UNIT 5

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Hens have chickens

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

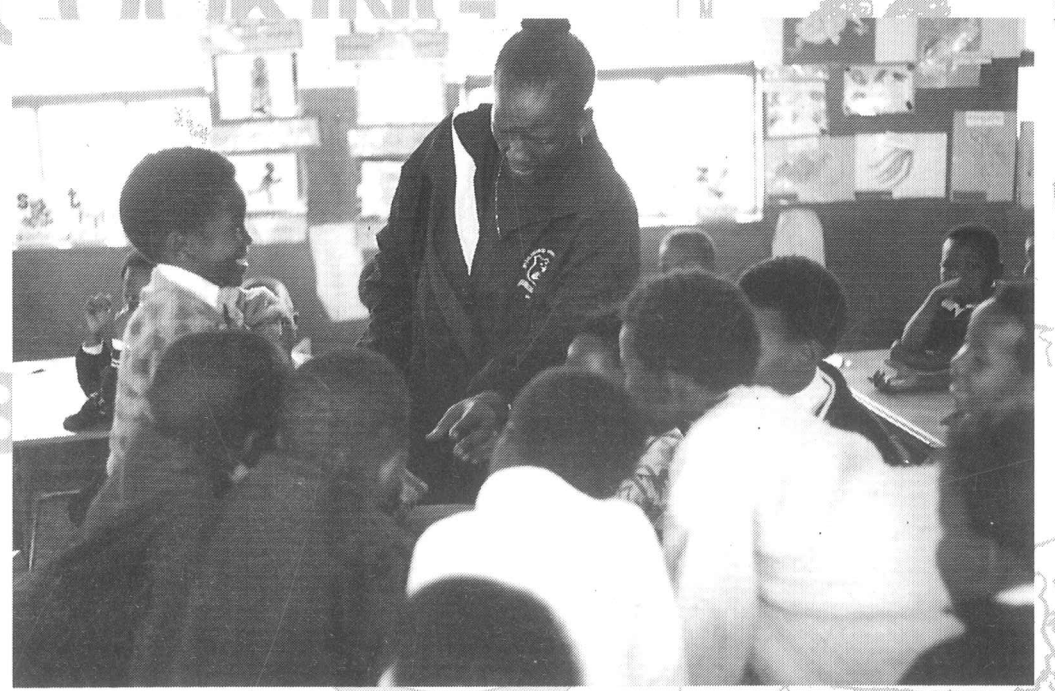
Eastern Cape Education Department

Distance Education Project

Core Education Studies Course

Learning in the World

Umthamo 3 – What is Curriculum?



(Pilot Edition)
February 2000

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT

CORE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE
Learning in the World

Umthamo 3: What is Curriculum?
First Pilot Edition – 2000

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people, who read lo mthamo, and gave us ideas and advice: Prof. Crain Soudien from University of Cape Town, Viv Kenyon and Nyameka Jabane from the DEP, Lulama Mbane of Fikile Bhengu School. Thanks to L. Fali, N.O. Jamela, C. Ndyawe and N. Rawutini-Gogwana of R.H. Godlo Primary School, for helping us trial the Key Activity. We would also like to thank Tillie Tshangela, Adi Kwelemtini and Khuli Zipete and the manager of Nando's, King William's Town, who helped us in various ways.

Thanks to the Daily Dispatch, who allowed us to use photographs from their library, and to the Stirling Teachers' Centre for giving us access to their library of text books.

We would like to thank Kagiso Trust, who generously sponsored the writing and development of this umthamo.

Finally, thanks to Ron Kahn of L. Harry and Sons (printers) for his patience, expertise and co-operation in helping us to turn lo mthamo into a book.

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What is Curriculum?

Introduction

This is the third umthamo in the strand, Learning in the World.

In the first umthamo you thought about the purposes of education and how it is linked to the larger society. Do you remember what was said there about the purposes of education? Think back to the interviews you did as part of Umthamo 1 in which you asked people about the role of education in their lives.

Some of the responses from your interviews were that "Education must train young people to be responsible adults" and that "Education must equip people to earn a living". You will also recall the article by Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, who passed away in 1999. He suggested that education should be designed to help young people grow up to meet the needs of Tanzanian society. We saw how the purposes of education were linked to the goals of the broader society.

In the second umthamo, we explored these ideas further and saw how the education system changed as the society and its purposes for education changed. We saw how the different groups that were in power had different purposes for education. Look back at the table you drew up on the four periods in our history and refresh your memory on the different purposes for education at the different times. You will see that all of the education systems in the four main periods of our history had clear aims and objectives. These aims and objectives had implications* for what was taught in schools and how. They also had implications for what happened in schools and classrooms and for how schools were organised.

*they had implications: they made a difference/ they influenced

In the second umthamo, we also touched on education and society after 1994, when we had our first non-racial democratic elections. At this point in our history we have a new democratic government. This government has different goals for our society and consequently different purposes for education. How will the new government try to realise* its purposes for education? This process has already begun with changes in the education system and the implementation of a new curriculum – 'Curriculum 2005'.

*realise its purposes: put them into practice; make them real

But what is curriculum?

In a broad sense, we could say that 'curriculum' is 'what and how learners learn'. However, there are a number of ways of looking at curriculum and the issues central to thinking about curriculum. There are a number of ways of looking at and making decisions about 'what and how learners should learn'.

These decisions are usually written down in some kind of syllabus or policy document. But learners learn much more than what is contained in the 'syllabus'. Their experience in the classroom consists of much more than what is written in the 'syllabus'. And it may not cover all that is written down in the syllabus. And then, of course, learners also learn outside the classroom. So, some people would say that all of these things are also part of 'curriculum'.

In lo mthamo, we will ask you to look at curriculum by examining what you do in your own classroom. You will also look at curriculum by reading about syllabi, and by analysing a part of a textbook. You will have an opportunity to think about the kinds of learning areas, or fields, that you think should be included in an ideal curriculum. Finally, you will read what various academics say about curriculum. You will look at how different kinds of curriculum are connected to different purposes for education.

In lo mthamo, we will look at curriculum generally. In the next umthamo, we will look at one specific example of curriculum; our own new Curriculum 2005.

Overview of Key Activity

The key activity in lo mthamo is made up of two steps. **Both parts of the Key Activity will be assessed by yourself and your peers, and handed in for umkhwezeli assessment.**

Step 1: Teach and reflect

In this step, you will reflect on one of your lessons*. In your reflection, you will answer the two questions: *What effect did my choices and my behaviour have on the learners and their learning? How did they in turn affect my conduct and reactions during the lesson?*

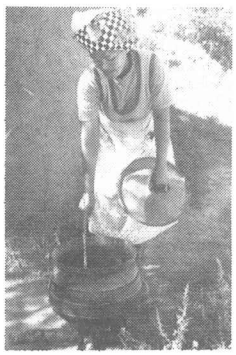
One or two 'classroom observers' will help you to reflect on your lesson*.

**A 'lesson' does not have to last for 30 minutes, or an hour. It can be shorter, or much longer. We should rather call it a 'learning experience' or a 'learning/teaching unit'. We use the term 'lesson' because it is quick and easy.*

Step 2: My part in creating the curriculum

Having worked through the rest of the umthamo, you will write a few paragraphs about *your part in creating the curriculum together with your learners.*

Lo mthamo is divided into five units, each organized around a theme.



Unit 1: Igumbi lokuphekela (the kitchen)

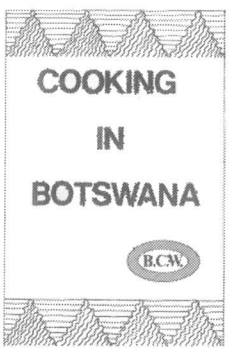
What is curriculum? – First thoughts

In this unit we introduce the analogy of the kitchen. We will use this analogy throughout the umthamo to throw light on different aspects of curriculum. In this unit, you will also have a chance to express your own ideas about curriculum and share these at the face-to-face session.

Unit 2: Sitya njani na? (How are we doing at feeding time?)

The curriculum in practice in your classroom

This unit makes up the first part of the Key Activity. You will reflect on one of your lessons. You will look at all the things which contributed to, or took away from the learning which took place in your classroom. In other words, you will look at curriculum in action in your classroom. You will do this with the assistance of one or two 'classroom observers'.



Unit 3: Ilisu lokupheka (the recipe book)

Critical thinking skills: Syllabi and text books

You may have used a syllabus or a textbook in the planning and/or teaching of your lesson. Many teachers base their teaching on a text book. This continues to be so, even though the new curriculum encourages educators not to rely on the text book, but to use a variety of resources. In this unit, you will read and think about syllabi, and you will examine an extract from a text book. You will look at:

- the educational purposes/outcomes which the textbook seeks to achieve, and
- the value systems which the documents embody.

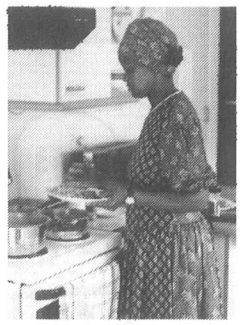
These 'critical thinking skills' should help you to make better use of text books.

Unit 4: Kutya kuni? (a balanced diet)

The 'content' of the curriculum

From looking at the aspects of 'curriculum' which can be seen in the classroom, and in textbooks, you will turn to what some people might call 'curriculum content'. Which learning areas should be offered in schools? Should they be offered separately, or integrated? You will choose the 'content' combination that you think is best. You will also ask your 'classroom observers' to give their views. You can involve your learners in this activity as well.

Unit 5: Uthini umpheki? (What says the cook?)
Consolidation and conclusion



In this unit, you will read what different academics say about curriculum. You will link some of their ideas to different purposes for education. Once you have read what they have to say, you will write the second part of the Key Activity. You will write about your part in creating the curriculum with your learners.

Learning outcomes

Overall outcome

When you have finished lo mthamo, you will

- Be more aware of the importance of reflecting on what you do and why, so that
- You are more critical (in a constructive way) when you work with all the aspects of curriculum.

Content outcomes

When you have completed lo mthamo, you will:

- have sharpened your understanding of what curriculum is;
- realise that educators and their learners contribute to creating and reshaping the curriculum;
- have a better appreciation of how the purposes of education are put into practice through curriculum;

**engage with other points of view: think about them, agree with them or disagree with them; get into a discussion about them*

Skills outcomes

When you have completed lo mthamo, you will have further enhanced your ability to:

- engage* with other points of view;
- analyse ideas and information;
- reflect on your own practice and engagement with curriculum;
- understand and critique* education policy.

Values and attitudes outcomes

When you have completed lo mthamo, you will have:

- looked more closely at, and reflected on the values and attitudes which you pass on to your learners.

Unit 1: Igumbi lokuphekela (the kitchen)

What is curriculum? – first thoughts

We will start this unit with an analogy* which might help you build a picture of the different aspects of curriculum. It will also show that different people give different meanings to the word 'curriculum'.

We ask you now to think about places where people cook, and what happens in these places.

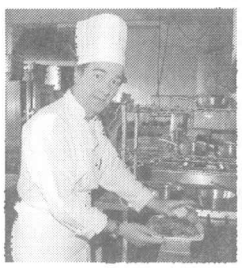
The resources and the context

A kitchen is a place where food is prepared – and sometimes also a place where food is eaten. Cooking places and kitchens are as varied as there are many cultures in the world. Each one approaches food and eating slightly differently.

