BrieflySpeaking

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Extended Programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase: Theoretical considerations for curriculum design

Introduction

Extended Programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase, now widely termed 'Extended Curriculum Programmes' ('ECPs'), were introduced in the early 2000s as a means of promoting access and success for students who had historically been denied access to quality higher education. They are now offered in 22 of the 26 public universities (DHET, 2019:22).

This Briefly Speaking begins by looking at the origins of ECPs before moving on to describe the principles informing their design along with the various course types that can be combined to form a 'foundation phase'. Criteria for funding provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (see, for example, DoE, 2012) require that this foundation phase is integrated into a fully accredited programme. A brief discussion of the impact of ECPs is then provided before the focus shifts to the implications of contemporary theory for programme design. The argument made is that, if theory were better used to inform the design of the foundation phase in ECPs, better educational outcomes could be expected to result.

This Briefly Speaking ends by making some recommendations for a possible national review of this important area of academic provision in South African higher education.

The origins of ECPs

Throughout the 1980s, a number of institutions had developed bridging or foundation courses to provide access to specific programmes for disadvantaged students (see, for example, Allie, 1987; Rutherford & Donald, 1994: de Villiers & Rwgema, 1998). These foundation or bridging programmes were mostly soft funded and, as a result, their stability relied on the goodwill of donors. Amongst concerns about access and success of students in the higher education system following the shift to democracy, the Ministerial Funding Statement of 2003 (MoE, 2003:4.1) introduced the concept of 'earmarked grants', which would be part of the new funding formula for public higher education to be introduced in 2004 (MoE, 2004a). One of these earmarked grants was for the provision of 'foundation programmes'.

In 2004, the DoE published a set of criteria for the use of this earmarked funding (DoE, 2004b). Universities had to submit proposals for the use of this money, allocated to each institution on the basis of the funding formula, in the form of 'Foundation Programme Grants'. Proposals for the Grants had to meet certain strict criteria, the first of which was that the money was only to be allocated for the insertion of additional

'developmental' tuition/courses into an 'integrated foundation phase' that formed part of fully accredited programmes. Students would thus be admitted to an accredited programme, which had been 'extended', and would thus be guaranteed a qualification provided they completed their studies. This was very different to previous practices where students had often been admitted to 'stand-alone' foundation certificate programmes with no promise of a place on an accredited programme once they had finished foundation level work.

The second criterion was that the additional tuition had to comprise between 0.5 and 1.00 additional FTEs. Using the concept of 'SAQA' credits, this meant that 60 to 120 credits worth of additional tuition could be provided. The additional tuition was 'supplementary' in the sense that it did not serve for degree or diploma purposes. Students still needed to achieve the credits recorded for the programme for which they were registered on qualifications frameworks. The DHET does not place any limits on where in the programme this additional tuition can be inserted. In principle, this means that developmental tuition could be inserted in the later years of an ECP and not only in the early years.

The intended audiences of ECPs

Policy on ECPs has always been clear that the purpose is to enhance the chances of success of those who meet the minimum requirements for admission to higher education but who nonetheless are at risk of failure because of the poor quality of their previous educational experiences (see, for example, DHET, 2012). Many programmes have entrance criteria that are more demanding than the minimum statutory requirements, however. These same programmes may also have high failure rates. Problems then arise when ECPs are used to admit students who do not meet the normal entrance requirements to these programmes in the spirit of widening access. However, it makes little sense to admit students with lower matric results to an ECP when large numbers of students who do meet the criteria are already failing and dropping out from the regular programme. The DHET therefore notes that

> . . . in considering what categories of student should be placed in an extended programme, universities are advised to focus first on students who meet institutional admission criteria but, because of educational disadvantage, would have a low probability of succeeding if admitted directly to mainstream provision. This category of student stands to benefit substantially from foundation provision (DHET, 2012:2).

The DHET guidance for foundation provision (DHET, 2012) goes on to advise that systems need to be put in place to identify students on regular programmes who might be at risk and who therefore would benefit from the additional tuition and support provided by an ECP. In this way, the purpose of ECPs is clearly stated as improving the chances of success of students who would normally be admitted to regular programmes. In spite of this principle, over the years many institutions have used ECPs as a means of widening access to students who do not meet regular programme admission requirements regardless of their existing low retention and throughput rates.

