qualifications along the conceptual – contextual continuum. All curricula are a combination of conceptual and contextual knowledge types but in order to develop coherent curricula it is important to identify the predominance of one over the other. In addition, appropriate selection, pace and sequencing is crucial to the development of coherent curricula (Muller, 2008; Young, 2008).

Academic staff also need to recognise the challenges and impact of a world of 'supercomplexity' and the uncertainty associated with it (Barnett, 2000). They need to ensure that they embed knowledge and skills that prepare students to make sense of a world that is constantly changing (Wheelahan, 2012) and explore the implications of this for the development of student identities.

It is important to note here that there is a 'discursive gap' between the fields of knowledge production and recontextualisation (Bernstein, 2000; Maton, 2000) which arises when a discourse is relocated from its original context of production (Luckett, 2009: 422). This highlights the fact that when knowledge is re-interpreted and transformed into a curriculum, there is space for ideological contestation and interpretation and it is important for staff to recognise and acknowledge this. For Bernstein (in Moore, 2013: 37) this is also a site of 'possibilities' within disciplinary knowledge.

Reproduction

Knowledge in the curriculum is further recontextualised into classroom practice that will facilitate student acquisition of the knowledge. Thus this field of activity involves actual teaching and assessment practices. One of the main insights with regard to this field relates to the ways in which students are inducted into a disciplinary domain. Gee (2007) argues that this is best achieved via an academic 'apprenticeship' where disciplinary experts explicitly model good disciplinary practice. This implies that students are gradually inducted into a disciplinary community by being actively engaged in the learning process via a range of

innovative and carefully scaffolded learning and assessment tasks. It is important to note, however, that in designing these tasks staff need to differentiate between 'knowing' and 'doing' and carefully consider how the relationships between these aspects of knowledge shifts as the modules progress between different levels within the programme (Barnett, 2009).

Thus the field of knowledge production creates the discourses, the recontextualising field transmits them and transforms them into educational knowledge and the field of reproduction focuses on their acquisition in a pedagogical context (Bernstein in Wheelahan, 2010: 31).

Translation of Concepts into Questions: Towards a Model for Curriculum Development

In order to design a workshop that would facilitate discussion in a wide range of disciplines, these concepts were translated into a series of carefully constructed questions that were based on our theoretical position but at the same time allowed for an open exploration of the particular challenges facing different departments (Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, forthcoming). Of relevance here are those debates that addressed the themes identified in the introduction – perceptions of the knowledge domain, the nature of the curriculum, the institutional context, the relationship between the discipline and the needs of the institution and the associated student identities. They are classified in the diagram below in terms of the three levels of Bernstein's pedagogical device. The first set of questions relates to the field of knowledge production in GD and explores the way in which the discipline is defined, the kinds of knowledge that is valued and the roles of the academy and industry in determining this. The second set of questions relates to the process of recontextualising knowledge and examines the decisions that staff make in developing curricula. This includes how selections from the field are made as well as what is selected and who or what informs decisions. The third and final set of questions explores the kinds of teaching and assessment practices that are implemented in order to provide students with epistemological access to the discipline.

