

**A social realist analysis of collaborative curriculum development  
processes in an academic department at a South African  
university**

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## Abstract

This study reports on a social-realist analysis of collaborative curriculum development in a journalism and media studies (JMS) department at a South African university. Archer's social-realist meta-theoretical framework is used to theorise about mechanisms that influence collaborative curriculum development within the context of the JMS Department.

The thesis examines the cultural, structural and agential conditions that influenced the process of developing a JMS curriculum that aimed to integrate theory and practice. Bernstein's theories of knowledge recontextualisation and disciplinary knowledge structures are used in the analysis. Bernstein argues that knowledge recontextualisation constitutes a site of struggle. This thesis is an examination of the "struggles" for the epistemic-pedagogic device (Maton's elaboration of Bernstein's epistemic device) during the recontextualisation process that aimed to integrate media studies (MS) and media production (MP) in the JMS curriculum.

Traditionally academic work has been an individual endeavour. However, given the growing need to work in disciplinary and inter-disciplinary teams, it is imperative to develop knowledge of the mechanisms that influence such practices. This thesis is a contribution to knowledge of collaborative processes at the level of an academic department in a university. It contributes to knowledge of cultural, structural and agential mechanisms that enable or constrain collaborative curriculum development within a particular kind of context. In addition it contributes to knowledge of the nature of leadership that may be necessary to facilitate productive collaborative relationships and practices in such a context.

The curriculum development project reported on in this thesis was initiated in 2003; however, data collection for the study was conducted in 2006 when the curriculum for the fourth year (JMS 4) of the Bachelor of Journalism degree was developed.

Since the JMS course prepares students to work as journalists or media workers it is necessary for the curriculum and pedagogy to be oriented both towards the academy and towards the media industries. The aim of the JMS degree is to develop students who will be critically reflexive journalists or media workers. As such the course is both theoretical (MS) and practical (MP). One of the findings of this research project is that the integration of MS and MP is a complex project given that the knowledge of the two disciplines is structured differently. MS is concept-dependent and some aspects of it can be applied to journalism and media practice, while MP is practical and thus context-dependent, though underpinned by theory. A further finding is that both the collaborative work and the integration project required different identity shifts from the lecturers in the JMS Department. Some were more able to make the shifts than others.

The thesis shows that the knowledge recontextualisation struggles in the curriculum development processes of the Department of JMS centred around, *inter alia*, the setting of boundaries between the department and the media and journalism industries, between MS and MP and between MS theory and journalism theory. In addition, existing boundaries

between MS and MP lecturers had to be traversed. These boundaries were circumscribed by, amongst other things, unequal power relations emanating from the higher status traditionally accorded to theoretical knowledge by universities, the tensions around the nature of journalism education and training and the differential properties and powers of the various lecturers within the department. The existence of a strong regulative discourse was found to be an important unifying mechanism in a tension-ridden context.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The research project reported on in this dissertation constitutes a social realist analysis of collaborative curriculum development within a journalism and media studies department in a traditional, research intensive university. The study is social realist because it is underpinned by Margaret Archer's (1995a, 1996, 2000, 2003) social realist theory which is useful in the investigation of social change (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, it espouses a view of knowledge that Moore & Young (2001) and Moore (2007) have identified as social realist (see Chapter 4:10).

I had several aims in undertaking this research. Following Quinn (2006: 1-3), I embarked on this research with three interrelated goals. Firstly, as an academic development practitioner I had the *strategic* goal of improving my insight into how academics pursue collaborative curriculum development. I was particularly interested in this aspect of academic practice as higher education (HE) policy enjoined academics to review their curricula so that they could be more responsive to the needs of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa as well to enable students to be better prepared to contribute to the new international social, political and economic order of the globalised world (See Chapter 4). It was envisaged that academics would have to work more collaboratively in the design of curricula if they were to develop the kind of integrated programmes curricula envisaged by policy documents (see 4.5 – 4.7). This was a new development in higher education where academic work had been regarded and experienced as predominantly individual work (see section 1.2 below).