Although the South African higher education system has nearly doubled in size since 1994, demand has also grown as evidenced by the number of applications for places received at the beginning of each academic year. The student protests of 2015 and 2016 also showed that funding continues to be an enormous problem. Although provision for students from the lowest socio-economic strata of society has improved as a result of extending the limits for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), there are still large numbers of students (often termed the 'missing middle') for whom financing a higher

education is unaffordable. CHE (2019) identifies only 25% of the total student body as being in receipt of NSFAS funding in the 2017 academic year. Given the financial constraints experienced by many students, the idea of needing to spend an additional year studying towards a qualification is unpalatable for most, a situation which is aggravated by the fact that students believe they are ready for tertiary study as they have met the minimum statutory requirements and they are unaware of the number of students who drop out from their studies or who take much longer than the minimum time to graduate. Of the cohort of students entering higher education to pursue a 360 credit diploma in 2012, only 55% had graduated by 2017 (CHE, 2019). The proportion of students registered for 360 credit degrees in the same cohort and who had graduated by 2017 was 58% (CHE, 2019).

In some institutions, the placement of students on ECPs has become a political issue resulting in the involvement of student leadership structures who object to decisions taken. In this kind of context, allocating students who meet regular programme entrance requirements to an ECP can be very difficult with the result that the purpose of the programmes can be challenging to maintain. Many students who were originally reluctant to join an ECP later come to report favourably on their experiences, noting that without the programme they would not have succeeded (see, for example, Potgieter et al, 2015). As Bernard's (2015:253) analysis of three articles in the press shows, however, beliefs in wider society are not so positive. These beliefs may then impact on students themselves:

> Coupled with deficient representations, such as 'lacking the necessary skills', the media presents a powerful stereotype of students entering university on foundation programmes which may have implications of how the students are viewed, view themselves, and participate in HE.

Placement of students on ECPs therefore continues to be a significant problem that needs more attention as the system moves forward.

Types of Developmental Courses

As already indicated, the criteria for earmarked funding (DoE, 2004) for ECPs require that 'developmental courses' forming an 'integrated foundation phase' should be inserted into fully accredited courses. Over time, a number of different course types have emerged in response to these criteria:

1. **Fully foundational courses** aim to fill 'gaps' in students' knowledge and skills. These courses are usually taught by specialists in the field of Academic Development (AD) who often have experience of school teaching rather than higher education and who are paid using earmarked funding. Fully foundational courses are not responsible for delivering any of the credits needed for a particular qualification. This means that, conceptually, all the credits for such courses should count as being 'developmental' as they are looking backwards to fill gaps in school based learning rather than forwards in the sense of accrediting learning needed for a particular qualification. In practice, however, many institutions do award credits that can count towards a qualification for foundation level work. Although this is allowable, it needs to be noted that, strictly speaking, this practice serves to 'devalue' the qualification itself by reducing the learning required for it. Arguments for awarding credits for foundation level work are usually related to the need to motivate students, a debate which has its roots in the 1980s (see, for example, Scott, 1984). This is a complex problem to solve. If fully foundational courses are made compulsory and credits are awarded, a solution might be to increase the number of credits required for a qualification overall since the 360 credits required for a three year qualification on the HEQSF are a minimum only. However, care must then be taken

not to overburden students by presenting them with too many notional learning hours.

2. Extended courses lengthen the time of a regular course in order to 'insert' developmental provision so that more time is available to devote to the teaching of content and to provide the foundational work needed to underpin it. This means that, for example, a semester-long course is extended so that the content normally taught in a semester is taught over an entire year to allow for additional activities and material to be inserted. An extended course usually doubles the number of credits in a regular course with the result that 50% of the credits that comprise it count towards those needed for a particular qualification and 50% are 'developmental' and do not. If a course usually carried 10 credits, it would be extended in order to allow for the teaching of an additional 10 'developmental' credits. In principle, extended courses can be taught by mainstream academics in the disciplines in which the courses is located or AD practitioners. In practice, they tend to be taught by AD practitioners employed on contracts funded by the earmarked funding.

3. Augmented courses run over the amount of time as a regular course but where the tuition time is increased to allow for regular content to taught alongside developmental activities. This might mean, for example, that a course normally running over a full semester continues to be offered over a full semester but the amount of tuition is increased. If a course usually offered 3 lectures and one tutorial sessions per week, it could be augmented to provide 6 lectures and two tutorial sessions. In this case, the credits for the course would double with the result that 50% of the credits allocated to the course would count towards those needed for a particular qualification and 50% would not, as they would be considered to be 'developmental'. If the course normally carried 10 credits it would be augmented by 10 'developmental' credits. These developmental credits are usually taught by AD practitioners and earmarked funding is used to pay for this work.

