

Curriculum formation: a case study from History

Suellen Shay*

Centre for Higher Education Development, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Drawing on the work of Bernstein and Maton and using a case-study approach, this study explores the formation of an undergraduate history curriculum at the University of Cape Town. This article focuses on two periods of curriculum formation referred to as history as canon and history as social science. With respect to these two curriculum periods the findings reveal the privileging of different kinds of historical educational knowledge, as well as the promotion of different student identities. The article also argues for the need for a more fine-grained conceptual framework for the study of knowledge and curriculum in higher education. The article concludes by highlighting the importance of this kind of research as pressure for curriculum reform intensifies in South Africa.

Keywords: curricular reform; knowledge; history; identity; sociology of education

Introduction

In their opening chapter, Barnett and Coate (2005) argue that curriculum is a missing term in higher education, missing from public debate and governmental policy, and even missing from educational texts produced by the academic community. They argue that, outside of the United States, there is scant attention paid to curriculum. However, this is not altogether true for South Africa, where there has been a small but significant body of scholarship on curriculum in higher education (Breier 2004; Ensor 2002; Griesel 2004; Moll 2004; Moore 2003, 2004; Muller 2000, 2008). The impetus for much of this research has been South Africa's post-1994 transformation agenda, which has resulted in wide-ranging higher education policy intervention (Badat 2009). Most of this scholarship, drawing on the work of the sociologist of education Basil Bernstein, has focused on the effects of these policies on curriculum, with a particular interest in the implications for knowledge.

Why knowledge? Changing conditions in higher education in South Africa, and indeed globally, have placed a spotlight on issues of access and success. Of particular urgency are students who have been historically marginalized from higher education, but increasingly there are also concerns in South Africa about the success of 'mainstream' students (Scott, Yeld, and Hendry 2007). The issue is not simply access into the university but access into disciplinary communities and their ways of knowing. At stake is *epistemological* access (Morrow 1992). Ironically, however, educational development interventions aimed at enabling the access and success of under-prepared students have largely ignored knowledge. On the whole these interventions have privileged knowers (the cultural and social nature of the learner) and knowing (the

*Email: suellen.shay@uct.ac.za

processes of learning), and have ignored or taken for granted knowledge (Maton 2010, 6, citing Freebody 2008). To approach the problem of access from the point of view of knowledge – that is, the requisite forms of knowledge privileged in any given curriculum – is not to disregard the knower and their ways of knowing. The argument is simply that, alongside our understanding of the formation of learners and their learning, there needs to be an understanding of the formation of curricula and their constituent forms of educational knowledge.

Sociologists of education argue that this knowledge ‘blind spot’ is in part a result of inadequate philosophical and theoretical frameworks for making knowledge visible (Maton and Muller 2007). A knowledge and curriculum symposium hosted by the University of Cape Town in June 2009 attracted a number of papers, which, like the studies noted above, drew on the sociology of Bernstein. These papers explored specifically the relationship between knowledge and curriculum in specific disciplinary contexts (Carter 2009; Luckett 2009; Shalem and Slonimsky 2009; Shay 2009; Vorster 2009). One of the priorities of this emergent scholarship is to extend the existing conceptual repertoire available to the higher education studies community: for example, the Kolb-Biglan classifications of disciplinary knowledge (Becher and Trowler 2001). While these conceptualizations have been extremely helpful as ‘ideal types’, we need finer-grained theoretical and analytical tools for the analysis of the diverse and changing forms of educational knowledge which constitute higher education curricula.

As a contribution to this scholarship this article offers a historical analysis of the formation of an undergraduate history curriculum at the University of Cape Town (henceforth referred to as UCT). Drawing on the theory of Bernstein and Maton, the case study seeks to describe the particular forms of educational knowledge which constitute this curriculum over time, how these forms of knowledge have shifted and are shifting, and the implications of these knowledge shifts for staff and student identities.

Theoretical framework

Bernstein (1975) argues that educational knowledge is realized through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. He defines curriculum simply as what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy is what counts as the valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation is what counts as the valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught (1975, 85). The focus of this study is on curriculum – what counts as valid knowledge. Bernstein’s interest is in the underlying structures or rules which shape what is considered valid, or, put another way, the principles which regulate why in any given curriculum certain forms of knowledge become privileged over other forms. Bernstein’s pedagogic device (1990, 2000; Singh 2002) constitutes the message relay or the ensemble of rules or principles by which knowledge (everyday, professional, disciplinary) is converted, or ‘recontextualized’, into educational knowledge. The device is made up of three fields: knowledge production, recontextualization and reproduction. Each of these fields operates by a set of rules which inform what knowledge gets privileged, and what happens to this knowledge as it is recontextualized into curriculum and transmitted through pedagogy and assessment. Bernstein argues that the pedagogic device acts as a ‘symbolic regulator of consciousness’ in the way in which it selects, creates and positions ‘pedagogic subjects’ (1990, 189, 2000, 37). Thus he models not only the formation processes for knowledge but

also of knowers. The analysis can thus ask what kind of student identity is the curriculum promoting?