Secondly, I wished to pursue the *intellectual* goal of investigating a theoretical and methodological approach that would enable me to research departmental practices. It does not happen very often that academic departmental practices are studied *in situ*. I was fortunate to be allowed to sit in on curriculum meetings in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) at Rhodes University for the better part of a year to record and study their work processes in the area of curriculum development. I recognise that it may not be possible to generalise beyond this case, however, I contend that there are enough theoretical and practical lessons to be learned in order to inform the work of academic staff development

practitioners as they work alongside academics in enhancing their teaching and learning processes (see Chapter 9).

Thirdly, at a *practical* level it was firstly my aim to contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms that underpin and inform academic practices in the area of curriculum development at the departmental level (see Chapters 7 and 8). Secondly, since my case is a department where students are taught professional skills, I endeavoured to develop an understanding of the role of the relationship between professional and academic knowledge in the construction of curricula. Thirdly, I was interested in understanding the role of academic identity in relation to the changing nature of academic work, particularly with regard to curriculum development practices.

## 1.2 Curriculum research in higher education

Several authors note the lack of attention to curricula in debates about higher education (Barnett, 2000; Ensor, 2002; le Grange, 2006). This neglect is problematic given R.S. Moore & Lewis' (2004: 47) claim that the changing higher education context requires capacity for "curriculum management and leadership" and that there are few avenues open to academics to develop the requisite knowledge and skills for optimum curriculum design capabilities. They suggest that "we need to deepen our understanding of academic social practices associated with the production and delivery of curriculum" (*ibid*). This implies producing knowledge about the kind of "authority and leadership" (*ibid*) required for successful curriculum development, how academics learn about curriculum development practices as well as what institutional conditions and cultural practices support or undermine these processes (*ibid*). This research contributes to building knowledge about academic leadership and the institutional and departmental structural, cultural and agential constraints and enablements for successful curriculum development.

Barnett (2000) suggests a need for curriculum change research that attempts to answer questions related to, *inter alia*, the extent to which institutions change, the sources of change to which disciplines respond, the different types of institutions and disciplines that respond to particular changes, the way they respond and which forces provide the biggest pull for curricular change. This project provides some answers to the question of how a complex

discipline responds to change and an explanation of the factors that within a specific context constitute forces for curriculum change.

According to D'Andrea and Gosling (2005: 104) "contextual factors frame the thinking of teachers in higher education and are sometimes perceived as barriers to change". They furthermore argue that there exists "a complex set of forces, some structural and some cultural, which impact on course design" (2005: 112). I would argue that in addition to these cultural and structural forces the agents involved in curriculum development also exert strong influences over the nature of the changes that are possible. The professional identities of individual lecturers are significant factors that condition their agency. For example, whether their identities are predominantly invested in their disciplinary research or their teaching will influence their actions. The (sometimes commonsense) ideas academics have of curriculum and pedagogy play a critical role. In addition, the power relations that exist in academic departments and institutions and those exerted by the professions and the state affect what individual lecturers regard as possible or not in relation to curriculum (see for example, R.S. Moore, 2003 and R.S. Moore and Lewis, 2004).

Collaborative curriculum development is not common practice in higher education since the design of curricula has traditionally been left to the discretion of individual lecturers, with some exceptions. South African Higher Education policy documents emerging since the early 1990s have been interpreted as steering higher education institutions towards the development of "coherent and integrated" inter-disciplinary programmes (Ensor, 2002; R.S. Moore, 2003a,b), thus necessitating collaboration in the development of these programmes. While R.S. Moore (2003) reports on academics' responses to and the effects on individual academic identities of processes of collaboration *across disciplines in two South African universities*, the focus of this research is on collaborative curriculum development in one (albeit complex) department in a single South African institution. R.S. Moore & Lewis (2004: 47) assert that "We need to deepen our understanding of academic social practices associated with the production and delivery of curriculum ... e.g. cases where a department or programme conducts critical ongoing review and substantive revision of curriculum". The curriculum revision process in the JMS Department has been underway since 2003 and thus constitutes an example of ongoing and substantive revision of curriculum referred to by R.S. Moore & Lewis.