The following table summarises the differences between these developmental courses.

Table 1: Comparison of developmental course types

Course Type	Regular credits	Developmental credits	Usually taught by	Time taken to complete (using the example of a one semester course)
Fully foundational		✓	AD specialists	One semester
Extended	✓	✓	AD specialists	One year
Augmented	✓	✓	AD specialists	One semester

The integrated foundation phase

The course types described above can be combined in a number of ways to produce a 'foundation phase' that is integrated into an existing programme. The models below are examples only and are not intended to limit possibilities. In the examples, developmental credits are shown in blue and 'regular' credits in green. In the examples below, no 'regular' credits are awarded for fully foundational courses. However, this does not have to be the case as 1) above describes.

The first example shows a fully foundational first year followed by the regular curriculum of the regular programme. This means that all 120 credits of developmental tuition fundable by the Foundation Programme Grant are offered in the first year. The foundation courses do not carry any credits towards the qualification as they are understood to be filling gaps in previous learning.

Table 2: Example of a 360-credit qualification comprising an integrated foundation phase of one year's worth of fully foundational provision

	Semester One			Semester Two			Credits for qualification	Developmental credits
Year 4	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 3	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 2	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 1	Foundation Course 20	Foundation Course 20	Foundation Course 20	Foundation Course 20	Foundation Course 20	Foundation Course 20		120

The second example incorporates a 'slow stream approach' to the foundation phase involving inserting augmented and extended courses in the first two years. In this way, the credits of the first year of the regular programme normally achieved in a first year, are completed over two years. In the example below, an equal number of augmented and extended courses are used to make up the foundation phase but this does not need to be the case.

Table 3: Example of a 360-credit qualification using a 'slow stream' approach to the integrated foundation phase

	Semester One			Semester Two			Credits for qualification	Developmental credits
Year 4	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 3	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 2	Augmented Course 10/10	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Extended Course 10/10	60	60
Year 1	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	60	60

The example below is of an approach which uses a mixture of all three developmental course types (extended, augmented and fully foundational) over three years of the extended four-year curriculum. This means that support and development of students' learning continues beyond the first two years of study. In some knowledge areas, it can be advantageous to provide development and support in relation to courses at the upper levels of the curriculum that have been shown to be particularly challenging for students. In a curriculum where a course at an upper level suddenly places numerical demands on students, for example, it would be possible to build support and development into the course. In this example, only 80 of the possible 120 developmental credits are used. Provided the between 60 to 120 credits are devoted to additional tuition in a fully accredited programme, earmarked funding is available.

Table 4: An example of a 360 credit qualification where developmental provision is offered through to the third year of study

	Semester One			Semester Two			Credits for qualification	Developmental credits
Year 4	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	120	
Year 3	Regular course 20	Augmented Course 10/10	Regular course 20	Regular course 20	Extended course 10/10	Regular course 20	100	20
Year 2	Regular Course 20	Extended Course 10/10	Regular Course 20	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Regular Course 20	90	30
Year 1	Extended Course 10/10	Foundation Course	Extended Course 10/10	Augmented Course 10/10	Regular Course 20	Foundation Course	50	30

Responsibility and quality assurance

Although, in practice, most developmental provision is taught by AD practitioners, the design of the ECP is the responsibility of the entity in which the ECP is located. The accredited programme, in a faculty or school, is responsible for the design of the ECP, its teaching and assessment and the assurance of quality within it. The school or faculty also needs to monitor assessment results and evaluate teaching as it would for any other programme. Links between AD practitioners responsible for teaching developmental courses and subject specialists employed in mainstream departments are often tenuous however, especially if the AD practitioners are employed in a unit or centre that sits outside academic departments.