- The majority of people across the world are working class people who eat simple food prepared in very modest cooking places and kitchens. For instance, there are many for whom cooking means making a fire outside and preparing the family's meal in one or two pots.
- On the other hand, some kitchens have magnificent equipment: stoves, ovens, fridges, electric mixers and cutters, a variety of pots and pans and serving dishes. They also have a wide variety of expensive ingredients to include in their meals. People eating out of these kitchens have an experience of many different kinds of food, and can choose between them.
- Then there are kitchens that are not so grand, but a good cook can produce a very tasty meal in them. They have some kind of stove, pots in which to cook, and enough crockery, cutlery or other utensils for the family, and for visitors as well. The ingredients available for cooking are plain, but nourishing: vegetables and meat occasionally; samp and beans; imbuya and other indigenous greens; and tinned foods in some cases.

The Cook and his/her values and choices

- In many homes, the mother cooks good nourishing meals for her family every day. She serves them with the best food the family can afford because she cares for them, and her love goes into the meal. It may be a meal made out of simple ingredients, but a lot of love is put into it.
- There are also situations where people have little choice; they give their families what they can find, or what they can afford.



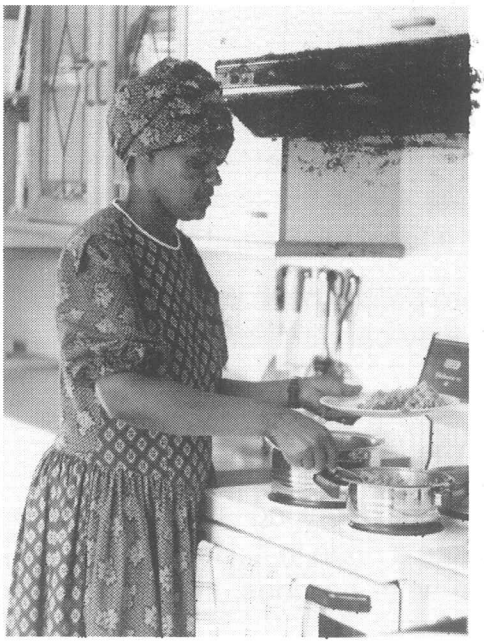
- At the other extreme you could have an expensive restaurant, where the cook is highly trained and skilled to cook a variety of interesting dishes. Cooking is his whole life; he* loves to cook, and takes a pride in it. He puts his love of food, and his pride in what he does, into every dish he cooks.
- Alternatively, there is the take-away Chicken outlet – Nandos or Kentucky, where the cook may be an expert, but cooks the same thing in the same way every day, for the hundreds of people who will pay money for 'Kentucky'. What she* does is very routine - a bit like a machine.
- And then there may occasionally be some cooks who cook with resentment, and throw the food down in front of the people they are cooking for. It could be an angry mother, a disgruntled and tired Kentucky worker, or even a waitress at a restaurant, who may have an attitude against certain people.

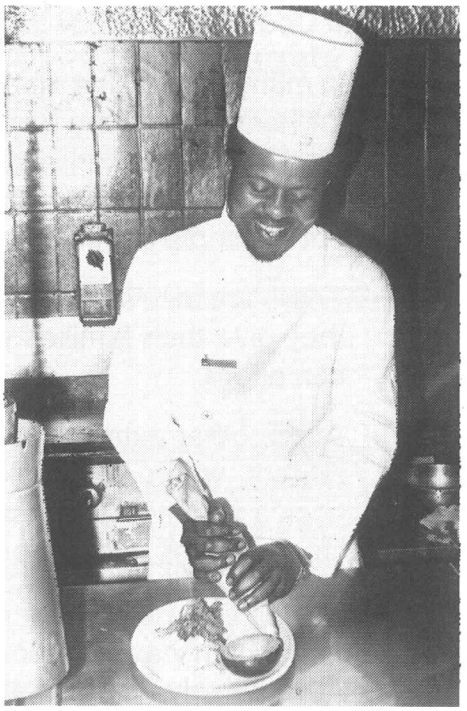
You will notice that some of the cooks mentioned here are men; others are women. The use of the word 'he' or 'she' does not mean that a person of the other gender cannot cook in that particular context, e.g. a restaurant, or a home.

How to cook?

Where does the cook get her cooking skills from? How does she know how to cook?

- Maybe she was trained; she went to cooking classes, or studied Home Economics or Food Technology at school. There she learned what needs to be included in a balanced diet.
- Maybe he uses a recipe book, and reads about food and nutrition in different books and magazines.
- Maybe he cooks the way his mother did. We know of many ordinary people who are excellent cooks; better even than those who have studied 'Home Economics' or keep recipe books.
- Maybe he uses 'trial and error'; cooks what he feels like, and sees what happens.





Why cook?

Different cooks have different reasons, or purposes for cooking.

- Some, like the cook at Kentucky, is cooking because she is paid to cook, and because her manager wants to make money.
- Some are cooking because they have a love of 'good' food, and want those who eat their food to share that love, and learn to discriminate between 'good' food and ordinary food.
- The purpose of some is to make sure that their children grow up healthy and strong, and get a balanced diet.
- The purpose of others may be just to stay alive.

What to cook, and how to serve it?

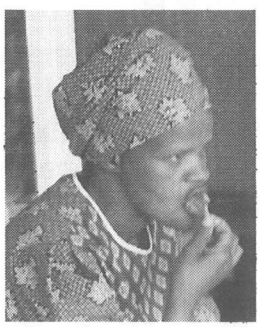
We have seen, of course, that different cooks, in different contexts, with different purposes, will cook different food.

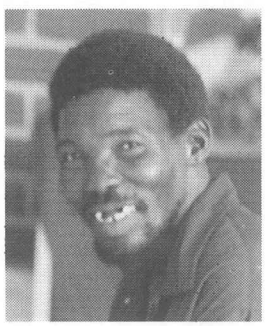
- Some will cook exotic and interesting food, a variety of dishes. They may be having a joyous itheko where there is singing and dancing as the food is eaten. Or the food may be served at tastefully decorated tables, perhaps by candlelight, with soft music.
- Some will try to cook good nourishing food; a 'balanced diet', taken from the different food groups. The family may serve it at the family dining room table. They may eat it sitting either on the floor or on chairs. They will often share their daily experiences as they eat. Maybe they serve it in front of the TV, where nobody talks and everybody watches, or fights over which programme to watch.

- Some will cook to the tastes of the buying public – some of it is 'junk food'. They serve it in plastic bags, to take away.
- Some will cook staple food, that can fill the stomach and keep you alive. People eat in whichever place they can sit down comfortably to eat.

And what is the effect of the eating?

- Happy, healthy people?
- Fat, overweight, dissatisfied people?
- People who enjoy their food?
- Fussy, discriminating eaters?
- People who are surviving to live another day?





So what is the 'curriculum of the kitchen'?

Some would say the 'curriculum of the kitchen' is the sum total of what we have looked at above:

- The cook's knowledge about food and cooking, learned from her mother, family and friends, and even cookbooks or training courses;
- The recipes given to the cook by the owner/ manager of Nandos or Kentucky;
- The ingredients;
- The method of preparation;
- The meals themselves;
- The skill and the attitudes of the cook;
- Her relationship and feelings towards the eaters;
- The way the food is presented and the mood of the eating;
- What the eaters gain from the eating.

All influenced by:

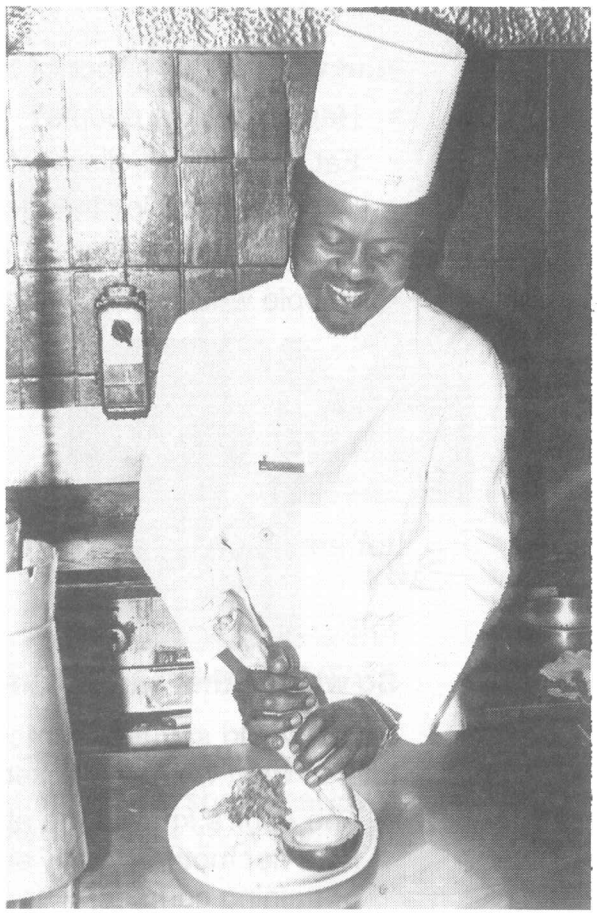
- The kitchen, its resources, its context and who owns it, and by
- The purpose for the cooking.

Others would say that the 'curriculum of the kitchen' consists of **some parts** of the above elements, e.g. the recipe book and the ingredients.

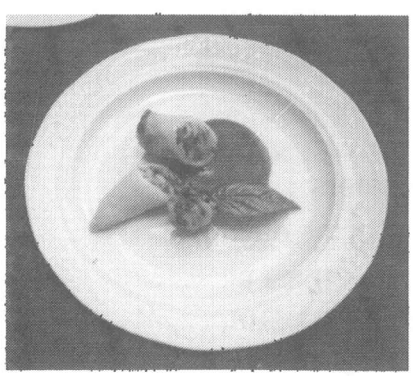
Think about

Compare your job as an educator to the cook in the kitchen. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Does this comparison help you think differently about your work? Write about this in your journal, if your wish.

You might like to go through all the aspects listed on the last 2 or 3 pages, and compare them with aspects of the educator's task.



Different cooks have different ideas about what 'a good meal' is, and how it should be served and eaten.



Similarly, different groups of people have different intentions regarding what should be learnt in school and how this should be learnt. For some people, what should be taught in schools and how this should be taught constitutes 'the curriculum'. Do you agree? How would you respond to the question 'What is curriculum'?

What is curriculum?

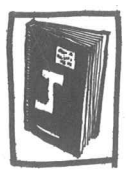
As educators, you might have come across the word 'curriculum' in discussions, meetings, documents and over the television and radio. At the moment, we are hearing a lot about 'Curriculum 2005'. We would therefore like to begin by giving you an opportunity to express what your own ideas about curriculum are. You will be discussing curriculum *in general.* In lo mthamo, we are *not* focusing only on 'Curriculum 2005'.

Journal write

On your own, brainstorm the question "What is curriculum?" You may choose to use a mind-map format to help you think more creatively.

