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Towards shaping the field: theorising the knowledge in a formal course for academic developers

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In recent years there have been calls both for building the knowledge base of academic development (AD) and for systematic induction of newcomers to the field if AD is to advance as a professional and an academic field. Despite the importance and complexity of AD, induction of novice academic developers remains mostly informal and predominantly focuses on the practices of the field. We argue that more-experienced academic developers have an obligation to provide formal and systematic routes into the field and its knowledge base than is currently the case. One way of doing this is through offering a formal course for growing the next generation of academic developers. Such a course could equip newcomers with a more solid and shared knowledge base, thus contributing to shaping the epistemic spine of AD. In this paper, using Maton's Legitimation Code Theory, we offer an analysis of an existing course aimed at equipping novices with the theoretical and practical knowledge to enable them to solve some of the problems in higher education. From this analysis have emerged general principles that could inform the selection, sequencing and pacing of knowledge in a formal course for academic developers.

Keywords: academic development; academic staff; induction; knowledge; Legitimation Code Theory; social realism

Introduction

In 2011, the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning at Rhodes University began offering the first formal course for Academic Developers in South Africa. We initiated this course because we share a concern with many seasoned academic developers from around the world about the need to ensure that novices are inducted into the field in ways that are much more systematic than that has been the case up to now (see, for example, Kensington-Miller, Brailsford, & Gossman, 2012 and Quinn & Vorster, 2014). Academic development (AD) work is varied, specialised and complex. As argued elsewhere, there exists an ethical obligation to induct novice academic developers into the complex theoretical knowledge, debates, critiques and strategic competencies of the field if AD is to move forward instead of newcomers constantly reinventing the AD wheel (Manathunga, 2007; Peseta, 2011).

Even though the field is almost half a century old, its multiple practices continue to be underpinned by a diffuse knowledge base that often draws from a weak theoretical stockpot (Boughey & McKenna, in press; Clegg, 2012; Shay, 2012). AD can be viewed as a relatively strong field of *practice* (Fraser & Ling, 2013; Timmermans,

2014), but it does not as yet warrant description as a professional or an academic field, as it lacks a strong theoretical and conceptual base for its practices (Shay, 2012).

This problem with the knowledge base of AD is highlighted by Peseta (2011) when she asks 'is content a dirty word?' in the field of AD. She argues that the field appears to draw on a limited set of ideas and concepts and only a few 'big names'. Others, for example Haggis (2009) and Boughey (2013a), question the usefulness of some of the seminal theories used in AD. We would thus argue that it is important to examine the knowledge that shapes the field and to ensure that newcomers are introduced to the kind of knowledge about HE and student learning that will enable them to realise the transformative potential of AD practice. This is what we hope to achieve with our recently initiated formal course for academic developers.

A formal course for academic developers

The purpose of the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education for academic developers is to advance academic developers' knowledge of HE as a field of study and to enable them to conceptualise, design and implement formal and informal AD initiatives (with a particular focus on academic staff development) appropriate to their specific contexts. In our selection of course content we were mindful to contribute to building a shared knowledge base for the field which will strengthen the stockpot of theories, concepts and principles from which developers can draw to inform their practice.

The course is offered part-time over two years during which time participants attend six one-week contact sessions. In between contact sessions, participants' learning is supported through courses hosted on a Moodle learning management platform. The course consists of six compulsory modules: The HE context; Teaching and learning in higher education; Curriculum development; Assessment of student learning; Development, enhancement and assurance of quality teaching and learning; and Conceptualising and designing contextually appropriate AD initiatives. Ongoing learning is encouraged through regular formative tasks and the submission of module assignments on which participants receive developmental feedback from the course facilitators. Summative assessment is by means of an integrated portfolio in which the participants demonstrate that they have met the exit level outcomes for the course.