In order to explain curriculum formation, I select from Bernstein's elaborate explanatory framework only those aspects which illuminate these formation processes, with a particular focus on educational knowledge. The theoretical focus of the study is the field of recontextualization and the rules which regulate selection, sequence, pacing and evaluation (Bernstein 1990, 185). In this case the field is a particular university and history department, where the academics as the key recontextualizing agents make choices about what counts as historical educational knowledge. Any instantiation of curriculum – for example, handbook entries, syllabi, examination papers – represent choices about selection (e.g. what constitutes a legitimate 'object' of historical study), sequence (e.g. what is the logical ordering of this content), as well as evaluative criteria (e.g. what counts as legitimate performance). While universities have greater autonomy over curricula than schools, these 'choices' are always constrained. The pedagogic device models the conditions for constraint. Firstly, the selection, sequencing and evaluation of educational knowledge – what Bernstein refers to as 'instructional discourse' – is always embedded in a regulative discourse: that is, a particular moral, social and political order of meaning. This suggests that the formation of a history curriculum in South Africa is embedded in, and thus regulated by, the norms of the given society. Secondly, the field of recontextualization is itself regulated by the field of knowledge production, in this case, the investigations, analyses, interpretations and arguments of historical scholars. The pedagogic device explains how curriculum 'choices' are shaped by, among other things, the norms of the prevailing socio-political order, as well as the contestations for legitimacy in the field of knowledge.

Bernstein's pedagogic device models the *processes* for producing educational knowledge. In addition, the analysis of educational knowledge requires a language of description for the knowledge itself. In his last work, Bernstein (2000) develops a language of description for different forms of disciplinary knowledge structures. Elaborating on this work, Maton (2000, 2007) argues that any description of knowledge must acknowledge two interdependent (but analytically separable) dimensions – the objective dimension, which is the relation between the knowledge claim and its object, and the subjective dimension, which is the relation between the knowledge claim and the subject. Maton (2000, 2007) refers to these respectively as the epistemic relation (ER) and the social relation (SR) of knowledge. These dimensions are always both present in any knowledge claim, but one may be more dominant than the other. The purpose of the analysis is to expose which one is dominant, thus forming the basis of legitimation for the knowledge constituting any given curriculum.

It is possible, therefore, Maton argues, to identify forms of educational knowledge which have more or less strong epistemic relations (ER+/ER-). For example, in a curriculum with a strong epistemic relation (ER+), the *what* you know and the *how* of what you know is paramount – what Maton refers to as a 'knowledge code'. A 'knowledge code' (ER+/SR-) emphasizes the possession of knowledge (procedures, skills, techniques). At the same time, forms of educational knowledge may have more or less strong social relations (SR+/SR-). In a curriculum where the social relations dominate it is *who* you are and what dispositions you possess which are valued – what Maton refers to as a 'knower code'. A 'knower code' (ER-/SR+) thus emphasizes perspective or the knower's 'gaze'. Maton (2010) argues that these codes do not represent ideal types of educational knowledge but different epistemic 'settings': like settings on a compass they signal relative positioning that are 'a function of context' (48).

Thus, with these selected theoretical tools from Bernstein's and Maton's work, the key questions posed in this case study are:

- What are some of the key influences on the formation of this history undergraduate curriculum?
- What are the implications of this curriculum formation for: the kinds of educational knowledge being privileged; and the kinds of student identities being promoted?

Methodology

The design of the study is a case study of an undergraduate history curriculum at UCT, with a specific focus on the first-year curriculum. UCT's history department has a strong research profile as well as a reputation for good undergraduate teaching. There is a long tradition of involvement of the senior professoriate in the teaching and the development of the three-year undergraduate curriculum. The primary sources of data collected were faculty handbook entries spanning the period from 1918 to 2008, examination scripts sampled from across the same period and interviews with academic members of staff. This data was also supplemented by texts on historiography, as well as publications by one of the interviewees on the history of teaching in this particular department.