Now share your mind-map with a partner. Talk about your different ideas about curriculum. Try to explain your view and to understand your partner's view. Now build a new mind-map based on your discussion.

If you are at a face-to-face session, discuss your mind-map with the other educators in your group. Build a group mind-map on newsprint based on your discussion. Your umkhwezeli will facilitate this.



Journal write

Using the ideas from the brainstorms, write a short paragraph in your journal as your explanation of "What is curriculum?" Please do not worry too much about "getting it right". There is a lot you know already from your experience. You might not have had the opportunity to reflect on it within an academic course such as this one. But trust your instincts and just share with us what your understanding is.

In the next three units, you will explore this question further by:

- Looking at the learning taking place in your own classroom;
- Thinking about some of the documents or books you might have used to plan and give your lesson;
- Thinking about the learning areas, or fields, that make up the broader curriculum;
- Reading what some 'experts' say.

Unit 2: Sitya njani na? (How are we doing at feeding time?)

The Curriculum in practice in your classroom

In Unit 1, we started looking at the question, "What is curriculum?". We looked first at what the 'curriculum of a kitchen' might consist of. The point was made that different cooks have different ideas of what people should eat, and how it should be served. We then asked you to write down your understanding of what curriculum is. You shared your ideas with other teacher-learners.

In order to deepen your understanding of curriculum, you will now look at what happens in your classroom. One of your lessons will give a snapshot of the curriculum which your learners are following. It is something like sampling a meal from one particular cook's kitchen!

In Umthamo 22, you started to work with other members of your school community to improve your school. We would like you to work with some of the same school community members to examine the 'curriculum' that you are offering your learners. We suggest that you invite one or two people – teachers, parents; community members, maybe your principal, or even older learners – to help you to reflect on your lesson. We think that you will gain fresh insights into what is happening in your classroom if you can see it through someone else's eyes.

An extra handout has been given to you along with Io mthamo. It consists of a letter to your principal, two copies of a sheet of questions, and an additional sheet with information in it for you.

The letter to your principal explains that we would like you to invite some observers to one of your lessons. It explains the purpose of this observation. It might be helpful to give this letter to your principal.

The two question sheets should be given to your 'classroom observers'. The questions give them guidance on what to look for when they observe your lesson. We have asked them to comment on certain things that they notice. They will also talk to your learners to find out how they felt about the lesson.

The additional sheet gives some examples of the way you could use the classroom observer's feedback when you write your report.

Invite your 'classroom observer(s)' to attend one of your lessons this week. Do not teach a 'special' lesson. We would like you to reflect on your regular classroom practice.

Do your choices make a difference?

Before you begin reflecting seriously on your lesson, let us go back to the kitchen for a moment.

Think about

There are many possible meals that can be prepared in a kitchen. There are many ways that these meals can be prepared and presented. Do the cook's choices make a difference to the well-being of the eaters? To their health? To their happiness?

Key Activity Step 1:

Reflecting on the lesson – What difference did my choices make?

Following your 'observed' lesson and your discussion with your 'observers', we would like you to write a reflective report on your lesson. **This report should be brought to the last face-to-face session dealing with lo mthamo. It will be assessed by yourself and your peers, and handed in to umkhwezeli.**

First talk with your invited friends about their observations. Find out how they responded to your lesson. You will also find out from them how your learners responded to the lesson. The input that they will give you will help you with writing Sections 5, 6, 7 and 9 in your reflective report. They may help you with some of the other sections too. There is a page in your extra handout which gives some examples of how you might use the observers' inputs to write your report. Please attach their notes to your report when you hand it in for assessment.

We are asking you to think about the choices that you made. What difference did your choices make to the teaching-learning situation in your classroom? How did your behaviour affect the learning which took place in the classroom?

We are well aware that this exercise just represents a snapshot of what you do in your classroom. What happens therefore may be a combination of your normal daily practice, as well as your approach to the particular lesson under discussion.

Use the headings and questions below to organize your report.

1. *My reason for cooking*

What was I aiming for in giving this lesson, and how did my choice of outcomes influence learning?

In answering this question, it might help to think about the following:

- What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values did you want your learners to have gained by the end of the lesson? How did you decide on these outcomes?
- Did you take them from a document (e.g. a syllabus, a phase document, a textbook)? Or did you choose them because of your own values or interests? Did your learners play some part in deciding on the outcomes? Were there other factors that influenced you to select these particular outcomes?
- What difference did your choice of this/ these particular outcome(s) have on the learning experience which took place in your classroom?
- Would you aim for something different if you gave this lesson again? Why?

You do not have to answer every one of these "sub-questions". Just think about them, and then answer the main question, printed above, in bold.

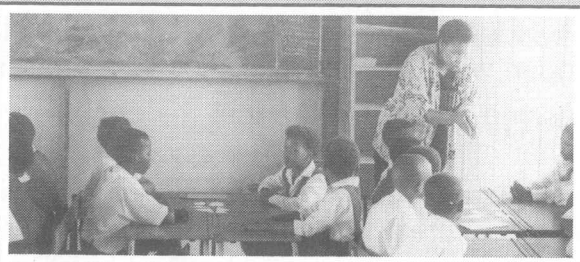
2. *The recipe I chose to use*

What resources did I use to plan this lesson, and how did my choice affect learning?

In answering this question, it might help to think about the following:

- Did you use the syllabus? The Curriculum 2005 phase documents? The textbook? Your own past experience? Learners' expressed needs? Anything else?
- How did you decide what you would use to plan this lesson?
- What difference did your choice have on the learning experience which took place in the lesson?*
- Would you make a different choice if you presented this lesson again? Why?

**For instance, what difference would it make if you used a 1982 syllabus rather than the 2005 Policy Documents?*



3. The ingredients I used

Which resources did I and the learners use during the lesson, and how did my choice affect learning?

In answering this question, it might help to think about the following:

- Did you make these resources? Did the learners bring them? Did you use resources that your school already has?
- Were there resources you could have used, but you didn't think of them at the time? Were there any resources you would have liked to have used but did not have access to?
- What difference did the resources make to the learning experience which took place?
- Would you use different resources next time? Would you use them differently next time?

4. The meal and the way it was presented and eaten

What activities did the learners do? How did I organise these activities? How did my choices affect learning?

In answering this question, it might help to think about the following:

- What kinds of learning were promoted by the activities you organised?
- What difference did the way you organised the classroom make to the learning experience which took place in your classroom?
- Would you use different activities or organisation if you presented this lesson again?

5. The languages we spoke as we prepared and ate the meal

What languages did I and my learners use in the lesson, and how did my choices affect learning?

In answering this question, it might help to think about the following:

- What kinds of thinking or learning took place because of these language choices?
- Did your choice of language encourage thinking or learning? Did it inhibit thinking, or learning?
- Would you use languages differently if you gave this lesson again? Why? '

Think back to the discussions you had about Umthamo 20.

6. The mood of the meal and the relationships among the eaters

How did people relate to one another in my classroom? What was the mood of the lesson?

In answering this question, you might want to think about the following:

- How did you and the learners relate to one another during the lesson? How did learners relate to one another during the lesson?
- What were the feelings during the lesson? Were learners excited? bored? contented? restless? or what?
- What difference did the relationships between people in the classroom make to the learning that took place?
- What difference did the mood of the lesson make to the learning which took place?
- Would you like to work on developing certain kinds of relationships in your classroom, in the future?
- Would you like to try to create a different mood in your classroom in future?

7. Did the meal really nourish or fill the eaters?

Did the learners really learn what I intended them to learn?

In answering this question, you could think about the following questions:

- How do you know that the learners learned what you intended that they would learn? Or When and how will you find out?
- What would you do to find out what your learners had learned, if you gave this lesson again in the future?

8. How much time was spent cooking and eating?

How much time did I spend on this lesson How did the amount of time allocated for this lesson influence what was learned?

When you answer this question, you could also think about the following question:

- Would you change the time allocation if you presented this lesson again?

9. Did the eaters get more than a plateful of food?

Did I convey any 'hidden' messages to my learners by the way I behaved and the way I conducted my lesson?

The 'hidden curriculum' consists of messages which you may have intended to convey but did not make explicit*. It can also consist of messages you did not consciously intend to convey*. As you answer the above question, it might help you to think about questions like the following:

- Did your behaviour tell the learners anything about gender (boys and girls' roles)? Did it tell them anything about rich and poor people? 'Clever' and 'stupid' people? Black and white people? People who speak English, and people who speak only the Primary Language?
- Did it tell them what you believe about learning?
- Did it tell them what you believe about their abilities?

** you did not make it explicit: You did not state it clearly and openly*

**For instance, when you ask only the 'clever' learners questions, the learners receive the message that other people do not have answers. They learn that some people can answer questions and others can't. They may learn that they themselves are 'stupid'. Have you ever thought about this before?*

Our Comment – So what is curriculum?

A popular view is that curriculum is just the syllabus, or it is all the syllabi for all the learning areas. Another view is that curriculum is more than the syllabus. It includes what is taught, how it is taught, the resources used and how they are mediated, what the learners actually learn.

This unit has given you a chance to examine the view that curriculum is more than just the syllabus. On the surface it may appear as if curriculum is simply about the choice and arrangement of subject matter. This is reflected in formal curriculum documents such as the syllabus, or textbooks and lesson plans. Syllabi, textbooks, lesson plans, etc. are some statements of curriculum. That is, they tell us what is to be taught, and often give some detail on how it is to be taught, and maybe how it is to be assessed. But choices about what to teach – subject matter – or how to organise learning into different learning fields reflect particular moral, social and political values and ways of understanding the world (worldviews).

A worldview consists of different opinions, beliefs and values regarding how we ought to live as individuals, as well as the way in which a society should be organised. These include ideas, beliefs and values about:

Families also pass on particular worldviews to their children, as they bring them up.

- the organization and welfare of society
- religion
- how children should behave,

- how different people are treated on the basis of "race" and gender,
- work ethics and how work should be rewarded,
- how citizens should contribute to the economy and the country.

Important questions are:

- *What are the worldviews within different curriculum statements (syllabi; policy documents, textbooks, lesson plans, lessons)?*
- *What messages are they giving to learners about the kinds of issues listed above?*

The Key Activity has given you a chance to look at how you interpret and re-create the curriculum in your classroom together with your learners. It has also given you a chance to look at the values and 'worldview' that underpins your classroom practice.

In some cases, you are consciously teaching certain values. You are teaching other values without being aware of it. For instance, perhaps you always make sure that your learners are very quiet in class. Think of the reasons that may underlie this, and what you may therefore be conveying. This is part of your 'hidden curriculum'*. Another educator might encourage learners to discuss, to question, and to voice out their views. This may reveal a belief that people learn through talking. This is one of the values you are conveying to your learners. This is part of your 'hidden curriculum'*.

**There will be an umthamo on 'the hidden curriculum' later in the course.*

In the next unit, you will look critically at an extract from a textbook. You will examine and reflect on values and worldview that underpin this textbook. You should be able to use the skills you will learn in this activity to evaluate other textbooks. This will help you to use them more effectively.

In the fourth unit, you will have a chance to think about the learning areas that should be included in a curriculum. You will also think about the values and the worldview that is revealed by this choice of learning areas. This worldview probably goes together with certain beliefs about the purposes for education.