What the paper does

As designers of the course, we drew on our own and our national and international colleagues' experience and knowledge of AD and the broader field of Higher Education Studies (HES) to design a curriculum for the Diploma. Having completed the first iteration of the course we undertook an analysis of the selection, sequencing and pacing of the *knowledge* in the curriculum. Our reasons for doing this were threefold: first, to better understand and to make more visible to ourselves (and future course participants) the structuring principles which informed our curriculum choices and practices. We are particularly concerned with enabling our participants to build the kind of knowledge that enables them to adequately explain and inquire into the field; second, to suggest some organising principles which could be used by others for designing and offering a course of this nature, and third, to contribute to the debate about exactly what kind of knowledge might be necessary to build the field. The analysis of the curriculum was undertaken in two phases:

(1) The first phase entailed identifying and naming the different domains of knowledge introduced in the course.
(2) Using aspects of Maton's Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton, 2014), the second phase was an analysis of what and how knowledge was re-contextualised to design the curriculum, and how it might enable cumulative learning and knowledge building.

Phase 1: Four domains of knowledge

Of interest to us in the Diploma are *cumulative learning* and *cumulative knowledge-building* (Maton, 2014). *Cumulative learning* makes it possible for students to integrate and build on their previous knowledge and experiences so that they are able to apply their new understanding to novel contexts. This is particularly important for academic developers due to the diversity of the institutional contexts they work in, the different conceptualisations of AD that exist and the range of practices in which they engage. Maton (2014) and Wheelahan (2010) argue that it is not only the nature of pedagogic processes that influence the development of cumulative learning, but also the forms of knowledge that are taught. Maton argues that educational knowledge can either enable or constrain cumulative learning (2014, p. 107). We think that the knowledge we have selected for our course and the way we sequence and pace it has important implications for cumulative learning.

Cumulative knowledge-building is used here to mean knowledge that builds on previous knowledge; knowledge that is coherent, that lays a strong foundation for further knowledge-building and that can be applied in innovative ways in a range of contexts. As argued above, our field draws on multiple theoretical and research orientations and can be regarded as 'theoretically fragmented' (Shay, 2012, p. 312). In order to build robust knowledge in our field, Shay suggests that developers need to work collaboratively and comparatively to conceptualise a coherent and sophisticated account of our field that transcends our varied theoretical and methodological approaches – 'whether it be critical discourse analysis, or activity theory or whether we are using Bourdieu, Bernstein or Vygotsky … ' (Shay, 2012, p. 312). Thus, the purpose of our analysis was to make explicit whether and how our knowledge selection could contribute to participants' ability to generate powerful explanations for the vexing problems that they are required to respond to in contemporary higher education.

If academic developers are to influence teaching and learning practices in their institutions, they need a complex set of knowledge. From our analysis of our course documentation, we identified four different domains of knowledge that make up the knowledge array that we believe academic developers require to respond appropriately to the teaching and learning needs in their contexts. The field of AD in South Africa has a number of focus areas, including staff, student, curriculum and institutional development. In order to make strategic decisions about when, where, how and why to focus their efforts, academic developers need to examine the contexts in which they practice through the lenses of robust analytical tools. These tools are what we have termed Knowledge 1 (K1), that is, a meta-level analytical framework that enables sophisticated analyses of contextual dynamics. The other three domains include knowledge of the field of AD (K2), the HE context (K3) and substantive knowledge related to teaching and learning (K4). When and how to use Knowledge 4 is contingent on how well an academic developer understands the first three knowledge domains. We now discuss each of the knowledge domains, including the theoretical perspectives to which participants were introduced.

Knowledge 1 (K1): Analytical framework

In this course we have chosen sociologist Margaret Archer's social realism (1995) with its critical realist underlabouring as an analytical framework through which to view HE as a social field. Archer's concepts of structure, culture and agency are useful for examining the social world and, as such, academic developers can use these tools to explore the HE context in general and their own institutional contexts in particular. *Structure* denotes material resources as well as roles – thus universities, senates, policies, classrooms, lecture timetables, the roles of the vice-chancellor, the dean of teaching and learning, and so on are examples of structures. *Culture* refers to the world of ideas, theories, values and beliefs. For example, an institution's vision and mission statements, teaching and learning strategy, and policy documents are all underpinned by ideas and theories that in social realist terms constitute cultural 'items'. *Agency* refers to people and their ability to act reflexively in response to contextual conditions. Institutions have *key agents* who have much power to influence events, while other agents can act as *collectives* who can shape the culture or structures of an institution. It is the interplay between culture, structure and agency that results in either social change or stasis.

Using the lens of the analytical framework could enable academic developers to understand – with greater sophistication – the historical trajectory of the field of AD, AD within the current HE context, and if, how and when particular AD practices can be inserted into their contexts.