Faculty handbook entries are published annually, and provide a rich source of archival material on the history curriculum since its establishment in 1918. The genre of handbook entry has changed over time in the detail of information offered, but consistent across the period is data on course titles. From the 1980s, course descriptions are also included (see Table 1). Handbook entries are bureaucratic texts with particular functions; they describe the programme and courses in general terms to a non-specialist audience (e.g. a potential student, the wider public). Given the administrative burden of handbook approvals, staff will resist making changes to these texts until absolutely necessary; thus there is often a time-lag between the representation of the curriculum in handbook entry texts and the curriculum as delivered. These texts provide, nonetheless, a rich historical overview of curriculum change. The handbook entries were sampled across five-year periods in order to identify transitional moments. This preliminary analysis revealed two distinctive moments of change from 1989 to 1990 and 1998 to 1999. In order to further explore these changes a sample of examination papers was collected from each period. Examination papers were selected as a 'window' into the evaluative criteria. This data was also available from 1918 in UCT's archives.

This preliminary analysis of the curriculum texts suggested three periods of curriculum formation – what I refer to as history as canon, history as social science and history for the market. This periodization was tested and elaborated on through interviews with staff in the history department. The staff were selected on the basis of their long-term involvement in first-year teaching and curriculum development. Three of the four staff members interviewed were senior academics in the department, selected because of their extensive involvement in the first-year curriculum. Two of them – Robert and Barry – had been involved in first-year teaching over a 30-year period, as well as being key players in curriculum development throughout that same period. The third, Harold, had also been teaching in the department for over 30 years, and taught on the first-year course from 1976 to 1982. He had also conducted research

Table 1. Handbook entries 1918–1997: course titles and descriptions.

History as canon		History as social science	
1918–1921	1922	1923–1983	1984–1989
<i>Modern History 1648–1878</i>	<i>Modern History 18th and 19th Centuries</i>	<i>Outline of the History of Western Civilization</i>	<i>Europe in World History</i>
			Part 1: From the decline of Rome to the sixteenth century
			Part 2: From the seventeenth century to the Second World War.
			1990
			<i>HIS 100W – Europe in World History</i>
			A history of Europe and its interaction with Africa, Asia and America in the making of the modern world.
			1991–1997
			<i>HIS 100W – The Making of the Modern World</i>
			The course will examine the shaping of the modern world under the broad themes of economic, social and political organization, culture and consciousness. Examples will be drawn from Europe, Africa and North America. Topics to be covered will include the nature of pre-industrial societies, the emergence of capitalism, slavery and racism, industrialization and mass popular culture, the status of women, nationalism, totalitarianism and democracy, colonialism and decolonization. These will be consolidated in case studies of the Atlantic revolutions of the 18th century and the First World War.

on the history of teaching in this particular department, which provided valuable contextual information for the analysis. The fourth interviewee, Sylvia, had been a post-doctoral student in the department, tutoring and lecturing on a first-year course from 2004. At the time of the interview she was no longer in the department. Robert was interviewed three times, Harold twice, and Barry and Sylvia once each (all the names are pseudonyms). This interview data represents the perspectives of the recontextualizing agents during a particular period of curriculum formation.

In this article I focus on the curriculum formation up to 1998: the history as canon and history as social science periods (see Shay [2010] for the analysis of the history for the market period). The analysis of the texts seeks to establish what constitutes valid educational knowledge in each of these periods, whether there are any shifts in knowledge and what the implications of these knowledge shifts are for student identity. The analysis seeks to identify *what* is selected as a legitimate ‘object’ of historical study, what is the sequential or organizational logic of the curriculum, and what are the criteria for legitimate performance. This textual analysis is situated, then, within the two layers of contextual analysis – the epistemic contestations in the field of knowledge production and the changing South African socio-political landscape. This contextual analysis draws on the interviews, the historical documentation and studies in historiography.

Analysis and findings

History as canon

The analysis of handbook entries reveals a curriculum with clearly demarcated boundaries around what constitutes the legitimate content of History 1, from the establishment of the programme in 1918 until the late 1980s (see Table 1). For five decades (1923–83) the course is entitled *Outline of the History of Western Civilization*. In terms of selection the focus is singularly on western Europe and key historical events: for example, the decline of Rome, the Second World War. This notion of history is ‘high politics ... rulers, kings, battles and wars’ (Har 1 [interview number] – 5 [interview transcript page]). In terms of sequence the titles and descriptions foreground dates, centuries and periods. The organizational logic of the curriculum is time – it is a chronological ordering of meaning with a selected geographical focus.