Another problem with delegating responsibility for developmental courses to AD practitioners is that these courses run the risk of having little relevance to the regular course. AD practitioners do not always know what is going on in the regular course and so teach their own versions of the 'skills' they think are needed for success. Learning in the university can be seen to relate to values and beliefs about what can count as knowledge and how it can be known, which differs significantly across programmes. For example, in the sciences, accuracy and precision are stressed alongside objectivity and these can be seen to relate to understandings of 'truth' or knowledge existing independently of human thought and action and needing to be 'discovered' or 'uncovered' without interference. In the social sciences, on the other hand, knowledge is often understood to be constructed by people. Different areas of study then have different organising principles (see, Reynolds, 2010 for the example of anthropology). These differences lead to very different ways of reading, writing and other practices. If AD practitioners are not adepts in the knowledge making practices of the fields in which they are working (and in practice this would mean that they have a postgraduate research qualification in the area and are actively researching in it) then it is unlikely that they will be able to explain these principles to students. Reynolds (2010) was able to identify the principles in anthropology only through close interaction with members of staff in the mainstream department and by attending lectures with her students as an expert learner. In a similar fashion, Jacobs (2007) calls for the same kind of close collaboration based on her research in a university of technology.

Rather than locating AD practitioners in a separate centre or unit where they teach based on their own understanding of the development needed by students, a better arrangement would be the location of AD practitioners in academic

departments and schools as fully fledged members of staff who attend lectures with the students they are teaching so that they can understand what is expected of them there. They can then contribute to discussions at staff meetings and faculty boards and so on. AD practitioners teaching and researching developmental courses often have valuable insights which could benefit mainstream teaching and curriculum design but opportunities to provide input are often limited because they are not seen to be credible as academics or part of the departmental staff (Boughey, 2007, 2012). This is problem is greatly exacerbated by many AD practitioners being appointed into support or administrative positions on short-term contracts.

There is no reason, given the ongoing funding for ECPs by the DHET why those teaching on them should not be offered more permanent employment. This would have the advantage of encouraging practitioners to upgrade qualifications and research and would lead to more overall stability in the field. A draft framework for ECPs (Scott, 2019) which would allow these programmes to be funded using the Higher Education Management and Information System (HEMIS) rather than by means of an earmarked grant is currently under consideration by the DHET. If this policy is approved pressure could be placed on institutions to make more permanent appointments in the field of AD.

The impact of ECPs

Although ECPs have received a great deal of attention in the field of AD, as Garraway and Bozalek (2019) point out, much of this work tends to be descriptive rather than theoretically informed or evidence-based. One of the main problems reported in this literature appears to involve the lack of articulation between the foundation phase and the rest of the curriculum of the programme. Potgieter et al. (2015: 154), for example, note that although problem solving strategies are emphasised in the foundation phase of the engineering programme they report on, students often revert to 'old practices that do not work' as they move on. Potgieter et al. (2015) go on to emphasise the need for these strategies to be 'made explicit in senior classes' if students are to make the connections between what they learned earlier and the work in regular classes. This problem of articulation is not helped by the shift from foundation phase classes which are typically small and allow for personal attention to large classes of the regular curriculum where they are just one of a sea of faces confronting a lecturer.

The cohort studies on higher education published annually by the DHET now include dropout and throughput rates for students on what they term 'foundation provisioning programmes'. The latest study (DHET, 2020b) shows that the cohort of students admitted to ECPs in 2013 demonstrated slightly fewer dropouts than those admitted to regular programmes. The table below gives figures for regular 3-year programmes and for 3-year programmes incorporating a foundation phase (i.e. ECPs).

Table 5: Comparison of dropouts from regular 3-year programmes and extended curriculum 3-year programmes for the cohort entering South African higher education in 2013 (from DHET, 2020)

	2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
Regular 3 Year	19.9%	26%	24.8%	25.5%	25.5%
ECPs (3+1)	19.4%	23.6%	27.1%	25.2%	26.2%

However, the throughput for 3-year ECPs was lower, as the following table shows:

Table 6: Comparison of cumulative throughput for regular 3-year programmes and extended curriculum 3-year programmes for the cohort entering South African higher education in 2013 (from DHET, 2020).

	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years
Regular	23.6%	41.9%	53%	59.2%
ECP (3+1)	1.1%	24.8%	41.7%	51.9%

Overall, the conclusion reached in this DHET analysis that 'the dropout and throughput rate of students on ECPS is not significantly different' to those on regular programmes. This statement is, however, qualified by the observation that dropout and throughput rates for ECPs over ten years is not available because information about ECP enrolment was only added to HEMIS data in 2012. The DHET also raises the question, indicated above, of whether the data reflects ECPs being used as alternative admission routes instead of as a means of promoting success.