M. Barnett (2006: 153) contends that curricula of degree courses developed to prepare prospective professionals for their profession should be oriented towards the academy and the profession, thus “facing both ways”. He states that the idea of facing both ways has not been an issue of debate in discussions around qualifications frameworks, for example. M. Barnett (*ibid*) goes on to say that “(t)he pedagogic strategies of these courses in the various sectors deserve serious study and critical evaluation since they may yield lessons for pedagogy at lower levels”. The JMS curriculum development processes that provide the focus for this study offer an opportunity to investigate the arguments and challenges that underpin the exercise of uncovering the pedagogic strategies for facing both ways.

This study does not consider pedagogic strategies directly. However, through exploring the curriculum development conversations of a group of academics and professional journalists turned academics it is possible to get closer to learning something about the thinking that underpins pedagogy in an occupationally directed curriculum. The case of journalism is interesting since it is in some ways one of the ‘newer’ professions being taught within a university context. The profession is not regulated by a professional body and therefore institutions or academic departments have some level of autonomy in terms of the content and processes of the curricula they develop.

### **1.3 Collaborative curriculum development – swimming upstream**

This study examines collaborative curriculum development processes in what is termed a *region* by Bernstein (2000). Thus the process is interesting from at least two perspectives. Firstly, Mary Henkel (2005a; 2005b) notes that the main academic activities within higher education, such as “research, scholarship and teaching” are individualistic enterprises (2005a: 145) and she comments that these activities “depend on the expertise and commitment of creative individuals” (Kogan & Hanney quoted in Henkel 2005b). Secondly, she argues that the notion of academic autonomy is deeply implicated in what makes academic identity distinctive. In fact, Becher & Kogan (1992: 100) assert that academic autonomy is a “central academic value and ... a right”. Given these views of academic work and academic identity, the notion of collaborative curriculum development within an academic department is an anomaly. This research investigates how a department manages a collaborative process in an individualistic environment (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Within a region there are further complicating factors since academics working within a region have at least two identities – one introjected towards the academy, the other projected towards the world or the profession or occupation for which the region prepares graduates. The teaching staff of the Department of JMS is made up of media theorists who are academics who have limited or no experience within a media environment, as well as ex-professionals from a range of media specialisations, including, writing and editing, design, radio, television, photojournalism and new media. These media specialists have a dual identity. Firstly, that of expert at their “craft”; this identity was formed during their time as active professionals in the field. Secondly, as teachers of media, they develop an additional identity, that of academic within the context of a university department of journalism that aspires to face both the academy and the profession.

According to M. Barnett (2006: 154 – 155) these latter academics are involved in “boundary crossing” between their field of specialisation and the academy. He argues that the process of constructing curricula that requires both professional practice recontextualisation as well as pedagogic recontextualisation is difficult. He explains (*ibid*: 154) that these “(b)oundaries are not just between so-called ‘bodies of knowledge’; they are boundaries between languages, people and identities”. Bernstein (in Barnett, *ibid*) refers to “boundaries between ‘discourses’”. My research suggests that there are also boundaries between practices that require negotiation.

Maurice Kogan (Henkel (2005b: 145) argues that it is important to conduct research that will enhance understanding of the meaning of the activities central to the academy for “individual academic values, forms of knowledge and practices”. Kogan notes the need for “close-grained inquiry and analysis at the macro and micro levels” to develop this understanding. This study aims to develop an understanding of practices at the meso level of academic activity, that of the academic department and workgroups within a department. Trowler (2005) argues that knowledge about the meso level within higher education is limited; he refers to the “missing meso-level” in higher education research. Of interest in this study is the relationship between the agents’ fields of specialisations and their identity connection with their department. It is argued (Henkel 2005a) that the discipline forms the primary site of the identity of academics and only secondarily is the institution of importance. In a field such as JMS there is an identity that comes before that of the discipline of JMS and that is the field of

specialisation of members. Because there are a range of specialisations, there will also be multiple identity allegiances within the department and the field or discipline.

In their working relationship with colleagues it is important that “individuals need ... not only immerse themselves within the cognitive and cultural traditions of their discipline but also ... [need] the courage and capacity to distance themselves from, or at least engage in critical dialogue with, their colleagues” (Henkel 2005b: 149). This study examines the extent to which this might be achievable within the specific context.