On the next page is an extract from a syllabus, and some pictures from 3 textbooks. Below them, you will see some teachers talking. What values and worldviews are shown in these words and pictures? Talk about it, and think about it!

from Science, Std 2, Redelinghuys et al, 1967.

1. OBJECTIVES

1.1 To guide pupils to respect and appreciate the wonder and beauty of nature and to recognise the omnipotence of the Creator.

1.2 To inculcate a love of nature in pupils and to make them realise the need to conserve the soil, water, the atmosphere and plant and animal life.

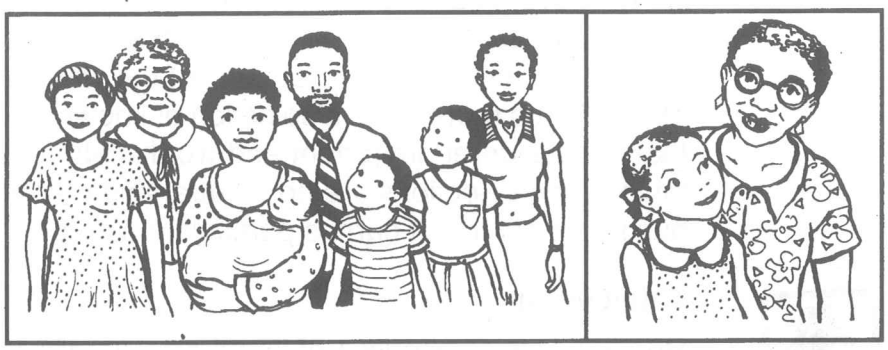
from Std 3 Nature Study syllabus, DET, 1982

I looked in the mirror
and what did I see?
I saw someone special...

from Active Life Skills, Lotz & Mhlauli, 1998.

from Numeracy, Mostert et al, 1998.

from Active Life Skills, Lotz & Mhlauli, 1998.



Vusi's family

Patiswa's family

Your work is so ugly and untidy!

A child has just given her book to this teacher.

That newsreader speaks such beautiful English! She doesn't have an accent at all!

This teacher is at home, watching TV.

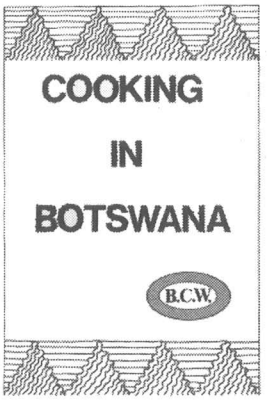
This teacher is chatting to colleagues in the staff room.

Kwela gumbi akhonto izakwenziwa kuba abafundi bachallenja njalo utitshala bezama ukutesta ulwazi lwakhe endaweni yokumamela bafunde iincwadi zabo. Yibreak ngoku. oMistress abatsha mabasenzele iti.

Unit 3: Ilisu lokupheka (the recipe book)
Critical thinking skills: Syllabi and text books

Some of you used the syllabus (or policy documents) and textbooks as resources in your lesson. Syllabi* and textbooks are something like the recipe books that the cook uses in her kitchen. Some people, of course, don't use recipe books. They just cook the way their mother cooked. Or they use their instincts. Some educators are like that too. From their experience, they follow their hunch or instinct in approaching certain lessons. They might not look at the syllabus or textbook. It may in fact be argued that 'hunches' and 'instincts' are also recipes of a kind, even though they are not written down.

We are including the new policy documents under the heading 'syllabi'



3.1 The syllabus

As we have said, one conception of curriculum is that it is the syllabus. A syllabus is certainly one expression of curriculum but it is our view that it is not the whole curriculum. The syllabus represents a selection of knowledge and skills that is considered important and worthwhile for learners to have. Such selections are not neutral and therefore a syllabus is not neutral. It carries particular values.

Think about

Reading D in Appendix 1 of Io mthamo (p. 40) raises some questions about syllabi and how they are made. Read through the extract, and think about the following questions:

1. If we accept Candlin's claim that 'syllabuses come in two ideological forms', what type of syllabus has been most typical in South Africa up until now?
2. Which form of syllabus do you think Curriculum 2005 is? (The guiding documents that you get may not be called syllabi but nevertheless they will give you some indication of what is to be taught and learnt, why, and how.)

3.2 Textbooks

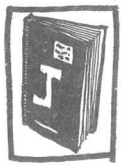
Textbooks have an important role to play in what is taught and learnt. However, it is important to be aware that textbooks also convey values and a worldview. Textbook writers use different sources to inform what goes into the book and how they write. They will usually begin by using guiding documents such as a syllabus or other relevant documents. They also draw on their own experience, understanding and values to guide the writing process. Different textbook writers will interpret the syllabus in different ways, based on their experiences, their understandings and their values.

The publishers also have a part to play in shaping the content of the textbooks. Because they need to sell a lot of copies of textbooks, they will usually try to make sure that the textbook writers do not write anything which is likely to shock or offend conservative teachers and education officials. As a result, they will sometimes suppress new and exciting ideas and methodologies, because they are afraid the book won't sell. In other words, textbooks can sometimes be like 'fast food', or Kentucky fried chicken. It sells well, but may not be that nourishing.

So, textbooks produced by different writers and different publishers will be different. Some are written by 'good, caring and creative cooks'; others are written by 'fast food' cooks. It is important therefore to take a closer look at textbooks. If you can see what values and world view they are 'pushing', you can use them selectively and add your own flavours to the meals that they offer.

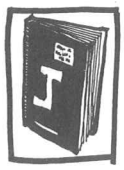
In this unit you will be given the opportunity to analyse an extract from a Grade 5 Natural Science text book. This will introduce you to the kind of critical thinking skills which you need in order to choose good text books. You can use the same skills to analyse the text book you have, so that you use it in ways which are more helpful for learning.

In the next few Language, Literacy and Communication imthamo, you will be introduced to something called 'Critical Literacy'. The work you are doing with textbooks in Io mthamo could also be called 'Critical Literacy'.



Activity 1: Analysing textbook extracts

1. Three textbook extracts have been given to you as a separate handout. We have commented on one of them, on the next page. Look carefully at the textbook extract, and read our comments.
2. Now select one of the other two textbook extracts, and answer the following questions about it. (You can use this set of questions to analyse textbooks in the future.) If possible, discuss the questions with your 'classroom observers', another colleague, or other teacher-learners at the face-to-face session. Write down some of your ideas in your journal. Your umkhwezeli will ask you to report back on this activity at the face-to-face session.



1. Who wrote this textbook? When was it written? From whose point of view is it written? For whom is it written?
2. What kind of world does the book show? What gives you the picture of this world?

Some aspects you might like to consider in answering question 2 are:

- What kinds of people are important/ not important in this world? How do you know?
- What kinds of children, parents, families and teachers live in the world of the extract?
- What kind of 'culture' are they part of? (urban/ rural; Western/ African; middle class/ working class, etc.)
- What are the males/ females like, and what kinds of things do they do?

N.B.: You may not be able to answer all of these "sub-questions". Think about them, and then answer the main question.

3. What kinds of behaviour does the writer approve of? How do you know?
4. What is the writer trying to tell us in this extract? In what ways does the writer try to get her/his message across?
5. Is the book learner-centred/ teacher-centred? What makes you say this?

Some aspects you might like to consider in answering question 5 are:

- The kinds of words/ level of language that the writer uses;
- Is the book activity-based? Are the activities of a kind that will stimulate learners? Are the activities 'do-able'?
- Would the design appeal to learners of this age group?
- Are the activities and content cognitively* challenging? Too easy? Too difficult?
- How do the books help learners to develop concepts?
- Do the authors give any indication of what they expect the learner to learn?
- What view of learning do the writers have? How do you know? How do they expect the educators to teach and the learners to learn the material? Do they expect the learners to just learn the content off by heart? Do they allow learners to shape their own understanding by discussing with others? Or by discussing with their educator? Or by using their own experience?

**Cognitively: In terms of thinking skills*

6. Are your ideas about these things the same as, or different from, those of the textbook writer? Do you like what you see of the book? Why?/Why not?

Comments on extract from: Redelinghuis, R.B., Hitchcock, I.and Basson, N.J.S. 1967. 'Science' Std 2. Juta & Co. Ltd.

1. *Although we can only see four pages of the book, we know that it was written in 1967. It was written by three white South African educationists in a time when racial groups in South Africa led very separate lives. It would seem that this book was written for white children, from a 'white' point of view.*
2. *The world shown in the book is the world of white middle class South Africans. The pictures and the content both give us indications of this. The little girl in the picture is neatly dressed, and seems to live in a tiled roofed suburban house, with a birdbath in the garden. Black people do not feature at all in this world (or at least not on these pages).*
3. *It seems that the writers approve of people who like to watch birds and learn their names and their characteristics.*
4. *The writers are trying to convey certain information about different kinds of birds. They are focusing particularly on seed-eating birds. They also seem to want to familiarise the learners with the names of some common garden birds.*
5. *The extract is largely teacher-centred.*

   The language used is not difficult, but it is dull and factual. It does not touch the emotions, or awaken excitement or interest. I doubt, therefore, that it would stimulate the interest of the learners.

   Learners are largely passive, absorbing information from the book and the teacher. It would seem that learners and teacher are expected to read most of this information together in class.

   The main method of getting information across on these four pages is 'telling', and illustrating with pictures. The writers seem to see learning as 'transfer of information'.

   A very good activity is included, which asks the learners to learn through their own experience. It is spoilt, however, by the fact that the 'answers' are given on the same page. The motivation to do the activity could therefore be lost.

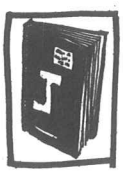
   The approach to concept development is, once again, to tell. New words or concepts which learners need to remember are printed in capitals, or italics.

   As it stands, the content is not cognitively challenging. It is quite boring. My guess is that it would only appeal to a very few learners of this age group.
6. *I don't like this book much. Although the layout is clear, and some of the pictures quite attractive, it seems very dull to me. I am not happy with the writer's view of learning. I would prefer it if children from all the different cultures and lifestyles found in South Africa could find something in the book that they could relate to.*

What does all of this mean for the classroom educator? A good school textbook can be an extremely useful resource for busy educators. So we are not suggesting that we throw out the textbook. We are suggesting that we need to be more selective about textbooks, and more careful about how we use them. We need to be aware of what values are implicit in the books. We need to think of ways of using the books to give the learners the kind of education which we believe is the best.

Different books have different strengths and weaknesses, and this makes the choice even harder. For instance, a book may deal with subject matter very well and have a good participatory style. But it may have race and gender stereotypes*. One choice is to look for another book. If you cannot change the book, you can alert your learners to the stereotypes and initiate some debate and discussion about them.

e.g. Its examples, illustrations, etc., may encourage the belief that men should never cook or look after babies, or that only persons of European origin can be good teachers, etc.