Knowledge 2 (K2): Knowledge of the field of AD

It is imperative that newcomers to the field understand how AD has evolved historically both internationally and in South Africa. In South Africa in the 1980s AD focused on supporting the small numbers of so-called 'disadvantaged' black students at historically white institutions. In the 1990s there was a move towards curriculum and academic staff development to contribute to epistemological access for the majority of students. Later there has been an increasing emphasis on institutional transformation in response to the changing HE context.

K2 thus involves an examination of the field's historical trajectory; the different forms that AD has taken internationally and in South Africa; the theoretical underpinnings for the range of AD work, and the different generations of AD practices in South Africa (Boughey, 2013b). Insights from this could help academic developers to learn from past successes and failures.

As part of building knowledge of the field, participants and facilitators share the practices they engage in in their institutions. This enables an understanding of how contexts influence practice. In addition it offers spaces for critique of practices and for considering adopting different practices where this may be necessary or appropriate.

A further aspect of AD knowledge that is examined is academic developers' identity formation and the identity shifts that emerge as they gain deeper knowledge of the field and greater experience of AD work.

Knowledge 3 (K3): Context knowledge

To make strategic decisions about AD practices for different contexts, academic developers need knowledge of HE as an institution in society and of the role of HE in a transforming global context as well as the forces that contribute to how HE, internationally

and in South Africa, is changing. In South Africa HE is not creating the necessary conditions for the majority of students to succeed in their studies (Scott, Yeld, & Hendry, 2007). Understanding this failure better will enable AD to play a more significant role in ameliorating this situation.

In addition, participants need to understand their institutional contexts intimately; including how institutional structures operate and they should be able to analyse how institutional actors, and in particular key agents, respond to contextual imperatives. In the course we thus build knowledge of the HE context at macro-, mezzo- and micro-levels. In doing this, we examine the university as a workplace and the nature of academics as particular kinds of professionals. It is critical that academic developers understand how their contexts enable or constrain their practice.

Knowledge 4 (K4): Substantive HE teaching and learning knowledge

Much of the course is taken up with exploring what substantive knowledge of teaching and learning in HE such as student learning, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and evaluation means for the role of academic developers. It is necessary to weave substantive knowledge quite deliberately with knowledge of the field of AD given that practices in the field have changed as practitioners' understanding of students' and institutional needs have developed.

It is particularly in relation to substantive knowledge that we have been mindful of what we select from the field of HES for our curriculum. Shay (2012) argues for the need to build a strong knowledge base for the field based on 'strong' theories with extensive explanatory power. As she points out, because our field draws on so many different disciplines, there is a danger that theoretical knowledge will be chosen arbitrarily rather than in a way that facilitates cumulative learning and knowledge-building. Rigorous debate among the field 'experts' is required to avoid this.

We link our choice of substantive theories to the needs of the South African HE context in particular without losing sight of the fact that our academics and our students operate in a globalised world. To this end we draw from the broader field of HES in each of the modules to enable academic developers to design appropriate initiatives that will impact on key aspects of the academic project such as epistemological access for students, curriculum design, assessment of and for student learning and quality assurance and enhancement.

Phase 2: What and how knowledge was re-contextualised

In this section, we report on our analysis of what and how the four different kinds of knowledge described above were re-contextualised while designing the curriculum for each of the modules. The purpose of this analysis was to build our meta-knowledge and to make visible to ourselves and our participants the structures and organising principles which underpinned our curriculum decisions. It is hoped that by doing this course participants will develop greater control of the various domains of knowledge and thus exercise their agency (both as students on the course and as academic developers) in more strategic, thoughtful and theorised ways.

We used a dimension of Maton's LCT, namely Semantics, to undertake a more fine-grained analysis of how the different domains of knowledge were re-contextualised for the curriculum.