As with all programmes, ECPs would clearly benefit from regular and rigorous curriculum review. Although criteria for the funding of ECPs are broad and allow for a great deal of variation in programme design, decisions about whether, for example, to include foundation, extended or augmented courses in the integrated foundation phase are not arbitrary. They need to be determined on a strongly theorised and well-informed basis. Research in two broad fields, New Literacy Studies and the Sociology of Knowledge, helps to show how particular course types are best be suited to different knowledge areas. This Briefly Speaking now moves to surveying this work as a first step in an argument that programme design needs to be theoretically informed and not driven merely by pragmatic considerations or what simply 'makes sense' to programme designers.

New Literacy Studies

Work in the field of New Literacy Studies draws on the idea that literacy is a set of social practices, or behaviours, and not merely a 'technology' focused on the encoding and decoding of written text (Street, 1984). Literacy practices involve specific ways of reading and writing as well as beliefs about what it is appropriate to read and write. Sets of practices develop in communities and may involve the setting aside of written text in favour of oral communication (Breier, 1996). This leads to an understanding of literacy as a multiple rather than a unitary phenomenon with different literacies manifesting in different social contexts.

Academic literacy, which is distinguished from school-based literacies (Geisler, 1994) and home, church or other literacies, draws on a set of values about what can count as knowledge and how it can be known. This leads to very different literacy practices in different knowledge areas. Dental Technology will require students to think, read, write and do in ways that are distinct from those in Digital Marketing or Developmental Psychology. These literacy practices may seem quite obscure for new students who, despite their success in school, suddenly find the expectations being placed on them to be mysterious or even alienating.

In a country where English, an additional language for the majority of students, is used for teaching and learning it is impossible to ignore the relationship of language to literacy. The notion that disciplinary areas develop specialised languages has already been introduced but it is also necessary to explore the nature of language itself in order to understand what is often termed the 'language problem' in South Africa (Boughey, 2002).

Christie (1985) distinguishes between two understandings of language: what she terms a 'model of language as an instrument of

communication' and a 'model of language as a resource'. The model of language as an instrument of communication understands language as just a vehicle for conveying ready made meanings to another. In this somewhat simplistic view, meanings need to be encoded into language and the success of the 'transmission' is dependent on the accuracy of the encoding process. This understanding leads to a focus on the accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling in the belief that, the more correct the linguistic form, the better the meaning is communicated. The naivety of this model is borne out in the experience of anyone trying to read in a completely new disciplinary area. Regardless of their status as speakers of a particular language, it is likely that the way language is used to construct the 'world' of the discipline will be unfamiliar to those who are not adepts, with the result that they will find the text is difficult to understand. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1994:8) point out, 'academic language is . . . no one's mother tongue'.

The alternative to the model of language as an instrument of communication is the model of language as a resource (Christie 1985). This model, drawing on the work of linguist Michael Halliday (1973,1978), sees language as a system of choices made on the basis of the context in which it is used. Two kinds of context are identified: the context of culture and the context of situation. In a university, the broader context of culture would be informed by values and beliefs about what can count as being 'academic'. The more focused context of situation would be informed by the particular field's norms as well as by those of a particular class or course.

A very simple example serves to illustrate the importance of context. The sentence 'Kids who do not go to pre-school are disadvantaged' is perfectly correct linguistically. In an academic context, however, it is inappropriate; the wrong choices have been made. In an academic context, the word 'kids' is eschewed in favour of the more formal 'children'. In addition, the words and phrases such as 'going to pre-school' and 'disadvantaged' need to be carefully qualified and defined. What exactly does 'going to pre-school' involve? What is a 'pre-school'? In a similar vein, what does 'disadvantaged' mean? The academic norm of explicitness requires that such terms be clearly defined.

Academic knowledge statements also require evidence. In an academic context, therefore, when a writer makes an observation or claim, they have to provide evidence for this, usually by including references to relevant research. In the kids and pre-school example, therefore, it is possible to see how a statement that would be acceptable in a context outside a university, would not be accepted in a piece of academic writing. The very lexical choices made by the writer need to be informed by an understanding of the discipline (or the 'context of situation'). In this way, it is possible to see that the mastery of the basic structures of the language is insufficient because field specific language development needs to take place in context. In addition to identifying multiple literacies, theorists in the field of New Literacy Studies also insist that literacies are only acquired through immersion in the social context in which they are used and not through direct teaching (see, for example, Gee, 2008). Morrow (2009) argues that making sure that students gain 'epistemological access', that is access to the knowledge of the field, requires teaching in ways that make the norms and values (and the relevant literacy practices) of the field explicit. But he also states that epistemological access cannot be 'given' to a student; the student needs to be supported in context to make sense of the expectations of the field.