According to one of the interviewees, these survey-type courses were prevalent throughout universities of the old British Empire (Rob 2–3). The assumption was that all students needed a foundation in European history:

there was a canon of knowledge that all historians, no matter where they were in the world, had to know before they went on and did other things. It covered from the fall of Rome to the Second World War, so it was Julius Caesar to Hitler in a year, and the joke about it was that if you missed a lecture, you missed a century. (Rob 2–3)

The argument at the time would have been ‘how can you send a graduate of [this department] into the world if they’ve never heard of the Renaissance, or the Reformation, or Napoleon, or any of the big pillars which loom in a course like that?’ (Har 1–7). These accounts point to a curriculum where the principles of selection and sequence are clear and largely uncontested for the better part of a century.

An analysis of the examination papers reveals continuity in the selected objects of history and the organizational logic. Two questions are given below as examples from this period:

Discuss the main features of political, social and economic decline in the Roman Empire in the period 180–376.

Discuss the nature and extent of social and economic changes in Western Europe from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.
(Extracts from History Paper 1 1979)

What we see in these examination questions is the privileging of particular events, time periods and places, illustrated by the singular focus on western Europe. What is expected is the acquisition of a particular body of knowledge – what Robert refers to as ‘factual knowledge’ (Rob 2–3), or what Maton refers to as a ‘knowledge code’. The basis of legitimation is what you know. This is not to suggest that these questions were not demanding or simply required regurgitation of information. As Harold explained, these questions were ‘an exercise in selecting the appropriate information, and then marshalling it in a way which either argues for or against’ (Har 2–6). This implies that a successful response to these questions would be informed by certain ordering principles for *what* gets selected. With respect to the examination questions of this period he noted, ‘It’s not lacking in challenging students to think critically and to show their ability but ... its vision of what constitutes *real* history is rather narrow’ (Har 2–7).

In order to understand the logic of this curriculum – the choices around selection, sequence and evaluative criteria – the analysis traces back from the curriculum to the field of knowledge production, and the ontological and epistemological distributive rules of nineteenth-century traditional historiography. Here the object of study was the past and the task of the historian was to constitute an accurate account of this past, ‘as it had actually occurred’ (Iggers 1997, 2, citing von Ranke 1973). With respect to this period, Robert underscores the striving for objectivity:

The ‘traditional’ western concept of history ... was to strip away that affective concept and make history rigorously scientific ... completely objective ... not involve ourselves and our emotions ... So the classic metaphor [for] that concept of history ... was that historians were like scientists in a laboratory, in other words, we take our data, we put it through the experimental test-tubes and we come out with a product at the other end, and if we’ve done the job properly, if we’ve been good historians that have done our source criticism correctly, then the end product will be the same irrespective of who we are. ... That was a very very dominant concept of what historical method and historical knowledge should be in the western tradition. (Rob 1–7)

This traditional historiography had been the training ground for the ‘old guard’, the senior academics of the history department during the canon period. Describing his colleagues in the 1970s, Robert notes:

They all came out of ... a training in history ... in which the concept was that there was a body of knowledge which needed to be acquired, and that body of knowledge was, to a certain extent, finite. It was very strong ... It’s history ‘as it occurred’, and history as provable fact, and the skill of the historian is being able to winkle out those facts from the source material. So, that’s the tradition that they came from. (Rob 3–4)

Robert’s account suggests that the validity of historical claims during this period of historiography is based on the rigour of historical method. The field could thus be characterized as a knowledge code; in other words, what is dominant in the field is *what* you know and *how* you know it. *Who* you are as a historian, it would be claimed,

is not important. Indeed the validity of the knowledge claim rests on ‘stripping away’ the historian.

The analysis reveals continuity in the dominance of the knowledge code: in other words, the basis of the legitimation of the knowledge claims resides in the epistemic relation, not the social relation. What is strikingly absent, however, in these curriculum texts over this 70-year span is any reference to the historiographer or what historiographers do to generate this knowledge. The rigorous, objective historiographer of the nineteenth century is absent. There is no expectation that, through this survey course, students would acquire any special historical method, any way of working with and analysing historical data. There is a strong emphasis on knowledge, but not the procedures for acquiring this knowledge. In postulating on this discontinuity, Robert argues that there was ‘no link’ between what these academics did as historians and what they did as teachers. Some of the ‘old guard’ – a reference to the professoriate in the 1970s – were not researchers but very committed teachers. But whether they did research or not, ‘there was no sense that you taught what you researched ... certainly not at first-year level. One might, almost, say throughout the undergraduate curriculum’ (Rob 3–3). The training of historians is reserved for those who go on to postgraduate level.