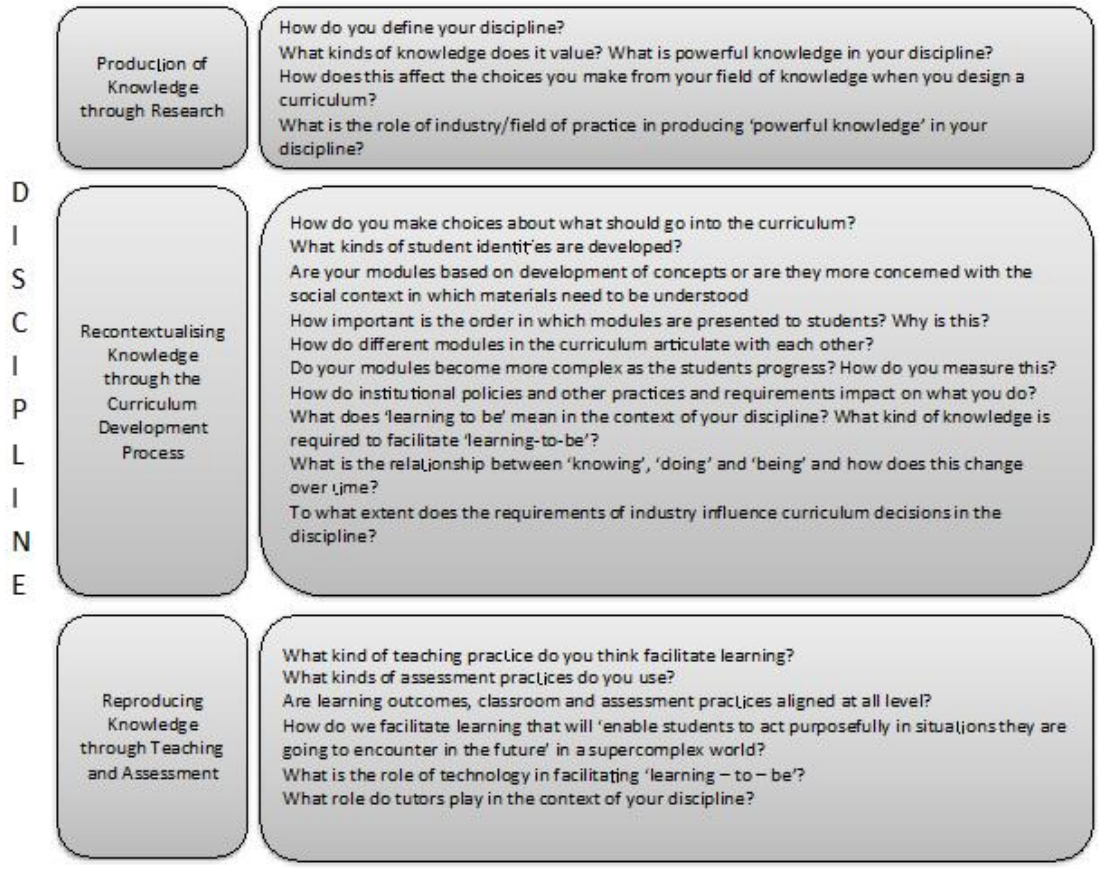

Figure 1: Model for Curriculum Development Workshops in Disciplines

Tasks, which were linked to these questions were developed to facilitate dialogue, which is essential for the development of a shared understanding of the curriculum development process and the learning-to-be philosophy. Dialogue is also central to the development of communities of practice whereby people learn to collaborate, share ideas and find solutions to common problems (Wenger, 1998). The resulting collaborative inquiry is powerful in developing confidence amongst staff and in facilitating creative and innovative thinking around teaching and learning.

It is important to point out that while the model is presented in a somewhat linear way, the production of curricula is a complex, reflexive process involving many rounds of decontextualising and recontextualising and may involve interplay between shifts in knowledge production, informed by research and industry, and the need to meet different institutional and other stakeholder requirements. The questions in the model provide staff with a useful, accessible guide with which to conceptualise ongoing curriculum development initiatives.

A Methodology for Exploring the Curriculum

The theoretical framework and the model outlined above were adopted to facilitate curriculum development workshops and ongoing discussion with academic staff in the Department of GD. This framework was useful because it allowed the discipline specialists to engage critically with questions around the nature of knowledge in GD in a way that made Bernstein's pedagogic device accessible to them. Staff were introduced to the questions contained in the model during two curriculum development workshops. During the first workshop the focus of the discussion was on the nature of the knowledge domain as well as the kinds of student identity promoted by the discipline. The debate generated in this workshop informed the discussion in the second, which focused on the challenges of enacting the curriculum and follow-up meetings held later extended this discussion.