These observations have a number of implications for programme and course design. In the first place they suggest that generic fully foundational courses in academic literacy located only in the first year of a curriculum structure are unlikely to be effective, not only because they cannot address the multiple literacies of the fields to which

students seek access but also because they rely on the assumption that literacy can be taught. Contemporary literacy theory suggests that, in the South African context of ECPs, augmented or extended courses should be used to develop literacies and for these courses to be extended as far up the curriculum as space allows. Literacy develops 'by degrees' and should be seen as the end goal of a period of study and not the beginning (Taylor et al., 1988). Also, if augmented or extended courses are intended to make the required literacy practices explicit and give student opportunities to practice these, academic development practitioners teaching them need to work closely with academics teaching the regular course to identify the literacy practices of the discipline and teach them in context in the way modelled by Reynolds (2010) and Jacobs (2007).

Unfortunately, financial considerations often intervene in the use of more theorised approaches to the development of literacy. It is cheaper to include a generic literacy course in the first year of an extended programme than to embed literacy into disciplinary teaching through the use of augmented or extended courses. In addition, disciplinary specialists often demonstrate a reluctance to incorporate the development of literacy in their own work in augmented courses largely because of problematic common-sense beliefs about the nature of language and literacy (Boughey, 2002). The result is that much of the teaching in augmented courses focuses on re-teaching content or on teaching a set of 'skills' which have not actually been valid in the disciplinary contexts in which they are being taught.

Perhaps more significant, however, is that structural arrangements in many universities work against attempts to embed literacy development in the teaching of the disciplines. Specialist units or centres dedicated to the 'teaching' of language and literacy exist on many campuses. In addition, many courses now termed 'academic literacy courses' have long-reaching roots in understandings at odds with the New Literacy theory from which the term ‘academic literacy’ comes. Practitioners working in these units or teaching these courses can be very committed to their understandings of what is needed and, thus, be reluctant to adopt more complex and productive approaches. Nonetheless, those who manage teaching and learning at institutional levels and, especially, those responsible for developing or supporting the development of extended curricula need to take heed of the implications of what the field of New Literacy Studies as well as contemporary linguistics have to tell us. More specifically, they need to be aware that fully foundational 'academic literacy' courses in programme types 1, 3 and 4 (see above) are unlikely to have the envisaged impact. Approaches that embed support for the development of literacies that draw on extended, augmented and augmenting courses in programme types 3 and 4 and even type 1 are more likely to be successful. The ideas presented in this section also indicate need to extend support for literacy and language as far up the curriculum as possible, either through the development of a new programme type or through the use of other funding such as the student support and development programme in the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) to provide 'in curriculum' development initiatives throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

The field of literacy studies, briefly discussed above, demonstrates that language use is not a generic skill autonomous of context but rather it is a social practice which can only be developed in the context in which the language will be used. These understandings are central to the offering of meaningful foundational provision. Another field of research which has been very generative in designing extended curricula is known as the sociology of knowledge.

The sociology of knowledge

A key figure in the field of enquiry known as the 'sociology of knowledge' is sociologist Basil Bernstein (see, for example, 2000) who explores the way knowledge is structured. He distinguishes between 'horizontal discourse', which is communication, usually spoken, about everyday knowledge and is very closely tied to the specific context in which it is used, and 'vertical discourse', which is communication about a coherent body of knowledge that is structured using principles and theories in ways that allow the discourse to be abstracted from any specific contexts. Vertical discourses are used in schools and other formal educational settings. The abstract, theorised and principled nature of vertical discourses allow those who have mastered them to move beyond immediate contexts and personal experiences and to think the 'unthinkable' and the 'yet to be thought' (Bernstein 2000: 30).

Within vertical discourse, Bernstein (2000) then makes a further distinction between two kinds of 'knowledge structures': a hierarchical structure and a horizontal structure. A hierarchical knowledge structure involves using data to produce ever more overarching theories and principles to explain what can be observed and experienced and is typically depicted in the form of a pyramid. Hierarchical knowledge structures are typical of the natural sciences. In fields with hierarchical knowledge structures, learning requires acquiring the bottom layer of knowledge before moving up to the next layer.