#### **1.4 The Department of JMS within the JMS HE landscape**

From its inception in 1970 until the early 2000s the Department of JMS at Rhodes University was the only university in South Africa to offer journalism and media studies at the undergraduate level. Since then, several other universities have started to offer journalism and media studies as undergraduate courses. The department thus has competition as an undergraduate provider of JMS. Internationally there are also more universities offering first degrees in JMS (Rhodes University 2005: 3).

One of the major challenges faced by the department in terms of the media industry is that its graduates are sometimes viewed by industry as less technically proficient than graduates from the former technikons<sup>1</sup>. The department sees this as an inevitable consequence of its location within a university and the concomitant balancing of theoretical and practical work that has to occur as a result. A further challenge in this regard is that JMS constitutes only a third of students' university curriculum, while technikon students spend almost all their time developing their journalistic skills (Rhodes University 2005: 15). From my interviews with lecturers (Chapter 7) and in the JMS4 working group meetings (Chapter 8) it was evident that practical specialisation teachers find this tension very difficult to negotiate. This makes sense given their understanding of industry requirements and their own knowledge of what constitutes professional standards in their field.

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<sup>1</sup> The former technikons were similar to the polytechnics in the UK. The Council on Higher Education (CHE 2000: 14) describes them as “institutions for advanced vocational learning”. As part of the restructuring of HE in South Africa, some technikons have now become “universities of technology” or have been merged with universities to form “comprehensive institutions”.

#### 1.4.1 Curriculum development structures in the Department of JMS

Following an investigation into departmental structures and the culture of the JMS Department, Praeg (2002) recommended the establishment of an academic discussion forum for the purpose of enabling cross-cluster<sup>2</sup> discussions about curriculum development. In 2003 the department established the Curriculum Forum (CF) under the chairpersonship of a MS senior lecturer, Anna<sup>3</sup>, who had been newly appointed at the time. She had previously taught in a university education department and was knowledgeable about curriculum development. She started working at the same time as a second new lecturer in media studies (MS). As newcomers, both new incumbents expressed concerns about what they perceived as the lack of coherence in the curriculum. In 2003 the senior lecturer, Anna, organised meetings with other MS lecturers to discuss the purposes and content of the Media Studies curriculum. Following from one of the recommendations of the Praeg Report (2002), members of the Print Cluster who taught in the first year were invited to participate in the discussions about the curriculum in an effort to develop ways to integrate MS and media production (MP). At the time of the Praeg Report curricula were developed by the various “clusters” in the department. Curriculum development by the clusters ensured vertical coherence within a specialisation, but there was no communication between clusters to enable horizontal cross-cluster coherence. This strong classification (3.2.1) between clusters sometimes resulted in overlaps in curriculum content and limited coherence between, for example, MS and the various practical specialisations.

The Praeg Report argued for the weakening of boundaries between the various specialisations in the department. He suggested that ‘convergence’ between the various specialisations was necessary, since media houses operated in a way that brought together various specialists under one roof to represent stories in various formats to the public. Following the Praeg Report, *year boards* were established to discuss curriculum development amongst members teaching all the various aspects of the curriculum at any one year of the academic programme. Each year board has a chair person who is responsible for convening and

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<sup>2</sup> For a number of years curriculum decisions in the Department of JMS were made in and by the various “clusters” that constituted the department. There was a cluster for each of the specialisations taught in the department: media studies, writing and editing, design, radio, television and new media. This meant that there were no cross-cluster curriculum discussions before the establishment of the Curriculum Forum and the curriculum development process which was initiated in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> In the interest of protecting the identities of individuals I use pseudonyms when I refer to members of the JMS Department except where reference is made to their writing which is in the public domain.

chairing board meetings. All decisions by the year boards need to be validated by the CF which meets once a term to discuss curriculum development matters of general concern as well as to debate and ratify proposals made by members of the year boards. Members are elected on to the year boards, but the CF meetings are compulsory for all the lecturers in the department. Curriculum *working groups* are responsible for collaboratively developing the curriculum for a particular year of the JMS programme. Recommendations from working groups are presented for discussion, critique and ratification at the CF. The curriculum for the first year was developed in 2003; in 2004 the second year curriculum was re-considered; 2005 saw the re-design of the third year curriculum.