LCT: Semantics

Over the last one and a half decades the social realist school of Sociologists of Education has argued that educational theory and research have focused predominantly on what is referred to as relations *to* knowledge rather than on relations *within* knowledge. This means that the emphasis has been on *knowers*' experiences of educational knowledge and on the effects of power relations on curricula, teaching and learning in specific contexts rather than on the specific nature of disciplinary *knowledge* and its effects on learning. Building on Basil Bernstein's work (2000) on knowledge structures, Maton developed a theory that enables the examination of the structuring principles of knowledge and knowledge practices. Sociologists of Education such as Young and Muller (2010) and academic developers such as Shay (2012, 2013), Luckett (2009), and others have been at the forefront of examining the structuring principles underpinning the re-contextualisation of knowledge for curricula in a range of fields, including nursing, sociology, mechatronics, design, law, political science, journalism and HES (http://www.legitimationcodetheory.com/practice-higher-education.html). These analyses have provided insights into how knowledge is structured in different fields and how this influences and shapes legitimate knowledge practices.

LCT is underpinned by critical and social realist perspectives that hold that knowledge is socially constructed and has real effects on the world. In addition, as noted above, some knowledge has greater explanatory power than other knowledge. As designers and facilitators of the Diploma, we undertook to investigate the nature of what we teach and how what we teach is learned and whether the knowledge contributes towards strengthening/shaping the kinds of 'knowers' required by the field of AD.

LCT: Semantics comprises two conceptual tools: *semantic gravity* and *semantic density* (Maton, 2013). These were used in this study to analyse the knowledge introduced to participants. Our analysis entailed examining the range of concepts, theories and ideas in the course. Semantic gravity (SG) and semantic density (SD) can be stronger or weaker along a continuum. We used *semantic gravity* (SG) to refer to the degree to which the meaning of concepts is dependent on a particular context. The stronger the SG, the more the meaning of a concept is tied to or dependent on the context and conversely the weaker the SG, the less the meaning of a concept is reliant on the context. For example, in order to discuss AD structures in institutions participants use concepts strongly tied to their contexts (SG+), however, in order to discuss the purposes of higher education they need de-contextualised, philosophical concepts (SG−).

Semantic density (SD) in this study is used to identify the degree of condensation or density of meaning contained in a concept. A concept that condenses a number of meanings can be characterised as having relatively strong sematic density (SD+), whereas a concept that embodies fewer meanings can be characterised as having weaker semantic density (SD−). So, for example, a term such as 'globalisation' has stronger semantic density because it contains a complex set of ideas and concepts, whereas a term such as 'classroom' refers to an object that can easily be understood by anyone and therefore can be characterised as having weaker semantic density.

The relative strengths of semantic gravity and density may vary independently according to the context. Our analysis was undertaken to determine the degree of context dependency and the density of concepts, theories and ideas to see what this could tell us about the organising principles underpinning our selection of content
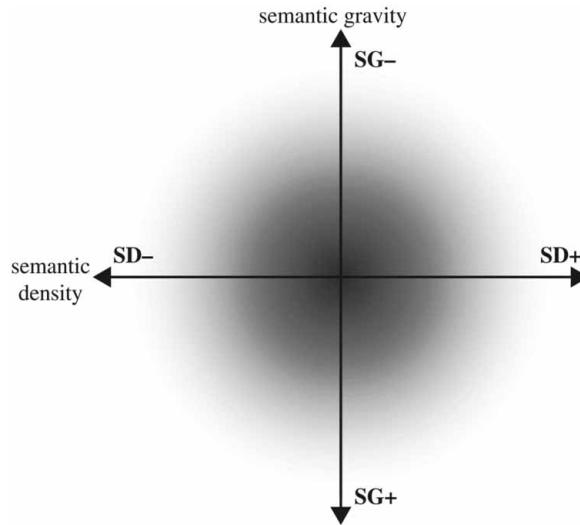
Figure 1.   Semantic plane (Maton, 2014, Figure 7.1, p. 131).

knowledge as well as the sequence and manner in which knowledge is introduced in the course. Figure 1 shows that strengths of semantic gravity and semantic density exist along continua on what can be conceptualised as a semantic plane.

Shay, using LCT: Semantics (2012), has developed a conceptual framework for differentiating between curricula for theoretical, professional, practical and generic qualifications that map onto Maton's semantic plane above. The curriculum for the Diploma occupies Q3, in Figure 2; that is, it is a professional curriculum where professional knowledge and practice are examined. As is the case in most courses which prepare students for entering a profession, we aim for what Shay (2013) and others call 'professional knowledge'; we wish to introduce participants to principles drawn from theory but firmly rooted in practice. The aim is to ensure that professionals are able to use this combination of theoretical and practical knowledge to solve problems in a range of contexts. Professional knowledge is thus characterised by relatively strong semantic gravity and strong semantic density; what Clarke and Winch (2004, p. 511) refer to as 'the confident embedding of theoretically informed action in practice'. This then is what one would expect to find in a course aimed at preparing academic developers for professional practice.