To understand the logic of this curriculum we also need to locate it in the wider socio-political landscape of the 1970s and early 1980s – who were the students of this curriculum and into what kinds of ‘pedagogic subjects’ were they being constructed? Phillips (2004), a historian of this department, records that the students at the receiving end of this teaching ‘remained socially uniform for much of the department’s first century ... Until the late 1980s the bulk of the 4000+ students who majored in History were the children of middle-class whites, who went on to become high-school teachers of history’ (205). The absence of the historian in the undergraduate curriculum of this period can thus in part be explained by its close relationship to the history schooling curriculum. Robert recalls that in the late 1970s when he began teaching on the course, more than half of the students were planning to become teachers. History teachers were the department’s ‘bread-and-butter’ (Har 2–8). Thus the primary purpose of this curriculum was not the formation of historians but the training of secondary school history teachers.

Figure 1 summarizes some of the formative influences on the curriculum of this period. The analysis shows strong traces in the canon curriculum of the legitimating code of traditional nineteenth-century historiography, with its claims to strong epistemic relations and weak social relations (ER+/SR–). The key agents in this recontextualizing process are the senior academics in the department, trained in traditional historiography, who across the decades fiercely defend these legitimating principles. Success in this curriculum is having the right kind of knowledge (ER+/SR–) and a gaze which recognizes the foundational status of a particular selection of history and its priority over all other possible selections. What is absent in this canon curriculum is the emphasis on historical method. This is because this curriculum is not about producing historians but history teachers; it is about supplying predominantly white history teachers into a racially and socially divided public schooling system – a role which, as we will see, history students of the next period fiercely resisted.

History as social science

The analysis of the handbook entries suggests an important change in the 1990 course description (see Table 1). The title is still *Europe in World History* but the course

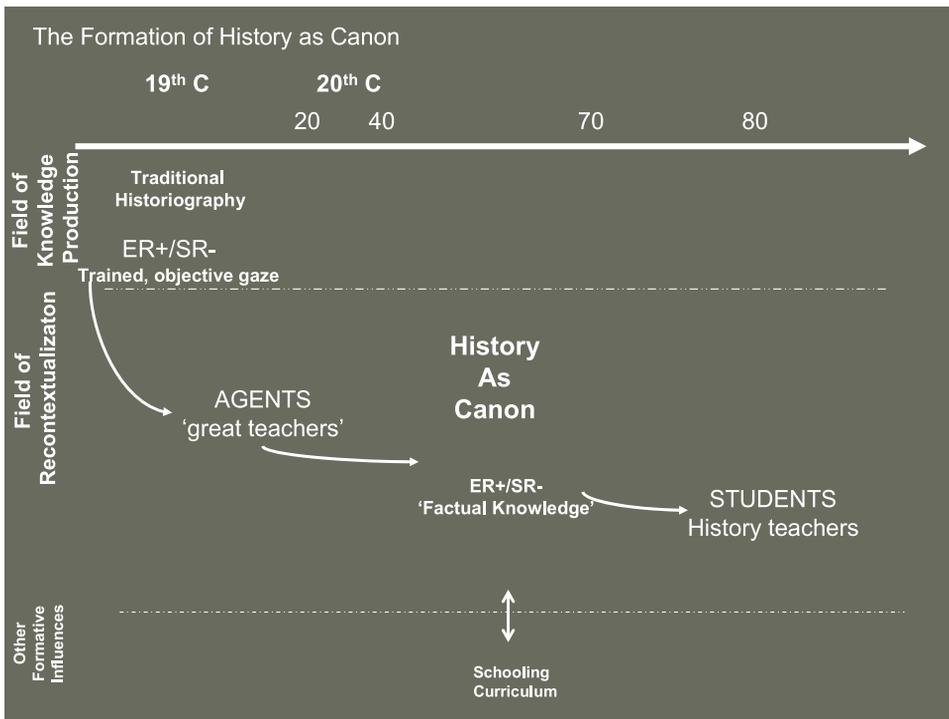


Figure 1. The formation of history as canon.

description reads, ‘A history of Europe and its interaction with Africa, Asia and America in the making of the modern world’. For the first time there are no dates, no periods. This would suggest that the organizational logic of time has been displaced; the object of interest is on processes of historical change, e.g. ‘interaction’, ‘making of the modern world’. This ‘making’ suggests agency. It is the first evidence in the handbook entries of the interpretive subject, the historian. This phrase becomes the title of the new HIS100W course in 1991 – *The Making of the Modern World*.

As historians will hasten to qualify, any periodization is an imposition of a structure that never exactly coincides with reality. Though *The Making of the Modern World* officially appears in 1991, there are textual signs of important shifts back as early as 1984 in the course title *Europe in World History*. With respect to the selection of historical objects of study, Europe is still privileged but it is now situated within world history. Harold, commenting on the significance of this change, notes that the perspective of history ‘begins to widen ... It’s beginning to say that the rise of Europe cannot be looked at in an isolated way as it previously had been’ (Har 1–9).