Journal write

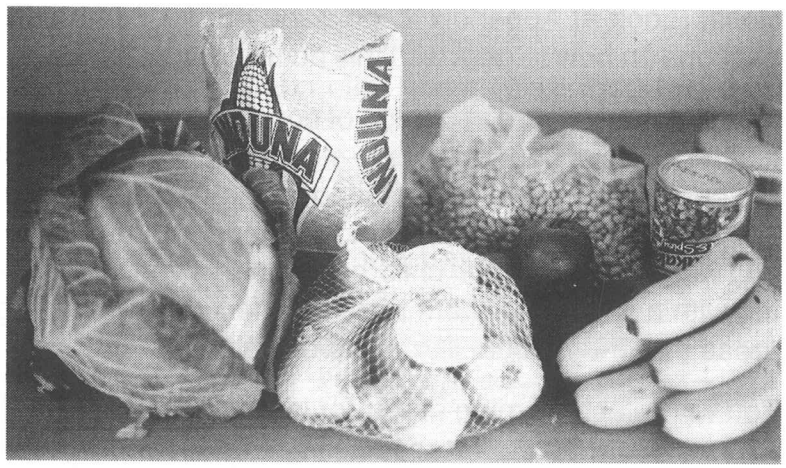
Imagine that your school had copies of the book by Redelinghuys, Hitchcock and Basson in stock. Think of a way of using these four pages as the basis for a learner-centred teaching-learning experience.

In places like Britain and Australia, learners from many different ethnic groups are now entering schools which were almost completely 'English' before. The reading box in your centre has photocopies of extracts from a booklet called 'Education in a multiethnic society: The primary school'. The extracts show the kinds of curricular issues that these schools are focusing on in order that every child can learn in a way which will help them become part of this new multiethnic society. Although our situation is not exactly the same in many of the schools we work in, these are issues which are very relevant in the new South Africa. Schools that were formerly segregated racially are now becoming mixed, with an overwhelming tendency for black Africans to send their children to formerly white schools where the teachers are still predominantly white.

Unit 4: Kutya kuni? (a balanced diet)

The 'content' of the curriculum

In Unit 2, you looked at 'one meal from your kitchen'. In Unit 3, you looked at 'recipe books' form one learning area. In this unit, we will move away from lessons and textbooks and look at the bigger picture of curriculum. Which learning areas should be included in the overall curriculum? What are the basic components of a 'balanced diet'?



There has recently been a lot of focus on the importance of having a balanced diet, including carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fibre, etc. Although there is general agreement on this, health fanatics, dieticians, doctors and members of the general public argue endlessly about 'What is good for you'. Is chocolate good or bad for you? Can you take too many vitamin tablets? Do dairy products build your bones, or do they clog up your system? And so on, and so forth. Part of the answer, of course, lies in the balance, and in the combination: "How much of each do you eat? How do you combine the different elements?" Another part of the answer is, "These things are good for you in some situations, but may not be in others". It is just like what some knowledgeable people will tell you about certain indigenous herbs that are 'good medicine' under certain circumstances, but can be 'bad medicine' if not prepared carefully.

The next critical thinking skills task looks at the same kind of issue in education.

- Which parts of all the possible knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the world do we want to teach to our learners?
- How much of each do we want them to learn?
- Do we want them to be integrated? If so, how do we want them to be integrated?
- Whose point of view on them do we want our learners to be exposed to?

Activity 2: What is a 'balanced diet' for learners at school?

Part 1

We suggest that you ask your 'classroom observers', or another colleague, to do this task as well. You should each do it on your own, and then discuss your choices. You could also ask your class to do the task in groups. Feel free to simplify it or adapt it to suit the level of your class. (Look at Appendix 2, on page 43, for some suggestions on how to deal with this activity with your class.)

Imagine that you are in charge of constructing a new curriculum. One of your tasks is to structure and select a set of 'learning areas' to be included in the curriculum. We suggest that you select the kinds of 'learning areas' that you would like your own children to have. If you are working with a class, ask them to select the kinds of learning areas that **they** would like to have in school.

You will select 'learning areas' for learners in Foundation Phase; Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase, and Further Education and Training Phase. You may select between 1 and 10 learning areas for each phase. Do not feel that you **have** to select 10. One may be enough – or two – or three. But you must have reasons for your choices.

There are a number of things that you need to think about as you select your 'learning areas':

1. What is the role, or purpose, of education, in your view? The learning areas you choose will need to relate to the purposes of education.
2. Do you want the curriculum to be built around 'content knowledge' or 'process skills'?
3. Do you want a mix of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in your curriculum? If you do, does this mean that you have to have a variety of 'learning areas'?
4. How much integration of 'learning areas' do you want in your curriculum?
5. There may be certain 'learning areas' which form a basis for other 'learning areas'. If you include one, it may be necessary to include the other.
6. Certain 'learning areas' may seem to be the same, except for their different titles (e.g. cookery and food technology). Think about why you might want to give it one title rather than another. What is the message conveyed by the title of the learning area?

Look at Reading E, by Winch, on page 44 of the Umthamo. He gives examples of how different purposes for education lead to different choices of learning areas.

Look carefully at the following list of learning areas. You might want to add to the list, if we have left things out which you consider important. Copy the table on the next page, and fill in your choices into the table. (Remember, you do not have to include 10. You can choose as few as one! But you need to motivate your choice.)

Your umkhwezeli will ask you to report back on this task and the next at the face-to-face session.

List of learning areas, or learning fields

- Mathematics; Arithmetic; Accounting; Bookkeeping; Economics
- Nature Study; Health Education; General Science; Physics; Chemistry; Astronomy
- Domestic Science; Home Economics; Cookery; Needlework; Food Technology
- Technology; Woodwork; Metalwork; Welding
- Computer Science; Computer Programming; Basic computer skills
- Word processing; Typing; Office Routine
- Entrepreneurship; Business management
- Psychology; Personal relationships; Life skills
- Environmental education; Ecology; Gardening; Agriculture; Horticulture; Biology; Zoology; Botany
- Fine Art; Arts and crafts; Drawing; Painting; Sculpture; Graphic design; Computer graphics; Beadwork
- Drama; Dance; Ballet; Modern Dance; Movement science; Movement studies; Physical Training; Games (e.g. Cricket, Tennis, Hockey, Netball, etc.)
- Investigation and Enquiry-based learning
- Communication skills
- Music; Singing; Voice studies; Instrumental music; Musical appreciation
- Peace studies; Diversity management; Conflict resolution; Cultural studies;
- Spirituality; Moral Education; Scripture; Religious studies; World Religions
- Geography; History; African History; Social Studies; Humanities
- Integrated Studies
- Language, Literacy & Communication; Additional language; Vernacular; African language (e.g. Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana); English
- Critical literacy; African literature; Literature studies

	Learning areas for Foundation Phase	Learning areas for Intermediate Phase	Learning areas for Senior Phase	Learning areas for Further Education & Training Phase
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
Reasons for choice of learning areas				

Part 2: Compare your list with the 1982 DET syllabus

Look at the following list from the Introduction to the DET 1982 syllabuses for Standards 3 and 4. Discuss the questions below it with your 'classroom observers', or with a colleague, or other teacher-learners at the face-to-face session. Write your conclusions in your journal.

Learning area	Time allocated	Proportion of time
Assembly	10 min per day	
Religious Education	5 periods per week	10%
Music	2 periods per week	4%
Physical Training	2 periods per week	4%
Vernacular	7 periods per week	14%
First official language	7 periods per week	14%
Second official language	7 periods per week	14%
Mathematics	7 periods per week	14%
Health Education	2 periods per week	4%
Geography	2 periods per week	4%
History	2 periods per week	4%
General Science	3 periods per week	6%
First optional learning area	2 periods per week	4%
Second optional learning area	2 periods per week	4%
Total:	**50 periods per week**	

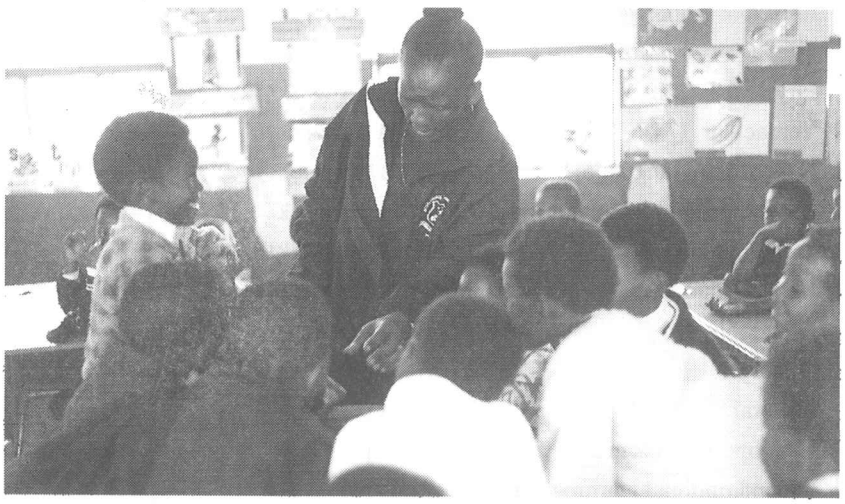
Book Education/Library should receive attention after school hours or during the study periods.

Optional learning areas for	Std 3:	Arts and Crafts
		Gardening
		Needlework
	Std 4:	Same as above
		Woodwork (only if facilities are available)

Some questions to consider:

- How does this selection of learning areas compare with yours (in Part 1)?
- Are your values and worldview different from/ similar to that of this curriculum designer? In what ways? How do you know?
- What does this curriculum designer see as the role, or the purposes, of education? What makes you think this?
- Different amounts of time have been allocated to each learning area. What does this tell you about how curriculum writers saw the importance of each learning area? For example, note that General Science is allocated 3 periods per week, i.e. 6% of the time while Religious Education is allocated 5 periods per week, i.e 10 % of the time.

- How does this list, with its times, compare with the Grade 5 learning areas and times at your school now?
- How long was the school day when you were at school? How much of the time was allocated to "academic" learning areas, to "practical" learning areas and to other activities at school, for example, cleaning the classroom or the school grounds? How would you like to allocate time in 'your' curriculum?



Our comment

What do you think the choice of school learning areas tells us? Some of you may have decided to include Life Skills, Peace Studies and Moral Education. Others may have chosen to focus on Music, Art, Mathematics and Science. Your choices say something about what you consider important or worthwhile for children to learn. But it is interesting to note that what is considered important today was not necessarily the case twenty years ago. In Botswana for example, major changes have occurred in the primary science curriculum in 1969, 1982 and 1989.

You might also like to look at the list of learning areas and time allocations for Std 3/Grade 5 for the NED, provided in the Reading Box, and compare the two.

Modise, writing on the Botswana experience, comments that the 1960s in Botswana witnessed large-scale changes in primary curricula. These changes were partly the result of curriculum developments that took place in countries like Britain. Prior to 1969, the word science was non-existent in Botswana primary schools. Primary pupils were taught Nature Study, which emphasised hygiene and plants. The revised 1982 Primary Science curriculum coincided with the period of rapid industrial developments in Botswana. The purpose of including Physical Science concepts in the Primary Science curriculum was to "prepare the nation for industrialisation". The purpose of including environmental concepts in the primary science curriculum was to "raise the environmental awareness of the nation". (p. 80).