The creation of these curriculum development structures has established an enabling environment for cross-field or cross-specialisation curriculum discussions. The Praeg Report (2002) noted that the strong boundaries between the different clusters within the department as well as the physical distance between the different sectors in the department was a constraining factor in terms of coherent, collaborative deliberations about the departmental curricula. In 2005 the department moved into its new building, the Africa Media Matrix. This move has brought together all the specialisations under one roof. The closer proximity of all the lecturers in the department creates an enabling environment for both formal and informal curriculum discussions and for relationship development in general. The first curriculum meeting I attended was the final meeting of the JMS 3 curriculum working group in November 2005. At this meeting, however, it was clear that there were still many divisions amongst the different clusters within the department.

In 2006 a new CF chairperson, Ingrid, was elected. Ingrid was intimately involved in the curriculum design process for JMS 2 and JMS 3 and had demonstrated keen interest and involvement in the debates around curriculum development issues not restricted to her specialisation, Radio. In May 2006 the JMS 4 working group started its work. The chairperson of this group was Roger, the fourth year course coordinator. Ingrid was also involved in a leadership capacity in this deliberation process. In her capacity as chairperson of the CF, Ingrid endeavoured to improve communication about curriculum development processes and decisions in the department. She set up a website with “curriculum resources” on the departmental learning management system (LMS). All curriculum documents are posted on the LMS site; thus all course documentation, year board, curriculum working group

or CF minutes are posted on the site. In addition she posted key papers on journalism education on the site. Members of the department also have access to blogs on the departmental website and some have used blogs to initiate discussions on important and sometimes controversial curriculum issues.

The first meeting I attended in 2006 (the year in which I collected the bulk of the data for this research project) was the CF in February. The JMS 4 working group had their first meeting in May 2006. They met weekly during terms 2 and 3 and less frequently for the fourth term. The last meeting for the year was held in November 2006.

## **1.5 Research questions**

Following R.S. Moore (2003: 218) the research question for this project was: How do academics in an élite academic institution, characterised by strong traditional identities, pursue collaborative curriculum development and what are the concomitant cultural, structural and agential challenges?

The aims of the research were to:

1. document and develop an understanding of the processes of and enabling mechanisms for collaborative curriculum development in an academic department;
2. explore the cultural, structural and agential constraints and enablements that contribute to or inhibit curriculum change;
3. explore the pedagogical implications of the curriculum discourses used in curriculum deliberations;
4. draw lessons about the dynamics of curriculum change from the analysis of the case;
5. provide an analysis of curriculum change processes that can be used by academics and education development practitioners to inform curriculum processes elsewhere.

The research methodology followed to answer these questions is discussed in Chapter 5.

## 1.6 The structure of the thesis

In Chapter Two I establish the meta-theoretical framework for the study. Margaret Archer's social realism (1995, 1996, 2000, 2003) is presented as an appropriate meta-theoretical framework for this study as it provides a framework for examining the complex interplay between culture (the ideational context), structure (the material context) and agency. Archer contends that culture and structure are ontologically prior to agency and they form the conditioning context for social interaction. Both the cultural and structural systems require agency to effect changes. Social realism advances a differentiated and stratified view of the world (see 2.2.1) where the different strata are *sui generis*. The idea of time is central to a social realist analysis of the social world, as is the notion of analytical dualism. Analytical dualism implies that the various strata of the social world are examined separately, even though it is understood that there is a constant interplay between them. Taking account of the influence of time, and separating the strata of structure, culture and agency in the analysis, enables the social researcher to establish which aspect of the context influenced change or stasis within the context at what point. In this research project I examine the cultural, structural and agential conditions that impact on collaborative curriculum development in the JMS Department at Rhodes University in South Africa.