The course description for 1991 provides further evidence of significant changes in selection and sequencing. The organizing logic of the course has shifted from time periods to forces shaping the modern world under the ‘broad themes of economic, social and political organization, culture and consciousness’. The course covers a range of ‘topics’ and ‘case studies’. This course description suggests a weakening in the boundaries which have legitimated a particular historical object. Comparing this course to its 1970s predecessor, Robert comments, ‘There is an absolute break, without a shadow of a doubt ... there’s definitely a seismic break’ (Rob 3–2).

Further evidence of a ‘break’ in what is being privileged can be found in the analysis of the examination papers. Extracts from two different examination papers are given below:

1. ‘The historian can offer us no more than an intensely personal view of the past’. Discuss this assertion in the light of EH Carr’s dictum that history is a dialogue between past and present.

5. Contrast Marxist and non-Marxist explanations of the origins of the popular revolts of the 14th Century.

6. In what ways did the status of women change in the Middle Ages and how can this be accounted for?

(Extracts from 1987 Paper 1 – questions 1, 5, 6)

2. Read the following extract below from the English Bill of Rights (1689). Use it to compare and contrast the political order of seventeenth century England with that of the Kongo kingdom or the Kano emirate. [Students are given an extract from the English Bill of Rights which has been omitted here.]

(Extract from 1990 June examination, Question 2)

In comparing the examination questions of this period to those of the canon period, a number of differences emerge. Firstly, in contrast to questions of the previous period there is the foregrounding of historiography. The focus of questions 1 and 5 of the 1987 paper has shifted towards explanations or theories of history. Harold explains (referring to question 1):

the question is much more a question about the nature of the discipline ... That’s announcing a very different course where the students are actually at first-year level being challenged to think about the discipline ... and of course that begins to raise a whole series of theoretical and methodological questions, which these earlier papers don’t even begin to consider. Nowhere here [the survey course] would you have found that explicitly. (Har 2–8)

Secondly, there is also the shift away from ‘high politics’ to the perspective of, for example in question 6, women, and other questions focus on peasants and slaves. Thirdly, there was a very deliberate attempt in the 1990 paper to set up the comparative approach through case studies taken from the Atlantic world. Question 1 of the 1990 paper illustrates this. Harold explains:

So there you’ve got the English Bill of Rights, and you wouldn’t find that unfamiliar ... but to compare it with the Congo Kingdom, that’s a very different perspective ... That’s mould-breaking stuff for South Africa without a doubt, and indeed I would say probably for universities in Europe and North America ... This is saying that European history and African history are on a par, we can compare the one with the other. (Har 2–10)

In order to understand the logic of this curriculum, once again the analysis traces back to the field of knowledge production, historiography of the early twentieth century, what Iggers (1997) refers to as the ‘new social science’. While this new historiography shared many of the bedrock assumptions of its nineteenth-century predecessor – assumptions about reality, intentionality and temporality – it can be distinguished from the historiography of the previous era in terms of its purpose and its objects of study. The notion of history as reconstructing an accurate account of the

past was being seriously challenged. History needed to provide explanations. 'We are not', Robert argued, 'doing history because there is something essential about ... this period and this time, we're doing it because we need to understand more about the broad principles by which societies operate and how humans behave' (Rob 1–6). This points to a different object of historical study; the object has shifted from events in the past to 'broad principles'.

There were other important differences in what was considered a legitimate object of study. In contrast to the political history or the 'history from above' of the previous period, Iggers (1997) refers to the twentieth-century developments as a 'democratization' of history or a 'history from below'. It was no longer a history of 'great men' and great political events, but historians became interested in people on the margins of historical accounts: for example, women and the lower classes. There was a significant expansion in what was considered to be the legitimate 'objects' of history, and these new objects of historical interest resulted in an 'enormous explosion' (Rob 1–3) of different sources of data: for example, oral texts, artefacts and other forms of material culture. There is still a recognition of the past as having an ontological reality, but the naïve assumptions about the objective 'scientist' (Rob 1–7) have given way in the recognition of the historical interpretive gaze – *who* you are as a historian matters. In Maton's terms, this is a weakening of the epistemic relation and a strengthening of the social relation, a shift towards a 'knower code', a different kind of historiography.

