**A review of Curriculum Development Literature and its relevance to the development of Open Educational Resources (INITIAL DRAFT)**

For the purposes of this review Curriculum Development is defined as the activities and processes by which courses are designed, reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, within institutional and national requirements. Curriculum and course planning in Higher Education (HE) is set against a learning and teaching landscape that is undergoing significant change in the UK. Unprecedented levels of funding have been dedicated to enhancing Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) and the establishment of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) has set a context in which quality enhancement of teaching is a key priority. Current academy concerns with the effectiveness of the quality assurance process and the debate that has arisen around this (HEA, 2008) has partly been responsible for the call for enhancement-led quality assurance processes and this is currently under review. Furthermore, the recently published review of HE (DIUS, August 2009) has highlighted the debate on the role of the Quality Assurance Agency and the role and purpose of higher education. In this context, curriculum development is paradoxically ‘one of the most discussed but least analysed objects of study in higher education’ (Maton, 2005:688).

Teaching in HE differs from that in schools or professional training in that while it has defined learning outcomes (set out for example in subject benchmark statements) it has no standard curriculum or course materials. Recent changes in curriculum in UK HE include modularisation, arising from the need to attract and retain students; introduction of a credit-base approach offering greater flexibility for students; and the response to the needs and wishes of employers (HEFCE, 2008). The unintended consequences of this are the increased burden for assessment, review and quality assurance (QA). A speeding up of the curriculum development process (ibid: 28) as a result, also, of external pressures, has seen the life-cycle of course development and revision become shorter, courses revalidated at a much faster rate, and at an increased cost to the institution, possibly balanced by an increased rate of participation in Higher Education. In terms of the social science curriculum in particular there is an ill-defined set of knowledge claims, with weak external boundaries, a horizontal segmental structure and a weak grammar (Bernstein, 2000) that can be seen to be reflected in a curriculum that currently lacks coherence and cohesion (Luckett, 2009).

The terms assurance and enhancement are often used interchangeably in relation to quality and the distinction is not always clear (Knight and Trowler, 2000, Knight, 2006). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) defines enhancement as ‘the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities’ (QAA Guidance for Institutional Audit), while HEFCE applies the term ‘continuous improvement’ in relation to the enhancement (QE) process. A HEA report on quality enhancement and assurance (2008), based on discussions with higher education institutions (HEIs) (64 out of 138 institutions took part), indicates that a considerable amount of structural and organisational change is taking place, particularly in the post-1992 sector. In this ongoing debate about the future of UK Higher Education (HE) Sir Ron Cooke’s (2008) response to the call to build world leadership in the field of e-learning, and the use of e-learning tools and improved pedagogies, focuses on the development of open educational resources (OER) and information strategies. This emphasis in Cooke’s paper on digital content as the source of curriculum innovation contrasts to the line taken in Ramsden’s response to the evolving student expectation of the educational experience in which he talks of remodelling curricula, and the special quality in the UK HE system of the ‘*intimacy of the pedagogical relationship*’ (Ramsden, 2008, p.7). The issues in this context are made topical and a concern for everyone involved in Higher Education by the recently published Select Committee Report on Students and Universities (DIUS, 2009) that is critical of the role of the QAA and of the place of the university to regulate and assure the quality of learning, teaching and assessment.

Barnett and Coate, (2005) reviewing the literature on curriculum issues question the lack of research in this area (see also Maton, 2004) and examine the rationale for reviewing what we know about the curriculum and how it is developed in HE. The notion of seeing the university as space (Barnett, 2005: 193) is one that resonates with current notions of the virtual university (Craig and Pountney, 2009) and the use of new creative physical spaces in the modern university.

With reference to how the curriculum develops, Barnett and Coate (2004) consider curriculum-in-action as post hoc curriculum-as-designed. This abstraction of practice appears to see these stages of curriculum development as clean-cut and separate. Many courses, however, have a transition period between old and new, or old and refreshed, and it is in this space, the lived curriculum, that academic teaching staff are engaged. Vannini (2004) explores the notion of authenticity as a space in which teachers feel teaching is meaningful and in which they are able to make a mark. Buss (2008) discusses the need to think again on learning outcomes, seeing this as a means by which creativity in course design might again become possible. The role of the assessment and the way assessment can be constructively aligned with designs for learning (Biggs, 1996) in a coherent cycle of curriculum development (Entwistle, 2005) is one aspect of change thathas the potential to be sustainable (Clark, 2004).

In considering the relationship between curriculum and professional development there is a means-end relationship (Barnett and Coate, 2004) constructed around the concept of the teacher in action (Schon, 1983) and the tacit, informal nature of practice (Eraut, 2000), which is considered to have a bearing on how the curriculum is refreshed and maintained (Stenhouse, 1980). The shared understanding of the notion of change is limited by the institutional setting and collective meaning-making (Weick, 1995), arising from practice that is legitimated collegially (Young and Irving, 2005), while taking place within competing discourses (Sachs, 2001). Teaching that is research informed, and for which the purpose is to further the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990) contrasts with teaching for which the purpose is the identification of a performative excellence (Kreber. 2002). Curriculum itself is often understood in very narrow terms (Barnett and Coate, 2004) and is notable by its absence in important HE policy documents such the Dearing Report on Higher Education (1997).

Course planning in HEI follows various formats in which there are generic events, processes and texts (Maton, 2004, Rosie, 2002). Here we might see course review within a mode of analytic description in which there exists a form of pedagogical relationship between the course planning team and the QSME machinery. Bernstein’s pedagogic device (Bernstein, 2000) offers an analytical framework for examining this, in which there exists a discourse of skills of one kind or another (instructional discourse) and a (dominant) discourse of social order (regulative discourse) both of which are embedded in a pedagogical discourse that brings them into relationship with each other. Moore (2006) views Bernstein’s theory on the structuring of pedagogic discourse as a theoretical object that makes this discourse visible (relations to education) that: has complexity that can generate a range of possibilities; is an object of theory not experience; is concerned with absence as well as with what is present; and is generative of an internal language of description, and an expanded, empirically-related, external language of description.

The focus that makes this possible centres on the idea that the organising device for framing and classifying knowledge in education is the curriculum itself (Bernstein, 1990). This ‘gaze’ brings discipline knowledge into relationship with student learning, institutional requirements, and sector requirements, and in doing so it creates gaps and spaces and the potential to change discourses, constituting a field of recontextualisation (Rosie, 2009). The ‘field’ approaches of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein within studies of higher education are yet to be fully realised (Maton, 2004). However, while these theorists do not by themselves conceptualise the basis of change in higher education they do begin to scope out the contextual field (cf. Bernstein, 2000, Bourdieu, 1994) and the difficulties that are associated with the translation, reproduction and transmission of curricula and curricular practices.

With this in mind the development of open educational resources can be seen on the one hand to be generative of a refreshed pedagogy while seemingly to have the potential to stifle creativity in designing courses on the other.

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December 2009

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