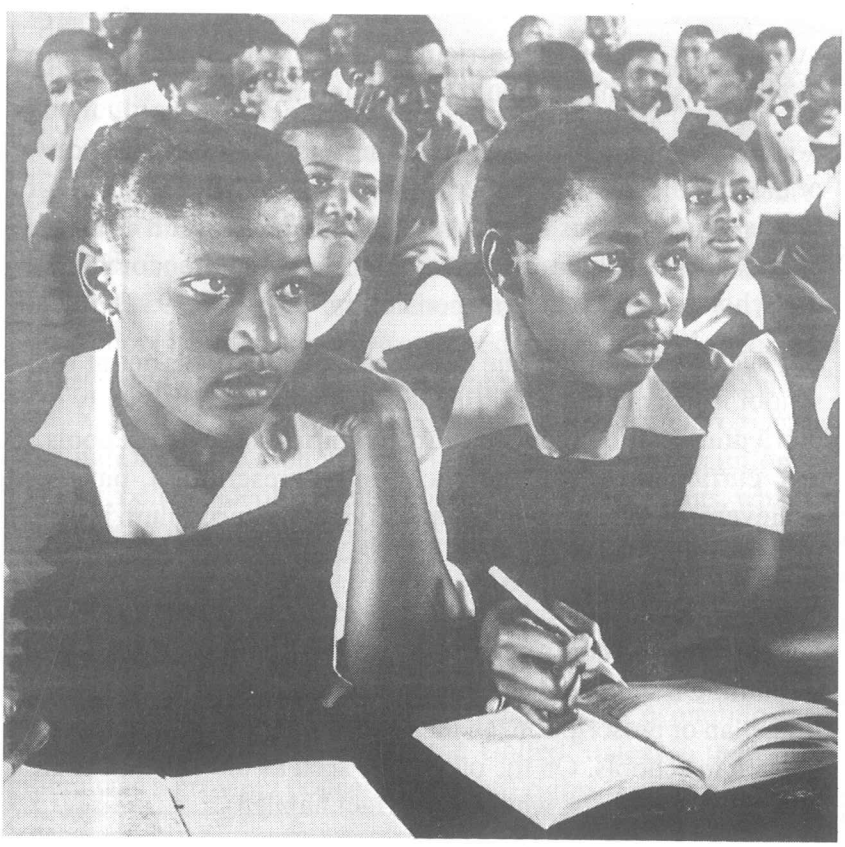
Reading C (page) tells about the Primary Curriculum in Britain at around about that time.

Modise argues further that the changes in the primary science curriculum came about because of changes in government policies; the political system; the education system; professional organisations; and theories of learning. (Modise Mosothwane, 1995). These are some the issues we will explore in more detail in the next umthamo where we look at Curriculum 2005.

Learning areas, or subjects, are not the only way to organise knowledge. A significant curriculum trend is to define knowledge in other ways. This is particularly evident in Western countries.

There is a move towards emphasising conceptual skills and learning processes instead of defining learning areas by content only. One form which this has taken is that of "skills" and competencies, as in the British National Curriculum where syllabuses are set out in terms of knowledge, skills and understandings for each learning area. In Canada and Australia, curricula are organised according to outcomes. We will consider this further in the next umthamo when we deal with C2005.

In this activity, we have been using subjects, or 'learning areas' as a way to unpack what is taught in schools. Subjects are what we are most familiar with. However, in the next umthamo we will be considering the way "worthwhile knowledge" is organised in C2005.



Unit 5: Uthini umpheki? (What says the cook?)

Consolidation and conclusion

You have looked at the curriculum in action in your classroom. You have examined some textbook extracts, and thought a bit about syllabuses. You have put together your ideal selection of learning areas.

In this, the final unit, you will read what some academics have said about curriculum. You will then write the second part of the Key Activity, a description of the part that you play, together with your learners, in creating the curriculum.

Activity 3: What do 'the experts' say?

Read the three passages which follow. They will give you a taste of the views of three academics who have been thinking about 'curriculum' for many years. Most of them have also been involved in constructing curricula. Read carefully, and see which of their points you agree with, and which you disagree with.

Reading A: Defining curriculum *(adapted from L. Stenhouse, 1975)*

In some countries the first thing that comes to mind when mention is made of the curriculum is a book of instructions to teachers. 'Could you please pass me the curriculum,' one might almost say.

Such a view equates the curriculum with a written prescription of what it is intended should happen in schools.

Some, however, equate the curriculum less with the intentions of the school than with its performance. 'Basically the curriculum is what happens to children in school as a result of what teachers do. It includes all the experiences of children for which the school should accept responsibility." (Kansas 1958).

For such a curriculum one does not look at a book but at the school. If curriculum is defined in this way, then the study of curriculum can be reduced to the empirical study of schools. The curriculum is not the intention or prescription, but the achievement. The problem of specifying the curriculum is one of perceiving, understanding and describing what is actually going on in school and classroom.

We appear to be confronted by two different views of the curriculum. On the one hand the curriculum is seen as an intention, plan or prescription, an idea about what one would like to happen in schools. On the other, it is seen as the existing state of affairs in schools, what does in fact happen.

In essence it seems to me that curriculum study is concerned with the relationship between the two views of curriculum – as intention and as reality. I believe that our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions. We cannot put our policies into practice. We should not regard this as a failure peculiar to schools and teachers. We only have to look around us to see that it is part of the human lot. But ... improvement is possible if we are secure enough to face and study the nature of our failures.

Reading B: Two different conceptions of curriculum

Cornbleth, a university professor in the United States, argues that there are two major conceptions/views about curriculum. One of these conceptions sees curriculum as a document or a set of documents and plans usually called the syllabus. Such documents often contain an outline of topics to be taught and learned in schools. These are usually accompanied by guidelines for teaching and learning. Cornbleth classifies this view of curriculum as a *technocratic* conception. She says a technocratic conception is one that 'views curriculum as a tangible product, usually a document or plan for instruction in a particular subject.' (p. 13). Such a document might include details about goals, objectives, content, teaching and learning methodologies, assessment and resources. The technocratic view of curriculum, she claims, sees curriculum as separate from the way the school is organised, teaching methodologies, and extra-curricular activities.

The *critical* conception of curriculum, on the other hand, sees curriculum as something wider than just subject content. According to this view, curriculum is the actual day-to-day interactions of students, educators, knowledge and the environment. It is about what happens in school classrooms, in the broader school-life, and in the community. The syllabus is but **one** part of the total curriculum. This view maintains that school learning is not just confined to the school classroom. Classrooms are part of a broader context. This context includes the ways in which schools are organised and structured, and the national education system. It also includes the traditions, values, beliefs, ideologies and political and social events, which are part of the society. So for example a school situated in an urban social context will function very differently from a school in a rural environment, even if both schools follow the same learning programmes.

Society, in turn, is influenced by political and economic issues. By way of example – In the United States, in the 60's there was a growing concern over civil rights issues and other

social issues. The government of the time then emphasised programmes in what was called 'black studies' and 'minority issues'. Programmes such as these were emphasised more than mathematics and science. Then during the seventies there was a call for "back to basics " – reading, writing and arithmetic. In South Africa at present there is an emphasis on science, technology and mathematics, to prepare young people for a changing technological world. This leads us to ask questions about who decides what is taught.

Cornbleth is critical of the technocratic conception. She argues that it appears to ignore the ways in which schools are organised, the nature of classroom interactions, and broader economic and political issues.

What do you think?

Reading C: The Primary Curriculum in Britain *(adapted from G.M.Blenkin & A.V.Kelly, 1983)*

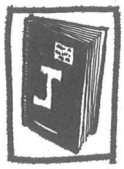
There are several good reasons for regarding the British Primary Curriculum as being worthy of study.

Its central characteristic is its insistence that education must be planned and assessed in terms of its own merits. It urges us to view education as concerned with activities or processes rather than as means to an end, whether that end is social, economic or vocational.

Secondly, it insists that education be thought of 'in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.' (Hadow, 1931) The curriculum should be planned by reference to the developing experience of the child and his individual needs and requirements. The pupils' needs should take precedence over the demands made by society, or beliefs about the importance of specific fields of study. This view has been strengthened by the work of developmental psychologists. These people suggest that the main concern of education should be to assist in the child's intellectual development, and improve his cognitive functioning*.This is more important, they claim, than promoting the learning of certain kinds of subject content. It can best be done by providing opportunities for active learning.

*cognitive functioning: thinking skills

These features can be seen to add up to what is currently being called a 'process' model of curriculum. The main characteristic of this approach is a concern to define the curriculum in terms of the principles that must underlie and inform the work of both teachers and pupils. This means that the curriculum is not defined in terms of its subject content, nor of its goals, or objectives.



Journal write

In these readings, and in the reading on syllabus design (see pages 20 & 40), you have read about:

- the technocratic conception of curriculum and the critical conception of curriculum;
- the process curriculum, and the curriculum which focuses on content, or objectives;
- the syllabus which believes in 'banking received knowledge' and the one which believes in 'exploring ways of knowing' (in Reading D, by Candlin, on page 40).

Can you connect any of these different ideas about curriculum with specific educational purposes?

e.g. The creator of a 'content' curriculum might think the purpose of education is 'the gaining of knowledge'. What would creators of the other kinds of curriculum think about the purpose of education?

Write your ideas in your journal.

Activity 4: Read, select and discuss

Now read the following short extracts and discuss the questions that follow.

A curriculum is a plan or programme for teaching or learning that is compiled with certain aims in mind and in which selected and systematically arranged subject matter is included. The curriculum includes didactic and educational goals, learning area content and evaluation procedures involved in educational activities.... (DET, 1986)

The curriculum ... comprises all the opportunities for learning provided by a school. It includes the formal programme of lessons in the time-table ... and the climate of relationships, attitudes, styles of behaviour and the general quality of life established in the school community as a whole. (Department of Education and Science, U.K.,1980)

The Curriculum is the path along which pupils travel: it is the sum of the learning experiences that are purposefully arranged by formal educational organisations in order to promote the academic, personal and social development of the pupils. It is a selection from all available knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes. (NED,1989)

A curriculum is the offering of socially valued knowledge, skills and attitudes made available to students through a variety of arrangements during the time they are at school, college or university. (The Open University, 1971)

P.T.O.

By curriculum I shall mean a programme of activities designed so that pupils will attain by learning, certain specifiable ends or objectives. (Hirst, 1974)

The curriculum is the prescribed content of education, that is, what ought to be taught in order to fulfil the aims of an educational practice or institution, irrespective of what actually goes on. (Winch, 1996)

The curriculum is central to the education process. Broadly defined, it refers to the teaching and learning activities and experiences provided by schools. These include: aims and objectives; the selection of content to be taught; ways of teaching and learning; and forms of assessment. (NEPI, 1993)

The school curriculum is like the national flag: it is the mot concrete and tangible expression of national values. In divided societies, the school curriculum (like the flag) becomes a rallying point for conflict and contestation within, but more importantly outside of the school system (Jonathen Jansen, 1993).

1. Read the above extracts, more than once if necessary, and try to understand what each of the extracts means.
2. Decide which of the extracts are closest to your understanding of curriculum.
3. Now compare your choice with that of a partner, or in a small group. Does anyone else share your view? Discuss differences.
4. Think about the extracts you have chosen. Can you link them with a particular purpose for education?
5. Go back to your journal. Look at your initial ideas in response to the question 'What is curriculum?'. Would you change this response on the basis of what has been discussed in the umthamo thus far?