The current state of our schooling system means that many students enter higher education with gaps in their understanding of science subjects. Filling those gaps as quickly as possible before they proceed to engage with the more complex learning of higher education therefore becomes paramount. In an ECP, it thus makes sense to use foundation courses located at the 'bottom' of the curriculum to fill the gaps in learning students bring from school. This observation about using foundation courses in curricula in the natural sciences needs to be tempered by what was said earlier about language and literacy and the need to embed their development in mainstream learning. The fact that an ECP provides foundation courses in science-related areas does not mean that language and literacy development should also be addressed using the same approach. Rather, a sounder approach would be to embed the development of language and literacy in the

When a knowledge area is structured hierarchically, any gaps in knowledge towards the bottom of the pyramid can prevent a learner from progressing to understand the more overarching theories and principles that occur in layers above the gap. So, for example, in chemistry, a student who does not understand the principles related to the way atoms in a molecule combine or fail to combine will not be able to go on to understand more complex principles related to interactions higher up in the knowledge structure.

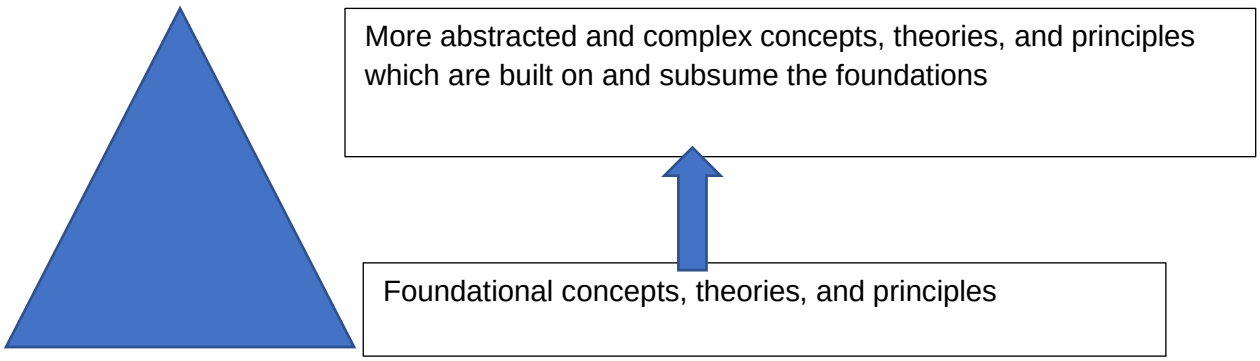

Figure 1: Hierarchical knowledge structures

foundation course itself in much the same way as that described by Ellery (2017) or to use extended or augmented courses to address language and literacy development.

As already noted, the second knowledge structure within vertical discourse described by Bernstein is the horizontal structure. In knowledge areas with a horizontal structure, different theories or lenses are used to explore a particular phenomenon. In anthropology, for example, theories such as Marxism or structural-functionalism may be used or, alternatively, a broader psychological, sociological or even ecological perspective may serve as a means of understanding whatever is being observed (Reynolds, 2010). As a theory or perspective is drawn upon, a specialised language of description emerges or, more simply, the language of a course will change.

A horizontal knowledge structure is often depicted as a series of boxes along a straight line:

Figure 2: Horizontal knowledge structure

In each box, a different theory or perspective (or 'language' as Bernstein would term it) would be used to view what is considered to be a legitimate object of study within the disciplinary area. In a typical undergraduate course, students are exposed to multiple lecturers each of whom may be drawing on a different perspective to look at the topic of the module they are teaching. In terms of the diagram above, this means that each lecturer could be sitting in a different box on the horizontal line and using a different language of description. The use of different theories or perspectives is rarely explained to students in ways they can understand because for the lecturer they may seem to be second nature. In an ECP, therefore, it would make sense for augmenting courses to be used where an academic practitioner is on hand to help students identify what is going on in the regular lectures. It is important that the academic development practitioner teaching the augmenting portion of the course understands the importance of unpacking the different theoretical perspectives or lenses used in regular lectures and draws attention to the way these impact on language choices. Teaching the augmenting portion simply as a generic skills course or as a means of expanding on content will not give students access to such understandings. This probably requires the practitioner to attend lectures with students on an ECP at least until they are familiar with way different modules approach the topic of interest. It would also be important to note that, if a different academic teacher became responsible for a course or module, the approach to looking at a particular phenomenon might change. One lecturer might, for example, take a functionalist approach to looking at the concept of 'work' in an industrial sociology course, while another draws on symbolic interactionalism.