In addition to the discussion and notes that were taken by facilitators during workshops and discussion staff were also asked to contribute written responses to some of the questions. These were made available to all participants in order to ensure that all staff could contribute their understanding of the discipline and its underpinning values as well as their conceptions of the structure of the curriculum. This also allowed staff to interrogate all responses and identify both tensions and areas of synergy.

Categories and associated concepts were derived primarily from the questions in the model. Analysis highlights connection between statements made by staff and the model presented above. The discussion below represents a snapshot of the potential of this model for facilitating an understanding of some of the tensions in the ways in which different academics understand their discipline, how this is reflected in the curriculum and how this may enable or constrain students' epistemological access to the discipline.

The Disciplinary Context

The department

The immediate context for the data presented here is the development of a new degree programme in GD. Within the academy GD is in its infancy having had its origins in the School of Arts and Crafts at the Witwatersrand Technical College where is was referred to as Commercial Art. After several geographic moves and corresponding name changes the programme name changed to Graphic Design. It was only in 2006, with its move to the

University of Johannesburg that it became part of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture.

GD is a small energetic department comprising 6 members of staff, who offer a BA in Communication Design (BACD), a BTech GD (BTech), and a National Diploma in GD (NDip). The NDip and the BTech are being phased out and the Department has applied to offer a Honours and Masters in Art Design. The focus of this paper is the BACD, a new programme offered for the first time in 2011. In the light of this the rationale for its introduction and the different ways in which staff conceptualised the diploma and the degree becomes important.

The curriculum development process

Any consideration of the developmental initiatives described here should take account of the fact that curriculum development is a 'messy' process which cannot be explained in chronological, causal or linear terms. In the context of the University of Johannesburg, it is far more accurate and useful to view it as a discipline-specific response to a range of intersecting national and institutional pressures. These include the impact of the merger on the two formally separate institutions, a growing awareness of the alarmingly low student throughput level nationally, growing pressure to increase epistemological access to Higher Education and to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the sector and the development and formal approval of the 'learning to be' philosophy at the University of Johannesburg.

In addition to these factors, staff in Graphic Design, driven by a need to compete with other higher education institutions nationally, opted to replace their diploma with a degree programme in Communication Design. This entailed a greater emphasis on the theoretical component of the course which is reflected in the content of both majors: Communication Design and Design Studies. The vocational focus, however, is still present in the Professional Design Practice modules taken in the first and second years.

The findings presented here are preliminary and tentative – they represent an early phase of an ongoing developmental process and the beginning of a much longer and more finely nuanced analysis which itself will be the outcome of ongoing discussion and debate with the involved academics. First, they include a broad discussion of staff perceptions of the nature of the knowledge domain and the values which underpin it. Then the focus shifts to the nature

of the curriculum developed and observations about the differences between a degree and a diploma. This is followed by a brief consideration of the kinds of student identities promoted by the curriculum, what Maton refers as the 'social' as opposed to the 'epistemic' dimension of the curricula. In addition, through an examination of tasks assigned to students questions of what it means 'to be' a Graphic Designer 'in the making' are considered. The section ends by returning to the opening quotes and highlighting some conflicting views about the role of the industry in the curriculum development process.

Definitions of the discipline and the values underpinning it

Debates over what counts as knowledge are not new amongst academics and practitioners in design disciplines (Carvalho and Dong, 2009), which in many cases, is partly due to their multidisciplinary nature. Discussion during the workshops in GD supported this and revealed broad agreement about the multidisciplinary nature of the discipline. One respondent described it as 'a Janus-headed profession that constructs and/or enhances the identities, and hence the profits, of individuals, interest groups, corporations and even nations, and their products, through the persuasive use of image and text in a variety of media' (R1).

Another concluded that Graphic Design

> could be viewed as an 'expanded field of practice' . . . which means that practitioners need to be versed in a variety of disciplines in developing their communicative strategies which may include sociology, philosophy, psychology, history and literacy. A graphic designer would be versatile and highly visually literate … being able to operate flexibly and solve problems within a variety of systems (R2).