It was this notion of history that the 'young Turks' – the recontextualizing agents of the late 1970s – championed. As noted, the first textual evidence of these shifts appears in the 1990/1991 faculty handbook entries. According to Robert, the contestation over the curriculum went right back to the early 1980s, when a new cadre of young academic staff (he and Barry included) arrived, 'saying "this is not the way that we would like to do this"' (Rob 2–5). At one level much of the contestation of this period appeared to be about content. In English-speaking history departments all over the world, the canon approach to history teaching was being critiqued for its Eurocentric approach. This canon was labelled 'a First World history only' (Rob 2–4). In South Africa this critique was particularly acute, given the fundamental changes in the socio-political landscape of the late 1980s as 'alternative histories' were emerging in defiance of Apartheid representations. But underlying these content battles lay more profound contestations about the very nature of historical educational knowledge, as the analysis of the examination papers illustrates, where students are required not simply to understand the significance of historical events but to adjudicate between different representations of these events.

Once again the logic of this curriculum needs to be understood within the broader context of South Africa in the 1980s, a time of great social and political upheaval as the pressures for revolutionary change mounted against the Apartheid regime. Who are these students and what kind of 'pedagogic subject' is being constructed through this curriculum? Phillips (2004) notes that from the 1980s 'racially restrictive, apartheid-decreed admission policies at the University of Cape Town' (205) eased, resulting in the admission of a small but significant number of black students (the term 'black' is used inclusively here to include those who were classified under Apartheid as African, Coloured or Indian) who were highly politicized. For history students of the 1980s the teaching of history had become a less attractive profession in South Africa, since the subject of history was deeply implicated in the transmission of apartheid ideology. The university curriculum became a training ground for activism. Harold argues:

The student [of this curriculum] is engaged ... This is South Africa 1987. This is South Africa in the midst of civil war, revolution rising, and this is a series of theoretical tools which would have been very much part ... of the understanding of capitalism, challenges to capitalism, the role of the under class, and so it's reflecting that. (Har 2-8)

Figure 2 summarizes the influences on curriculum formation of this period. As in the previous period, we see strong traces, in this case, of the 'new' historiography. In the field of knowledge production there are significant shifts as the object of history shifts from events of the past to representations of these events; this is a weakening of the epistemic relation (ER+↓) and strengthening of the social relations (SR-↑). As the 'young Turks' take over from the 'old guard' there is a deliberate attempt to align the history undergraduate curriculum from the first year with historical knowledge production practices. This curriculum is no longer in the business of training school teachers; these are historians in the making. The basis of legitimate performance shifts from knowledge *about* history to perspectives of history – from historical events to discourses about these events. With this less stable knowledge object (discourses rather than events), being the right kind of knower dominates over knowledge and procedures. This is, however, a different kind of knower than in the canon period. This curriculum intentionally cultivates a particular historical gaze – one which is aware of its position and perspective. In Maton's terms this is a shift towards a knower code, where who you are – your position, values and the perspectives that you bring – are crucial to the legitimation of the historical knowledge claim. While similar code shifts are likely to be found in undergraduate history curricula in other parts of the world,

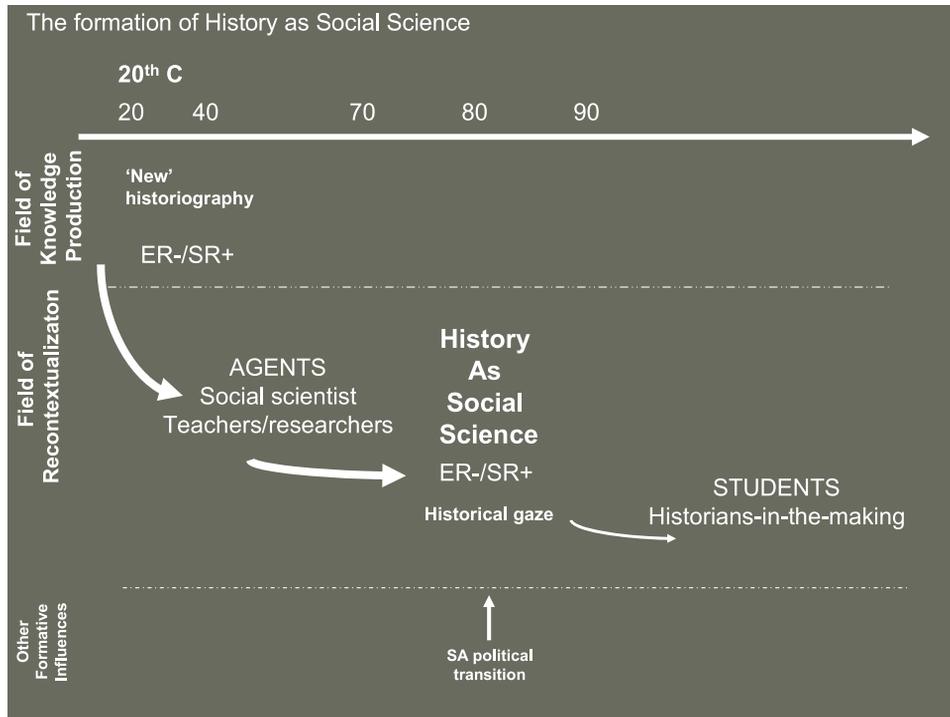


Figure 2. The formation of history as social science.

there is no doubt that the revolutionary changes in South Africa's regulative discourse had a profound impact on this curriculum.