This cursory overview of work in the field of the sociology of knowledge alongside the work drawn on earlier produced in the field of New Literacy Studies shows how the design of an ECP needs careful consideration. The selection of course types for the foundation phase of a programme is not arbitrary and should not be based only on pragmatic reasons. The DHET's policy (DHET, 2012) on ECPs allows for considerable flexibility to ensure that the programmes can take account of the different knowledge structures and literacy practices to which students are seeking access, yet it is arguably the case that few programmes draw on the kinds of considerations offered above for their design.

As already indicated, Garraway and Bozalek (2019: 8) note the 'relatively superficial' theorisation of foundation provision in South Africa and draw attention to the fact that more than half of the papers in a special edition of the South African Journal of Higher Education (2015) and most of the papers in another volume of case

studies (Bozalek, Garraway and McKenna, 2011) are descriptive. Given the persistent student performance patterns in South Africa (CHE, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and the analysis of performance on ECPs provided by the DHET (DHET, 2020) we need to ask serious questions about whether pragmatism and 'common sense' is a sufficient basis for the design and structuring of programmes specifically intended to enhance student success.

Conclusion

With nearly R442 million set aside for funding of ECPs in 2020/21 (MoE, 2019: 23), it is clear that we need to continue to research the impact of this initiative on student performance. It is therefore recommended that the DHET should continue to analyse the performance of cohorts of students admitted to universities on what is termed 'foundation provisioning' as we move forward.

The analysis provided in 2019 (DHET, 2019) could also be refined for future work. For example, one of the things that a future cohort study could do is exclude UNISA from the regular programme cohort against which ECPs are compared. UNISA is one of the four institutions in the country which has never offered ECPs and, in addition, is a distance provider. Throughput and dropouts in distance programmes are usually higher than those in contact provision so it is arguably the case that a study comparing ECPs with performance in all contact and distance provision is skewed. Ideally, each university offering ECPs should be doing its own analyses of students admitted to ECPs and to the regular programmes with which they are associated. This would provide a better 'like with like', fine grained comparison.

Since its establishment, the CHE has conducted a number of national reviews of programmes including the LLB and teacher education. It is currently conducting a review of all doctoral programmes. A national review of ECPs could be considered with a particular focus on programme design and, also, on criteria for admission. As already indicated, the criteria for the award of funding for ECPs are very broad and the DHET does not micromanage programme design although experts appointed to a Ministerial Reference Group do scrutinise programme applications and may make recommendations for improvement. A national review could look more closely at programme structure.

In the absence of such a review, an initiative to expose those responsible for ECPs to the use of contemporary theory for improved programme design and enhanced impact on success could reap rich benefits. This initiative would have to push hard for changes in practice where appropriate and would need to include a process to provide feedback on programme design and to advise the DHET on whether or not renewed curricula were eligible for funding.

Yet another recommendation relates to the status of AD practitioners who mostly teach on ECPs. Although it is not the case at all institutions, as a field of practice, AD has often been a poor relation to the academic disciplines. The field is now becoming increasingly established as an area of academic endeavour in its own right (Shay, 2012) with doctoral programmes in teaching and learning now offered at several universities. It is arguably the case that only if AD practitioners themselves are qualified at the highest levels, however, that ECPs will be appropriately designed and implemented to fulfil their potential. However, and as already indicated, the field has long been unstable (Boughey, 2007, 2012) with many AD practitioners seeking more stable employment rather than developing their expertise in an area where they might not have a future. As also noted, the new proposed policy on funding for ECPs offers the opportunity for these programmes to be funded using the standardised funding framework. If this were the case, the future of those teaching on ECPs could look very different in terms of stability. The draft new policy was developed in

2017 but still has not been finalised. Clearly this needs to be completed as soon as possible.

One final issue relates to the points made at a national workshop hosted by the DHET to consider the new draft policy on ECPs late in 2019. At that workshop, participants indicated a desire for the flexible curriculum proposal (CHE 2013) to be reconsidered at a national level. This proposal involved the introduction of a flexible curriculum structure involving both three- and four-year routes to 360 credit undergraduate qualifications with most students being placed on the four-year route into which substantial developmental provision had been inserted. If the flexible curriculum were to be introduced, the four-year route would need to be informed by work that has been done on ECPs. It would therefore make enormous sense to begin looking at the way in which these programmes could be improved on the basis of contemporary theory in advance of major undergraduate curriculum change.

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