This multidisciplinarity is reflected, for example, in descriptions of the second year Design Studies modules, which are core modules and which draw not only on the work of Bourdieu and Marx but also require students to have an understanding of modernist products of the 1940s and 1950s and to demonstrate knowledge of communication, marketing and branding theories in the work that they produce (curriculum document, 2011).

The increasing versatility and visual literacy required of students is reflected in the formulations of outcomes and aligned assessment practices at all levels in the curriculum, which also illustrate an increase in task demand. For example, first year students, are required to 'use *standard* design methods processes and techniques to create present and argue basic communication designs' while this is extended in second year to the more

challenging requirement that they 'use a *range* of design methods processes and techniques'. In third year, there is an additional shift towards more vocationally oriented designs and professional practices and students are required not only to 'use a *range* of visualisation, autographic and digital skills' but also to present and provide a *rationalization* for 'professional communication design' (curriculum document, 2011).

These two comments and the related examples drawn from the curriculum, point to a knowledge structure which, like many social sciences, is predominantly horizontally organised, drawing from a range of different disciplines which relate segmentally rather than vertically and rely more on contextual features than conceptual ones. Importantly, however, vertical progression in the core modules is clearly evident in increased task demand reflected in the outcomes.

The nature of the curriculum

According to Carvalho and Dong (2009) disciplines structure their profession in an image of the knowledge they value. Similarly, academics often structure their curriculum to reflect the knowledge and dispositions that they value. Despite broad agreement about the nature of the discipline, there was nevertheless considerable disagreement about what the precise *focus* of the discipline was and from this, where the emphasis of the new degree curriculum should lie. As one respondent put it

> the emphasis for the programme in graphic design, for me, is more conceptual, and about dealing with how messages are encoded and decoded in a supercomplex, global, post-modern context…the degree curriculum needs to be experimental and transformative and supercede merely teaching students a commercial trade (R2).

Another, however, insisted that the conceptual dimension of the curriculum was far less relevant than the contextual one. As she said, 'it really makes no difference how you sequence these modules – there is very little conceptual progression and what is important is that students are able to explore and experiment, that's all that matters' (R3).

Another emphasised the contextual and social nature of both the discipline and the curriculum 'On the one hand, the profession positions itself as a concerned partner in the economy, and – somewhat less frequently – in the structures of social and environmental change of local and global communities' (R1). Somewhat wryly, she then added

> on the other hand, a key – and critical - objective in the profession is the accumulation of industry awards, the outcome of which has little, if anything, to do with economic, social or environmental needs. In the latter sense, graphic design therefore parallels fine art in its obsession with public acknowledgment of individual creativity (and requires the showmanship and narcissism of the artist); on the other hand, the profession requires, in its day-to-day exchange with clients, practitioners that are able to suppress an eccentric ego in order to craft visual narratives that adhere to rigorous, market related tenders (R1).

On balance, these comments combine strongly to support a horizontally structured discipline and corresponding curriculum. For example, topics covered in Communication Design which draw primarily on the needs and context of the profession and are largely self-contained units with little or no reference to material in other years and range from areas such as the study of type-face in first year, to simple Web design in second year and packaging in third year. This does not, however, imply that there is no conceptual progression in the curriculum, but simply that the curriculum as whole is contextually coherent. As the examples from the curriculum document illustrate, in the core modules, the outcomes are progressively sequenced which provides evidence of the development of conceptual complexity through the three years.

The difference between a degree and a diploma

Given that the diploma in Graphic Design had been discontinued in favour of the new degree programme, staff insights into the differences between the two qualification types are of particular interest.

As one person put it 'I think that with a degree there is some kind of deeper understanding-that is not superficial, deadline driven craft' (R5). By contrast the diploma 'is more technical, skill based and focused on industry readiness' (R4).

For another however, the difference was 'just a change of name' (R3) while another focused on what the lecturer perceived as a potential problem: '…the problem is that if you have a programme which has both a degree and a diploma underpinning then you have got a crisis of legitimacy in my opinion. Then the students in their head don't know where they are supposed to be' (R1).