An analysis of knowledge in the diploma using LCT: Semantics

We analysed the components of the course content in terms of their relative strengths of semantic gravity and semantic density to generate *semantic codes* (SG+/−, SD+/−). The semantic codes were used to conceptualise processes of strengthening and weakening semantic gravity and semantic density; to trace the movement between complex, generalised and abstract theory (SG−, SD+) and concretised, empirically grounded practice (SG+, SD−) over the duration of the course. This was done to understand how, in the course, we shift between discussions of everyday AD practices to an examination of those practices using powerful theoretical lenses. We make these shifts because we would argue that academic developers need exposure to a range of
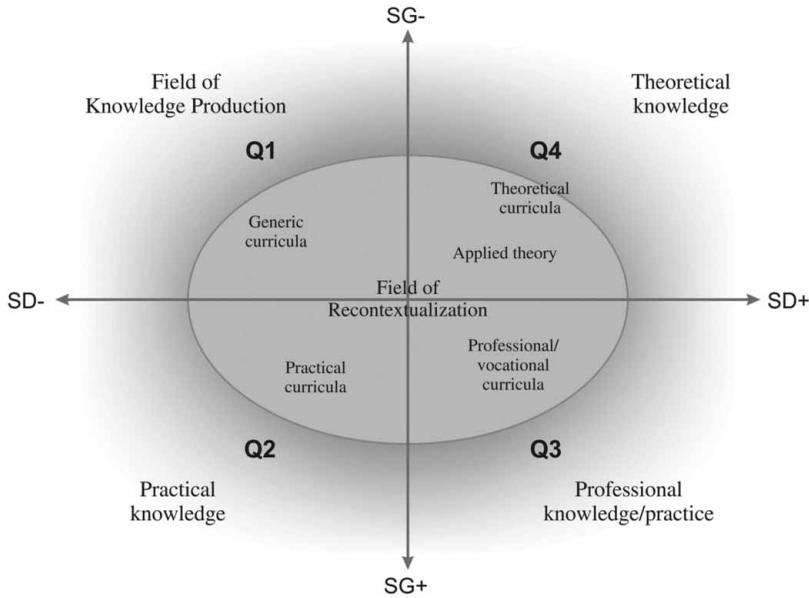
Figure 2.   Semantic field of re-contextualised knowledge (Shay, 2013, p. 572).

theoretical and practical knowledge to contribute towards solving complex practical problems in their contexts.

According to Maton, *semantic profiles* 'take the pulse of knowledge-building' (2013, p. 12). Maton (2013) illustrates three simple kinds of semantic profiles (Figure 3): first, a high semantic flatline (A1), where the concepts used in a course have stronger semantic density with little or no reference to context (SG−, SD+); second, a low semantic flatline (A2) where the majority of concepts are relatively simple and apply to specific contexts, and third (SG+, SD−), a semantic wave (B) in which, during a course, there is movement between the two, that is, between SG−, SD+ and SG+, SD−, and vice versa. Using semantic codes to examine a course can show the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge.
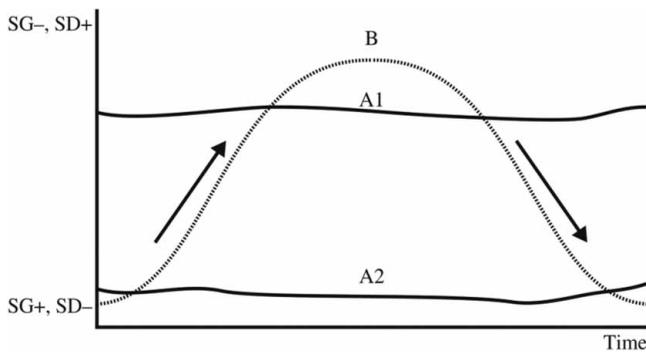

Figure 3.   Semantic profiles (Maton, 2014, Figure 7.3, p. 143).