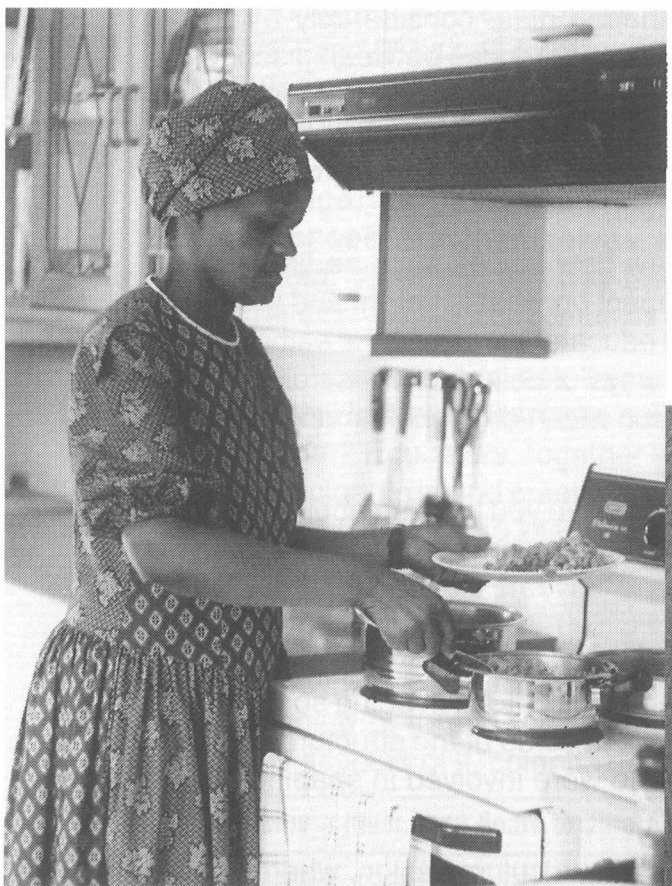
We hope that the variety of extracts provided you with additional insight into the different responses to the question "What is curriculum?". As you have seen, different people have different understandings and ways of talking about the curriculum. We hope that by now you have developed your own understanding of curriculum.

Key Activity, Step 2: The part played by the cook

What is your role in creating the curriculum? In what ways do you work together with the learners in doing this?

Write about this, in not more than a page.

Hand this page in with your reflective report (Key Activity, Part 1).



Conclusion

What have we learned in lo mthamo?

We began by posing the question, "What is curriculum?". We answered it with a broad statement that curriculum is about what and how learners learn. We used the analogy of the kitchen as a way to begin thinking about this question.

But kitchens exist within particular contexts. Learning also takes place in a context. We saw quite early that what can be done in a kitchen is shaped quite considerably by resources. In the same way, the differences between a school in a rural area and a school in a rich urban area, will impact on what happens in the classrooms. So, as we struggle with the question, 'What is curriculum?', we need to recognise the importance of the context.

In the Key Activity, you saw how issues such as time, resources, language, etc, impact on what is taught and learnt. We also saw how different educators teaching the same lesson may choose different ways of doing so. These different ways of dealing with a lesson mean different learning experiences for the learners.

The reading about syllabus started you thinking about where these documents come from and what their purpose is. In the next umthamo we hope to illustrate that documents such as syllabuses, Education Policy Acts, and the like, are the result of complex processes that take place within a particular social, political and economic context. In doing so we will focus on C2005. We will look at some of the structures, and different interest groups, who were involved in shaping our new curriculum.

We also touched on issues of curriculum design, where you were given the opportunity to construct a curriculum of your choice. We need to ask - What are the sources and forces of curriculum change? Who makes the curriculum? What is the role of the teacher, and of the learners?

There are no quick answers to these questions. Debates on curriculum have dominated the education landscape (locally and internationally) for decades. These debates and discussions are driven by changing societies searching for appropriate and effective education.

According to the NEPI (1992) Report on Curriculum: "The school curriculum brings together a number of different interests:

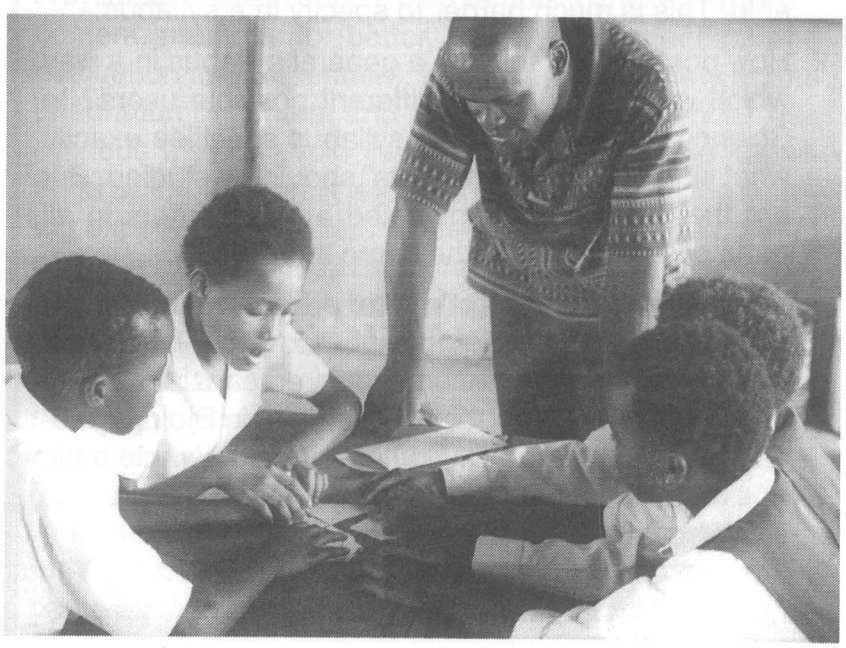
- The learning and development of individual students;
- The nature of knowledge and developments in knowledge itself;

- The labour process of educators, and their values and interests;
- The values and interests of parents and communities;
- The changing needs and interests of the broader society;
- The values, entitlements (or lack of them) and requirements of citizenship in a particular society;
- The human resources needs of the economy."

The writers of the NEPI Report argue that the "curriculum is not a thing, but embodies social relationships. It is drawn up by particular groups of people; it reflects particular points of view and values; it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups; and it produces particular patterns of success and failure. Assumptions about what counts as valuable knowledge, as basic skills, and as essential learning experiences are themselves socially influenced and contested. Viewed in this way the curriculum can never be neutral or removed from patterns of power" (p. 2).

Why is it important to ask the question, "What is curriculum?" Why is it important to be conscious of all aspect of the curriculum? Educators, together with their learners, are active participants in and creators of the curriculum. According to Shirley Grundy, "No matter how sophisticated the plans might be, it is through the transactions of the classroom that the real curriculum is developed." We end with a quote from Gail McCutcheon who says that, "Educators are the filters through which the mandated curriculum passes. Their understanding of it, and their enthusiasm, or boredom, with various aspects of it, color its nature."

Curriculum must open doors to different ways of seeing and being.



Appendix 1

Reading D

Adapted from Candlin, C.: *Syllabus design as a critical process.*

When one looks at a syllabus, either in the form of a policy document, or as a textbook, it is a good idea to think about what a syllabus is. Initially, the answer seems easy. A syllabus is a collection of items of knowledge. These items have been selected and put in a certain order, suitable for learners at a certain level. This collection of items, in this order, should carry the learner from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge.

But we must think about the following questions:

1. Can all the knowledge we would like learners to gain from a syllabus be listed as items? Some of the key processes and concepts may not be so easy to specify. Some examples of things which cannot easily be put into a list of items are: a response to a poem, the way in which one should disagree with someone else in a group discussion, cause and effect in History. It is easy enough to specify what the causes of the Anglo-Boer War were and expect learners to learn this off. But is this what we want? A list of causes does not ever take into account the different perspectives of different people. Also, the list of causes could look very different, depending on who was writing it. Do we not rather want our learners to speculate* on the causes and to understand the principle of cause and effect. We might also want them to debate whether wars are acceptable. This is much harder to specify in a syllabus.
2. How possible is it to write a general syllabus in a way which will satisfy all the different possible users? In Science, for example, one syllabus specifies exactly what kind of "unwanted plants" should be studied. But are the same plants unwanted by all learners in all parts of the country at the same time?
3. What view of the subject-matter does the syllabus designer have? Why has some knowledge been selected for inclusion? Why has some been emphasized? Why has some been left out? For example, in Biology secondary school syllabi in South Africa, the whole topic of evolution was left out for many years. Why is this so? Was it because the 'Christian' syllabus designers thought that evolution went against the Bible? Why does the Primary Science syllabus include reverence

**speculate on the causes: wonder about them; suggest possible causes*

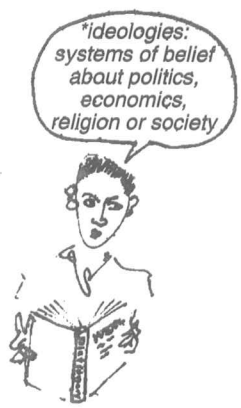
for the Creator? Again, it is linked to certain religious beliefs. What about the Great Trek? Whose view of this event in our history was reflected in History syllabi?

Seen against the background of these questions, a syllabus becomes a much more significant document. It is more than just an ordered sequence of selected and "innocuous*" items of content. It is actually a window on a particular set of values about society, education, subject-matter and morality.

Syllabuses stand, then, for particular ideologies*. This is most clearly seen in terms of the choice of content. It is also seen in the relationship of the learner to the content, and the relationship of the learner to the educator. Both of these aspects are contained in the approach and methodology. Syllabuses come in two ideological forms. One requires learners to bank (or store) received knowledge. The other encourages learners to explore ways of knowing. It encourages learners to interpret knowledge and to engage in dialogue with it and with themselves.

It is clear that content in the first type of syllabus is of utmost importance. But we must ask where this content comes from, and who determines what the syllabus is to contain. Is the learner involved in it at all? Is it possible to separate content from methods and approach? Is it possible to avoid bringing assessment into the debate? Most traditional syllabi in South Africa specify that learners should be tested and what marks each type of test should carry. But is testing the only form of assessment?

A syllabus of the second type attempts to make purposes, content, methods (or better, learning experiences) and evaluation interdependent. It focuses particularly on the integration of content and the learning experience. This syllabus tries to avoid the mistake of regarding knowledge as information. It is just as concerned with the learning experiences it offers to learners as with the content of those experiences. The content of any learning experience is directly linked to the process of the experience itself. Think about teaching a poem on Nature. Writing it on the board and asking the learners to memorise it and then say it aloud will result in one experience of the content of the poem. Another way to teach the poem would be to ask groups of learners to discuss the poem. They might share anything from nature that it reminds them of and share their feelings in response to the poem. They could be asked to go outside and collect anything that



Note that this article was written before the current curriculum changes.

reminds them of the poem and to say why. This different method of teaching the poem will result in quite a different knowledge of content than the first.