During the conversation about the differences between qualification types, ideas about the difference between the desired curriculum and the enacted curriculum also emerged. Some staff expressed frustration about institutional policy constraints, such as modularisation, which in their view minimised developmental possibilities and in-depth engagement with the materials. As one put it: 'I think that when you are with a class for a year you can get more out of them. There is a degree of flexibility that you have because you have specific outcomes that you need to reach, but there is more room for play for experimentation, which allows for more holistic integration of theory and practice' (R5).

A related comment focusing on the requisite number of assessment marks was also made:

> I think that if there were fewer assessment points and really more attention was paid to the whole this allows for more development and more room for experimentation. Breaking things up too much makes students forget the big picture. This may be fine for industry where they are required to brief-produce-brief-produce. But we need to prepare the degree students to do more than this (R5).

The hybrid nature of the degree programme in GD is a characteristic shared by many vocationally oriented qualifications (Wheelahan, 2009) and disciplines that are predominantly horizontal and segmented in their knowledge structure (Luckett, 2009). In the light of this and the fact that there is an emphasis on dispositions of the knowers it is not surprising that there is contestation and questions in relation to its legitimacy as an academic discipline. It is important for staff to recognise this and to explore how this may influence student access to the discipline. Students in turn, need to be made aware of the different approaches that are being taken and of the reasons for this. This discussion resulted in the realisation that there is a need explore not just what is taught and where the emphasis should be but also at the framing, pacing and sequencing of the material (Bernstein, 2000).

Student identities in Graphic Design

The horizontal nature of the discipline and the curriculum derived from it is further corroborated when student attributes and the implied identities are added to the analysis. For the staff, students learning 'to be' Graphic Designers – in-the- making need to be confident, creative, empathetic, engaged, responsible, self-confident, self-motivated, versatile, problem-solvers, independent, logical and analytical thinkers, who have the ability to synthesise and apply their knowledge. While these attributes do not exclude conceptual knowledge, the large

majority of the descriptors refer to the 'knowers', their attributes and predispositions – to 'who they are and what they can do' rather than to 'what they know'. Even the respondent who insisted on a conceptually organised curriculum, referred to students as 'practitioners' and foregrounded knower attributes; students need to be 'versatile and highly visually literate while being able to operate flexibly within a variety of systems' (R2).

While incoming students do not undergo any formal induction programme into the discipline, there are processes reflected in the curriculum which imply that they are gradually introduced to the disciplinary domain (Gee, 2007). This is most evident in the Design Studies module where there is an emphasis on basic, introductory design concepts in combination with the encouragement of specific student attributes (curriculum document, 2011). Students are also exposed to a range of guest lecturers from industry and to a variety of design contexts which enable them to observe and model appropriate professional behavior. The awareness of the needs of users or client is integral to the design context. Student briefs are carefully constructed to emphasise and develop this awareness. The following Communication Design brief given to a group of third year students clearly illustrates this:

> In pairs, identify a device application or web interface that you use routinely and radically revamp it, improving its feel and functionality for a particular type of user. The re-design process must be informed by extensive research and user testing.

This focus on knowers and their professional is also emphasised by the American Institute of Graphic Artists who state:

> Graphic design is a complex combination of words and pictures, numbers and charts, photographs and illustrations that, in order to succeed, demands the clear thinking of a particular thoughtful individual who can orchestrate these elements so that they all add up to something distinctive, or useful, or playful, or surprising, or subversive or something memorable (American Institute of Graphic Artists, in Carvalho and Dong, 2009: 499)

During interviews staff supported this view by placing great emphasis on the dispositions of students. For them a good graphic design student is one who can critique on high level, learn independently, experiment, rebellious and even subversive. While process and technique is important for some, staff were quick to caution 'I do not think that GD is only about

technical aspects otherwise you will just be teaching students to be "technical Johnny's". In fact you wouldn't call yourself a graphic designer if you were a technical Johnny' (R4).