As will be seen from the analysis below, it is the upward and downward shifts of the semantic wave which appear to be most significant in illuminating how, in the process of re-contextualising knowledge for the curriculum, the course 1) mediates between different kinds of knowledge, 2) facilitates the unpacking and repacking of complex concepts, 3) enables cumulative knowledge-building with explanatory power, and 4) provides a suitable semantic range.

We found the concept of semantic waves (described above) useful for tracking knowledge shifts *within* each of the modules. Another concept relevant to our analysis is what Maton calls *semantic weaving* which entails 'the weaving together within a context of practice of different types of knowledge or semantic codes' (Maton, 2013, p. 12). This concept was used to show how the four domains of knowledge are woven together *across* the modules in a coherent and integrated way to enable the building of cumulative knowledge.

The purpose of the connecting – the waving and weaving – of the four domains of knowledge as well as of theory and practice is to ensure that participants are introduced to the appropriate semantic range in order to develop the knower identities which we would argue they need in order to 'read' their institutional contexts and know how to select and use the theoretical tools they have been introduced to in the course.

Module 1: HE context

As this is the introductory module of the Diploma, the analytical framework (K1), knowledge of the field of AD (K2), and context knowledge (K3) as well as some teaching and learning theory (K4) are introduced. The module starts with an introduction to critical realism and social realism as the analytical framework. We offer this framework as a heuristic for analysing all levels of context and all aspects of participants' roles as academic developers. Even though these theoretical concepts are highly complex (SD+), they can be linked to concrete empirical or contextual referents that allow linking of the concepts (structure, culture and agency) to participants' contexts and practices (SG+) (thus applying semantically dense concepts to particular contexts). In addition, using the heuristic, participants can abstract contextual data to understand social processes – hence moving from a situation of stronger semantic gravity (SG+) to weaker semantic gravity (SG−). At the same time, using the heuristic facilitates a move from weaker semantic density (SD−) to stronger semantic density (SD+). This is an example of a semantic wave as described above. And if participants can explain the contextual dynamic created through the interplay of culture, structure and agency, they are in a position to consider how to act (that is, they are able to shift from a semantically dense analysis (SG−, SD+), to finding solutions to their real-world challenges (SG+, SD+). It is our intention that the framework be used as a means of abstracting contextual data and texts about the context (at whatever level) to enable a nuanced and multi-faceted understanding of why things are the way they are in their contexts and the conditions that may constrain or enable particular kinds of AD practices in their institutions.

As the focus of this module is the HE context, K3 predominates and includes knowledge embodied in concepts such as 'globalisation' and constellations of ideas around the purposes, philosophies and values of HE (SG−, SD+). SD is weakened when ideas such as 'throughput/pass rates', 'educational policies' and 'staff–student ratios' are introduced and participants are asked to provide examples of how these relate to their own contexts (K3). In the process of generating examples, the meanings

of these concepts are made more concrete. Pedagogically then, there is a focus on content that is relatively weak in SD and relatively strong in SG as participants examine their institutional contexts. As noted above, participants need to relate their understanding of context to an analysis of social change processes – thus context knowledge is related to the analytical framework (K1).

In this module there is also engagement with K2, that is, knowledge of the field of AD. The historical developments in the field are linked to macro international and national socio-political and economic changes. Once again the concepts and ideas introduced evidence movement up and down the semantic range. Participants analyse AD in their own institutions using the analytical framework linking it to historical shifts in the field of AD. For this analysis, participants weave the different domains of knowledge they have been introduced to in this module. Furthermore, in their module assignment they need to theorise how they understand AD in their contexts, using the knowledges they have been exposed to during the course of this module.

Module 2: Teaching and learning

The purpose of this module is to develop participants' knowledge of student learning to enable them to contribute to the enhancement of a teaching and learning agenda in their institutions in order to improve epistemological access for all students. Our analysis indicates that although the focus in this module is on substantive teaching and learning theory (K4), it also includes aspects of the other three knowledge areas.