As stated above, Archer's social realist theory is a meta-theoretical framework and as such requires substantive theoretical approaches for the investigation of particular social phenomena. The social phenomena of knowledge, curriculum, the university and the academic department and the journalism and media industries in South Africa are examined. In Chapter Three I therefore introduce Bernstein's (1996, 2000) theoretical approaches to knowledge and pedagogical contexts. Bernstein's pedagogic device, and Maton's (2004) epistemic device (an extension of the pedagogic device), and Bernstein's (2000, 2001) theorisation of identity are presented as theoretical lenses for the substantive part of the thesis.

In Chapter Four I present the South African higher education curriculum context which forms the backdrop for curriculum work in higher education institutions in South Africa. Curriculum restructuring has been part of the debate within South African higher education as the new country was preparing for a new political dispensation in 1994 after the demise of

the apartheid government. In this chapter I argue that there are multiple influences on the higher education curriculum and that the new policy framework has had limited influence on the restructuring of curricula at some South African universities (Ensor 2003). I present the viewpoints of a number of curriculum theorists who argue for the need to re-examine curricula in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These ideas range from an understanding of the world and knowledge as being utterly unstable and constantly changing to a social realist understanding of the status of knowledge in a changing world (see 4.9 and 4.10). Lecturers' understanding of the epistemology of their discipline has an impact on their views on curriculum and pedagogy.

In Chapter Five I discuss the research methodology followed in this research project. The chapter is an argument for an approach to social research where the aim is to uncover the underpinning mechanisms for the action in the social world. I use Maxwell's (2004a, 2004b) approach to realist research. I argue for the importance of using a range of data in research into higher education and explain how the research reported herein was approached.

Chapter Six presents a distillation of views on journalism education from the writings of members of the Department of JMS and some of the main writers that they quote on the subject. From this chapter it should be evident that there are divergent views on journalism education as well as on what should constitute the curriculum for a degree in journalism. It is also clear from the argument presented in this chapter that some of the theories taught in journalism schools are contradictory in relation to the journalism practices taught and that this constitutes a source of tension within journalism schools and particularly in relation to pedagogy.

Interview data from key informants in the curriculum development process in the Department of JMS are analysed in Chapter Seven. The interviewees' views on various aspects of curriculum and curriculum development processes in the JMS Department are examined through the lenses of culture, structure and agency as well in relation to the struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, 2000; Maton 2000, 2004).

Chapter Eight provides an analysis of the meetings of the JMS 4 curriculum development process during 2006. Again these are examined as a struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic

device, particularly in relation to the establishment of boundaries between the department and industry, between different forms of journalism as well as between different approaches to theorising journalism and media.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter Nine in which the findings of the research are discussed. In this chapter I also consider the implications of the findings for knowledge on and the practice of collaborative curriculum development processes in higher education.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

### **A Social Realist Approach**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Margaret Archer's social realist morphogenetic approach (Archer 1995aa, 1996, 2000, 2003) to the understanding of the social world is utilised in this thesis as a framework for developing nuanced perspectives on the nature of curriculum development processes in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) at Rhodes University in South Africa.

University departments can be complex structures, which exist within an even more complex constellation of "role sets and are dependent for their existence and endurance upon other organisational (structural) configurations" (Willmott 2002:12, see also Sayer, 2000). These structural configurations include the university or enterprise (Henkel, 2000) as well as the higher education system nationally and internationally. The department, by virtue of preparing students to enter the journalistic job market also has relations with this market. Each of these necessary and internal relations between the department and associated structures, constitute the basis for a complex set of mechanisms (Archer 1995aa, Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson 2002) to come into play within a process such as curriculum development. The morphogenetic approach, by virtue of its ontologically complex understanding of social structures, cultural systems and agency, enables a fine-grained analysis of social processes within complex structural arrangements.

An explication of the ontological and epistemological understandings that underpin this study is crucial in informing the basis upon which knowledge claims are asserted. Archer (1995a) says that the way we understand society influences how we study it (*ibid*: 3 – 5). I shall firstly explain the critical realist underpinnings of Archer's social realist approach after which I shall describe aspects of the morphogenetic approach developed by Archer (1995a, 1996, 2000, 2003). In Chapter 3 I discuss the relationship between Archer's work and the work of Bernstein (1996, 2000) and Maton (2000, 2004) which I also employ as analytical tools.