Another staff member agreed 'we should be putting out fantastic creatives, who have a voice…who may even challenge a brief. (A good graphic designer) must go beyond just getting a brief and producing the work . . . in a technical way' (R5).

While there was often disagreement and vigorous debate, staff did agree that graphic design is not an exact technical science but a creative discipline where greater value is placed on the dispositions of the designer.

Their view is further corroborated by the range of student attributes articulated in the curriculum itself where students in Graphic Design who expected to 'apply integrated knowledge to innovatively solve complex Communication Design problems' and 'to use appropriate professional discourse' as well as demonstrate 'creativity and self-expression' and 'professional ethical behaviour' (curriculum document, 2011).

As a result of extensive engagement with questions relating to the nature of the discipline and the kind of knowledge and dispositions that is valued, there was a definite shift among participants from seeing 'learning to be' as merely the implementation of innovative pedagogy that engages students in the learning process towards seeing it more broadly as developing curricula that provide students with epistemological access that will enable students 'to be' graphic designers. The attributes identified above were more broadly linked to the values and discursive practices of the discipline with staff acknowledging that if students are to 'become' graphic designers, they need to be explicitly 'apprenticed' (Gee, 2007) into the discipline – they need to see their teachers involved in clearly identified professional roles and behaviours, both in and out of the classroom, as they themselves 'become' fully fledged members of the discursive community. The recognition of the student identities promoted by a particular discipline is often left implicit – here however, there has been some movement towards the explicit articulation of the regulating identities assigned to students and promoted within the discipline.

The role of 'the industry' in the curriculum development process

In exploring the difference between the degree and the diploma staff also had to engage critically with their relationship with industry and the extent to which their role was to prepare students who are 'industry ready'. As the opening quotes indicate, there are

considerable differences of opinion with regard to both role and nature of what is loosely termed 'the industry' There is no doubt that the perceived (and real) expectations of potential employees influence thinking about the construction of the curriculum but it is crucial to recognise that 'the industry' is by no means a homogeneous body with shared perceptions and unified expectations and needs. So while broad vocational requirements need to be incorporated into the curriculum, it is crucial to balance this with the academic autonomy required to conceptualise a curriculum which moves beyond the practical needs of a multi-faceted and heterogenous industry.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, we contended that one of the primary roles of staff development is to create enabling educational contexts which provide academic staff with the time and opportunity required to reflect critically on all aspects of the curriculum and to develop a more theoretically nuanced view of the complex developmental processes it entails. Staff responses to this curriculum development process leave no doubt that it indeed provided a solid platform from which to extend and deepen their understanding of a complex array of influences on the curriculum development process. Even those expecting more practical pedagogically-oriented material recognised the value of taking the longer view, of standing back and allowing the possibility of critical reflection which has the potential to impact on both theoretical insight and also on pedagogical practice. Above all, it seemed that the opportunity for dialogue with each other about their daily practice was of particular value and is something that occurs all too rarely as it competes with other academic and administrative commitments. The comment below captures the view of many staff:

> Since staff members rarely get the opportunity to discuss our positions, expectations, experiences, hopes and fears regarding the programme that we offer, it was good to do just this…. The materials elicited the kind of discussion that was desperately needed in our department… (the workshop) is a salient reminder that a sense of achievement (in curriculum development) should be regularly measured against outside theories, visions and institutional expectations.

The challenge, of course is to sustain and develop the dialogue, to make a deliberate effort to facilitate developmental opportunities for staff during which issues of common concern can be debated, problems raised and solutions found. Staff developers can and should play a

continuing role in this process but in the medium term it is in the departmental and Faculty contexts that these processes will be taken forward.

This comment points to a certain ambivalence about the precise nature and focus of the discipline which goes to the heart of the central tension in the debate. As this final observation illustrates, the disciplinary terrain is still highly contested and fluid: 'Graphic Design is a very young discipline, which gives us an opportunity to define the terrain and to do ground breaking work' (R2).

Bionotes

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