In this module our entry point is low down on the semantic scale. In a pre-module task, participants are required to describe the teaching and learning strategy in their institutions through an analysis of institutional documents, including policies and audit documents (SG+, SD−). They are encouraged to use the structure, culture, agency framework (K1) for this description (SG+, SD+). The aim of this analysis is for participants to gain a better understanding of prevailing institutional teaching and learning practices and the theories that inform them. Furthermore, it is envisaged that participants may begin to identify possible areas for change.

Next we move on to deepening participants' knowledge of the challenges of student access and success within the South African HE context. Using the national data on poor success and throughput rates (Scott et al., 2007) the importance of AD work in the area of pedagogic practice is raised. Thereafter we argue that over the last few decades there has been a concerted move away from predominantly psychological theories of learning to theories informed by a social understanding of learning. We show how the social view of learning, that takes account of structure and agency (Ashwin, 2012) results in more nuanced explanations for academic success and failure. In the course we argue that AD work has for some time now been underpinned by theories (SD+) with powerful implications for practice and that there are grounds for not relying on common-sense theories of AD (SG+).

At the start of the module there is a focus on participants critiquing their institutional teaching and learning contexts and as the module progresses this context is examined through the lenses of the teaching and learning theories introduced; there is a move up the semantic scale as everyday understandings of teaching and learning and AD practices are theorised (SG+, SD+).

The module assignment requires them to move both up and down the semantic scale and to weave aspects of all the knowledge domains in order to make sense of and reconceptualise teaching and learning practices in their institutions.

Module 3: Curriculum development

The purpose of this module is to enable participants to conceptualise the role of AD in relation to the design and quality assurance of curricula. Participants are assigned a pre-module task in which they begin analysing their institutional curriculum practices. They are encouraged to use the analytical framework of structure, culture and agency for this task. As was the case in module 2, this module starts relatively low on the semantic scale (SG+, SD−).

However, for the most part of this module engagement is relatively high on the semantic scale. Substantive theoretical knowledge related to curriculum is introduced, including curriculum paradigms, responsiveness, outcomes-based curricula, Bernstein's pedagogic device, disciplinary knowledge claims and codes of legitimation, knowledge and knower structures, curriculum models and structures, curriculum differentiation, progression and articulation. These theories draw predominantly from the sociologies of knowledge and curriculum because we believe that they offer useful explanatory frameworks for examining institutional and disciplinary practices. So, in part of this module there is a fairly high flatline of engagement with substantive knowledge (SD+) (see Figure 2), but also periodically movement down the semantic scale using contextual and AD field knowledge (SG+).

The module assignment requires movement up and down the semantic range as knowledge of curriculum is integrated with knowledge of the HE context to conceptualise an AD agenda in relation to curriculum development in participants' institutions (SG+, SD+).

Module 4: Assessment of and for student learning

The purpose of this module is to enable participants to conceptualise the role of AD in relation to the design, implementation and quality assurance of assessment of and for student learning in their institutions.

For the pre-module task participants conduct a small-scale empirical research project in which they interview a range of lecturers from their institution about their assessment practices in order to better understand the links between assessment and learning in their contexts (SG+). Thereafter the participants are introduced to the HE literature and research on assessment (K4 SD+). Using the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003), participants integrate substantive knowledge on curriculum and student learning gained in modules 2 and 3 to theorise the role of assessment (SD+) of and for student learning.

The module assignment requires participants to use the analytical framework (K1) as a lens to make sense of the context, institutional needs (K3), their roles as academic developers (K2) and their potential influence on institutional thinking and practices (K3) related to assessment (K4). They are encouraged to think of opportunities where they can contribute to enhancing institutional assessment practices (SG+).

Module 5: Quality

The purpose of the module is to problematise notions of quality assurance in HE and to enable participants to conceptualise and design mechanisms to enhance, develop and assure the quality of teaching and learning appropriate to their contexts.

This module begins relatively high on the semantic scale by introducing philosophical approaches and substantive knowledge (SD+) related to quality in HE (K3) and AD (K2). In particular, theories and practices related to the evaluation of teaching and courses and quality assurance of institutions are explored (SG+, SD+). The influences of culture and structures as well as the roles of agents in the assurance and development of quality teaching and learning at macro-, mezzo- and micro-levels are analysed.

For the module assignment participants need to weave together ideas from the four domains of knowledge to design a strategy towards enhancing, developing and assuring the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions.