Discussion

The purpose of this case study on curriculum formation is to deepen our understanding of how and why certain kinds of knowledge and knower identities become privileged. I now turn to the key insights emerging from the study with respect to curriculum formation, as well as the conceptual framework needed for the study of knowledge and curriculum.

In terms of curriculum formation this case study offers insight into the relationship between the field of knowledge production and the field of recontextualization; in this case, the relationship between developments in the field of historiography and this particular history curriculum. What is noteworthy is the time-lag. The intellectual breakthroughs of the early twentieth century are only manifest in official course descriptions in the 1990s. The fundamental challenges of postmodernism in the 1970s are manifest in the curriculum fragmentation of the market period. What also emerges from this case are both continuities and discontinuities between what is privileged in these two fields. While there is continuity in the knowledge code of nineteenth-century historiography and the history as canon curriculum, the analysis notes the absence of any focus on historical method in the latter. In the history as social science curriculum, there is stronger alignment with what is valued in the field of knowledge production. This insight underscores the limitations of conceptual frameworks for disciplinary knowledge, which fail to distinguish between disciplinary knowledge and educational knowledge. The history curriculum is a 'recontextualized discourse' which has undergone 'complex transformations' (Bernstein 1990, 185). Thus the basis of legitimation for the knowledge constituting the curriculum cannot simply be 'read off' from disciplinary knowledge.

The case study also offers insight into the implications of this curriculum formation for shifts in the forms of educational knowledge. Across this span of time we see a strengthening of the social relations and a weakening of the epistemic relations, as the focus of historical study shifts from history as events to history as representation of events; each of these notions of history requires a particular historical 'gaze'. The assessment shifts from detailed understanding of historical events to comparisons of different representations of history. The schooling curriculum is outside the scope of this study, but a pressing question is the extent to which it prepared students for this knower code orientation: that is, a historical gaze where perspective and disposition constitute the basis of legitimation. It is possible that previously excluded students were being given access to universities such as UCT only to find significant barriers in the epistemological requirements of the curriculum. These epistemological shifts once again highlight the need for conceptual frameworks for disciplinary knowledge, which can map these changes rather than simply present ideal types, e.g. hard/applied or soft/pure. Maton's legitimation codes offer a finer-grained language of description for knowledge in its ongoing struggle for legitimacy.

Finally, the case study offers insight into the relationship between curriculum formation and identity; how curriculum is constituted by and constituting of identity. With respect to students, the case study offers glimpses of the way in which educational knowledge specializes consciousness (Bernstein 1990, 2000). The gaze of the canon curriculum has its own set of recognition rules. The curriculum is demand-

ing in terms of its sheer content load, but requires very little from the student in terms of the ways of knowing, seeing and being a historian. In contrast, the social science curriculum requires students to behave like historians, to develop particular ways of seeing which enable them to contribute (eventually) to the ‘making’ of history. With respect to staff, we see the crucial role of the recontextualizing agents in the curriculum formation process. Central to their formative role is what they understand the purpose of the curriculum to be. The academics of the canon period are seen as ‘great teachers’, whose role is to lay the formative foundations of knowledge. The academics of the social science period are historians whose role is to produce historians. These different perceived roles and identities result in a different curriculum, different forms of knowledge and different graduate outputs. What this suggests is that in any curriculum development initiative identity is always at stake.

Conclusion

This case study enlarges our understanding of the complexity of curriculum formation. At the same time it serves to extend the theoretical tools currently available in higher education studies to explore relationships between disciplinary knowledge and curriculum. This project is all the more urgent as the global and national pressures on the higher education curriculum intensify. A recent ministerial report on transformation in South Africa makes strong calls for curriculum reform, including ‘epistemological transformation’; that is, ‘how knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted’ (Report of Ministerial Committee 2008, 89, citing Hall 2006). Such transformations will inevitably result in shifts in educational knowledge. In responding to pressures for change, whatever form they might take, it is crucial that we understand whose interests these knowledge shifts will serve and what kind of student identity is being promoted.

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