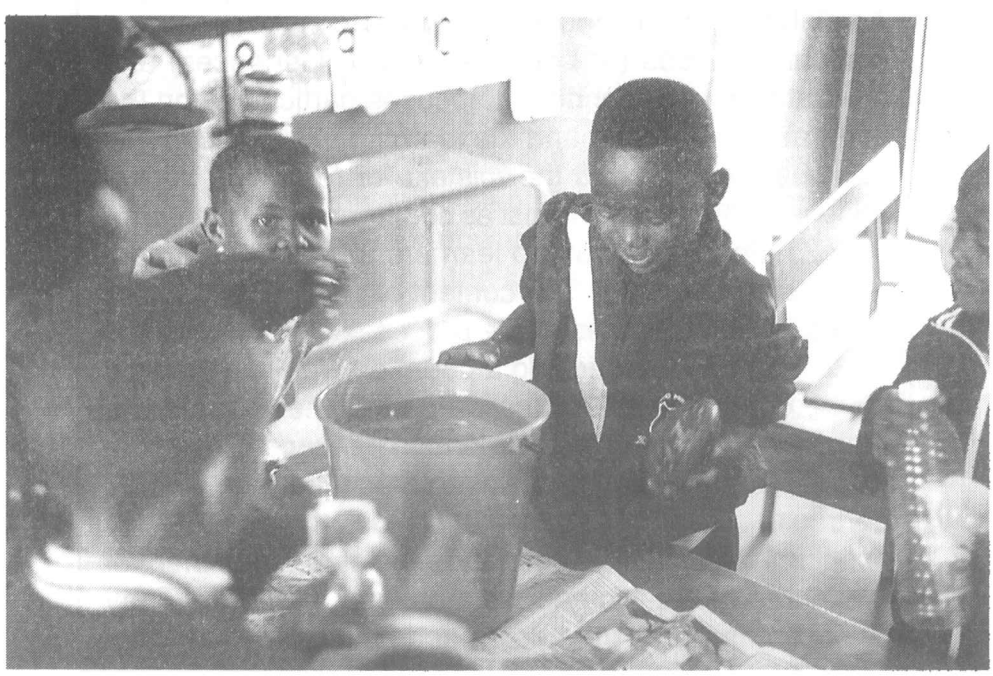
The knowledge of content is not value-free. In the second type of syllabus, to "know" content is to question its values. This implies a methodology that encourages learners to question. So this type of syllabus must include not only "what is learned", but "how it is learned". This type of syllabus focuses on the learners, who bring their experience to bear on the content. Thus the syllabus becomes a dynamic and negotiated concept rather than one which is static and imposed*.

Such an interactive syllabus becomes one in which participants, both educators and learners, are encouraged to ask questions from the beginning. They can ask about syllabus objectives, content, methodology and experiences, and their evaluation. And it is through such questioning that new knowledge can be created and brought to bear on other learning experiences.

This first type of syllabus acts to sustain* the social order and view of the world out of which the syllabus was developed. It does this by selecting and ordering content on behalf of the learner. The learner cannot question or change the content which has been selected. The second type of syllabus acts to challenge world views, through action and reflection by all participants. It allows learners and educators to question the content and organization of the syllabus.

*'dynamic' means 'moving and changing'; 'negotiated' means 'worked out together, by discussing'; 'static' means 'still and unchanging'; 'imposed' means 'someone else tells you what to do'.

This sentence means, then: 'The syllabus becomes something that can change through discussing it together. It is no longer something unchangeable, that someone else has told you to do.'



Appendix 2

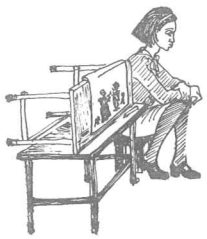
Suggestions for involving learners in choosing 'curriculum content'

Early years and Foundation Phase

You could divide your learners into three groups, as you did in the activity in Learning in the World 1: The Role of Education (page 9 & 10)* This will give you a chance to speak to a fairly small group of learners at a time. It might also be interesting to see whether girls and boys have different ideas, as you did that time.

**Look carefully at the instructions in that Umthamo as you prepare yourself for this activity.*

In this activity, you once again want to find out what your learners think.



We suggest that you ask your learners several questions. Encourage them to tell you what they think. There is no 'right' answer. Try to draw out from them their genuine thoughts. Here are the questions:

- What do you learn when you come to school/ pre-school?
- What do you enjoy learning? Why do you enjoy it?
- Who decides what you learn at school?
- Would you like to choose and decide what you want to learn at school?
- What else would you like to learn?
- What do you need to learn for when you are grown-up? What are the most important things you need? Where can you learn them?
- How can we fit in some of the things you would like to learn into our school day/ week/ term?

Try to write notes of their answers, either while you are talking to them, or immediately afterwards. Make sure that you carry out these plans for 'curriculum' that you made together. Share what your learners had to say with your colleagues, or at the face-to-face session.

Intermediate and Senior Phase

With younger children (e.g. Grade 4), you might like to follow the same procedure as you followed with the Foundation Phase. For slightly older learners, you could let them discuss the questions in groups, and report back to the whole class.

As they move up in the school, they might like to discuss a list like the one you discussed with your 'classroom observers' (page 27). Choose items from that list, so that they can work with a simpler list than the one you worked with. You know your learners well. You will know what they can cope with, and what might be confusing for them.

They could perhaps choose the learning areas that they would like to study in their present grade, or phase. They could discuss it in groups, and then report back to the rest of the class. They can try to persuade the other learners why their choice is a good one. (This means they must give good reasons for their choices.)

Keep their lists, or some notes which you have made about the lesson, to share with colleagues, or at the face-to-face session.

Appendix 3

Reading E: What is taught and why

Adapted from C. Winch (1996). *'Constructing Worthwhile Curricula'*

The curriculum could be defined as the prescribed content of knowledge, understanding and skill that fulfills the aims of education.

How is the curriculum chosen? The learning areas chosen are thought to be those that fulfil various educational aims.

They may, for example, be chosen to reflect the important aspects of a society's cultural, literary and artistic heritage, if the aim of the curriculum is to transmit that heritage to future generations. For example, in Britain, the study of the Classics and Philosophy has been highly valued within the culture for a long time. These subjects were seen as a key to an understanding of the British and European cultural heritage.

Learning areas may be chosen to reflect the vocational skills that are thought to be particularly valuable for promoting economic growth. These days, a learning area like computer studies will flourish because of its perceived vocational relevance. In addition, computers have a certain mystery about them and so the subject has added prestige*. Computers has more prestige than engineering at present, although engineering is also required for economic growth.

Learning areas may be chosen as the best means for developing character attributes, such as autonomy and consideration for others. Learning areas like Religious Education, Moral Education or Good Citizenship may fall into this category.

Learning areas may also be chosen because they are thought to develop particular intellectual skills whose application is potentially very wide and which thus serve a variety of aims. Philosophy and Mathematics have sometimes been thought of as belonging to this category.

There will not therefore be any one view as to what learning areas should be selected for the curriculum. The selection will arise from negotiations against the background of changing fashions and preoccupations within society.

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We apologise that some of these references are incomplete. This will be corrected in the final edition.

"A curriculum is rather like a recipe in cookery. It can be criticized on nutritional or gastronomic grounds – does it nourish the students and does it taste good? – and it can be criticized on the grounds of practicality – we can't get hold of six dozen larks tongues and the grocer can't find any ground unicorn horn! A curriculum, like the recipe for a dish, is first imagined as a possibility, then the subject of experiment. The recipe offered publicly is in a sense a report on the experiment. Similarly, a curriculum should be grounded in practice. It is an attempt so to describe the work observed in classrooms that it is adequately communicated to teachers and others. Finally, within limits, a recipe can be varied according to taste. So can a curriculum.

But analogies should be abandoned before they cause indigestion."

(Stenhouse, L. ***An introduction to curriculum research and development.*** *1975. London: Heinemann.)*

UNIT 5

Hens have chickens

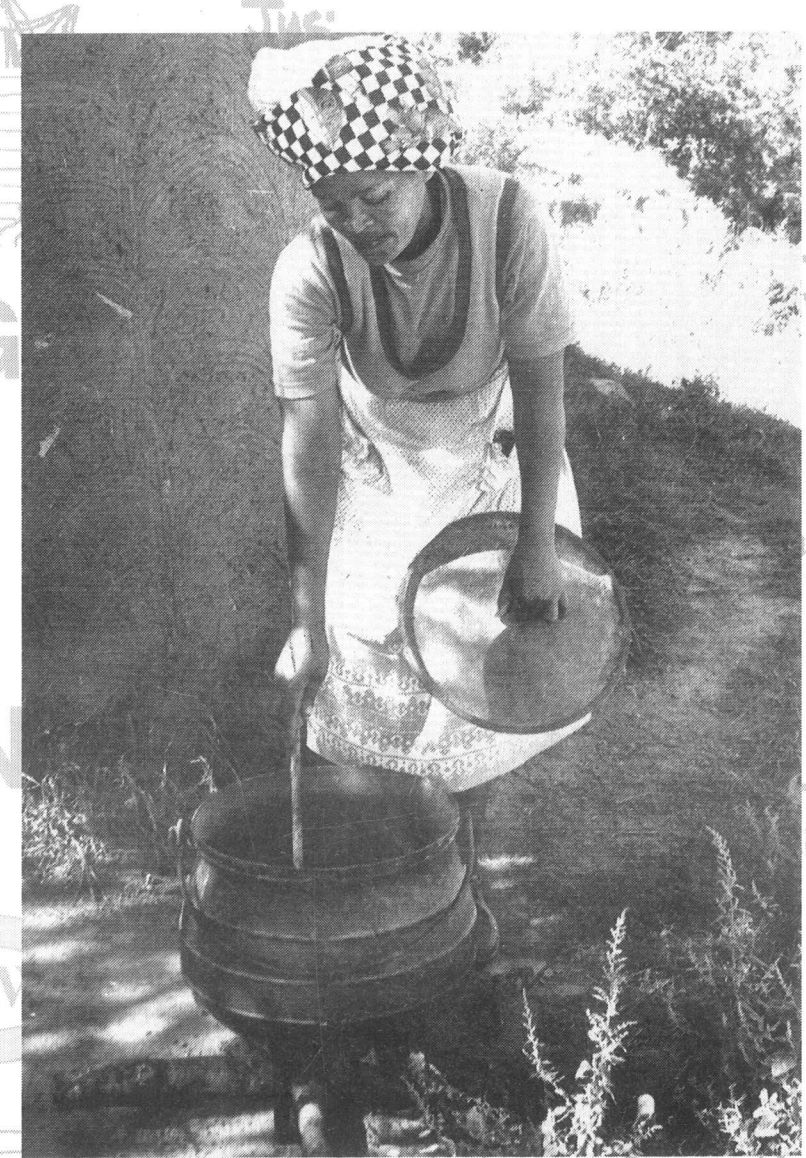
In this unit you'll look closely at the way a hen gives birth to her chickens. You've already learnt a lot about this in the first four units of this chapter. Now you'll put the facts you know together with some new facts to make a poster called 'The birth of a chicken'.

For you to do

Step 1

1. Choose three friends to work on the poster with you.
2. Find someone who keeps chickens at home, or where they work. Ask them if you can watch the chickens when you need to.

COOKING IN BOTSWANA



Printed by: L. Harry & Sons, 18 Kimberley Road, East London 5201. Telephone 7220604