Module 6: Conceptualising and designing contextually appropriate AD initiatives

As this is the final module of the course, the focus is on participants consolidating and integrating the knowledge, ideas and strategies developed throughout their two-year engagement with the Diploma. In keeping with the overall purpose of the Diploma, in this module participants are tasked with conceptualising principled and theoretically sound and coherent AD initiatives appropriate to their institutional contexts (SG+, SD+).

Furthermore, academic developer identities (K2) are interrogated in order to deepen participants' thinking about their roles and the potential impact of AD on higher education. We believe that if academic developers are to be respected as legitimate members of the academy their approach to their work should be scholarly. This means that it should be informed by theory and advanced through research (SD+).

The summative assessment for the Diploma takes the form of an integrated professional portfolio in which participants demonstrate that they meet the outcomes of the Diploma and that they are able to theorise the role of AD, their roles as academic developers and devise a coherent set of contextually appropriate, theoretically informed AD initiatives. To this end participants need to weave together ideas from the four domains of knowledge and move up and down the semantic scale applying theory to practice and vice versa. In addition, the portfolio has to show growth in participants' identities as academic developers.

Conclusion

The analysis described above has allowed us to suggest some general principles that could inform a course aimed at inducting academic developers into the field. Our main argument is that academic developers require meta-theoretical knowledge to enable them to understand HE as a social field, universities as workplaces and how academics understand their roles and academic practices.

Furthermore we claim that the four domains of knowledge that we have identified are necessary for a course for academic developers. However, different course designers might choose different concepts or theories within each knowledge domain. Crucial though is to equip academic developers with analytical tools with which they can re-contextualise the knowledge they have acquired in order to design and implement AD initiatives. Because AD differs across contexts, academic developers need to explore and understand educational contexts at international, national and institutional levels so that they are able to make appropriate, informed and strategic decisions about their practices. To understand the field and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, academic developers need knowledge of how AD has evolved (internationally, nationally and institutionally) and the theories and ideologies that have

informed this evolution. Finally, academic developers need in-depth knowledge about teaching and learning in higher education. This includes knowledge of theories and practices related to student learning, teaching methodologies, curriculum, assessment, evaluation and quality development/assurance. Without this, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for academic developers to work in meaningful ways.

Having decided on the content knowledge, the next challenge for course designers is how to re-contextualise this knowledge into a curriculum which will achieve its aims. In Phase Two of the analysis above we suggest a curriculum structure that may be useful for others. From our analysis it emerged that for cumulative learning and knowledge-building it is important to weave together all four knowledge domains in each of the modules. However, some areas of knowledge are emphasised more than others depending on the topic of the module.

Although all the knowledge domains are woven together within each module, across the modules there need to be 'waves within waves that aim to progressively move higher as they build upon previously waved knowledge … This may also involve … revisiting knowledge to heighten or deepen past waves' (Maton, 2013, p. 17).

Professional courses need to 'look both ways', that is, towards the theoretical field as well as the field of practice. So, both within individual modules and across the modules there need to be upward and downward semantic shifts, that is, movement between stronger and weaker semantic gravity and between weaker and stronger semantic density. In designing the course principled decisions need to be made regarding different entry and exit points on semantic scales. These decisions will be made in relation to the purpose of each module. At times this will mean first introducing theoretical concepts and then encouraging participants to apply those to their contexts. It is important that downward semantic shifts are not only about unpacking concepts but include 'teaching and learning appropriate ways to select, recontextualise and enact abstract condensed principles of knowledge' (Maton, 2013, p. 19). At other times it will mean facilitating a move from everyday, common-sense understandings of, for example, teaching and learning, to more theoretical conceptualisations. This is particularly relevant for academic developers in contexts where AD is practised without strong theoretical foundations. Facilitators need to ensure that in the semantic flow there are not disconnected shifts up and down, that is, jumps between theory and context/ examples that are not clearly explained. The challenge is to ensure that all participants are able to use the full semantic range in both meeting the course requirements and in their work as academic developers.

Conducting this analysis has given us the means of making the organising principles of the curriculum and the pedagogy of the course visible to ourselves, our participants and to others who may wish to embark on designing such a course. We hope that this work will contribute to growing the next generation of academic developers as well as to shaping the epistemic spine of the field.

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