## 2.2 Critical Realism

Critical realism is regarded as an *underlabourer* or underpinning philosophy for social realism (Archer 1995aa, 1996, 2000). Critical realism (CR), developed by Roy Bhaskar (Bhaskar 2008, Danermark *et al* 2002), elucidates the ontological and epistemological bases for developing knowledge about the world from a realist perspective.

### 2.2.1 Critical realist ontology

A critical realist perspective postulates that there is a reality that it is possible to know. To develop this knowledge requires that we understand that reality is differentiated, structured and stratified (Archer 1995aa: 9, Bhaskar 2008). According to Bhaskar (2008) it is possible to *differentiate* three levels of reality: the *empirical* (that which we can apprehend through sense data), the *actual* – which refers to events that can be experienced, but which occur whether we are aware of them or not; the actual emerges when the causal powers of the *real*, which consists of “objects, their structures or natures and their causal powers and liabilities” (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2002: 3) or generative mechanisms are activated. Mechanisms are not always perceivable, but they are nonetheless real. Bhaskar (2008: 13) developed the following table to illustrate this differentiation:

	Empirical	Actual	Real
Experience	√		
Event	√	√	
Mechanism	√	√	√

**Figure 1: *Three domains of reality*** (Bhaskar (2008: 13))

CR is not based on naïve empiricist ontology; CR research therefore goes beyond the empirical and the actual in order to uncover that which lies beneath in order to develop an understanding of the mechanisms that make an event possible. This study investigates the curriculum development processes of an academic department. As such there is a focus not only on the “events” of curriculum meetings or curriculum documentation that emerge from these events; I also have an interest in the experiences of academics in relation to these

processes and I aim to uncover the various generative mechanisms of these events. All of these aspects of the context I examine are real from a CR perspective.

Reality is *structured*. Danermark *et al* (2002: 47) define structure as “a set of internally related objects” (p. 47). Some of these relations are necessary, while others are contingent. Necessary relations imply that A needs B to exist as in the case of the relation between a university and students. Whether relations are necessary or contingent is important in social analysis and I shall discuss this issue in more detail below.

Reality is also *stratified*. The natural world consists of the physical world, which has an atomic structure, which in turn is made up of electrons, protons and neutrons, and so on. The strata that make up the social world include social structures, cultural systems and agents (people) (Archer 1995aa, 1996, 2000).

The concept of *emergence* is central to CR (Archer 1995aa, Sayer 2000). Emergence is when something new comes into being as a result of the interaction of two or more things. Thus, when people interact within, or on a particular social structure, a new *sui generis* social practice may emerge that is irreducible to the sum of its parts and has its own properties and powers (Archer 1995a, Sayer 2000).

According to a critical realist understanding, the social world like the natural world is an open system where Humean constant conjunctions of events are not possible (Archer 1995a: 54; Danermark *et al* 2002: 206). Events in the world (whether natural or social) come about as a result of particular causal mechanisms (Archer 1995a: 15). However, the fact that it is possible for a mechanism to exercise causal powers, does not mean that it will; what one can say for sure is that mechanisms have *tendencies* to exert causal influences. These influences, according to Danermark *et al* (*ibid*: 53) can also be liabilities. A number of *mechanisms* may be at work on an object at the same time with various effects. For example, one mechanism may cancel out the effect of another or strengthen its effect (*ibid*: 58). *Causal powers*, as will be discussed in detail in the section on Social Realism (see 2.3), “can also be located in the social relationships or structures that people build” (*ibid* 2002: 54); thus critical realists have established, for example, that reasons for actions constitute causes (Bhaskar 2008;

Fairclough, *et al* 2002). How causal powers operate within the social world will be discussed below.

CR makes a distinction between the *intransitive and transitive dimensions* of reality (Bhaskar 2008). The intransitive is that which can be said to exist, the objects of knowledge, while the transitive refers to the way in which we refer to our knowledge of the intransitive (Bhaskar 1975 in Sayer 2000: 10 - 11). Thus the transitive relates to our descriptions of that which is known to belong to the intransitive dimension. Danermark *et al* (*ibid*: 22 – 23) explain that there isn't a direct relation between science and its object of study and that there is always "an ontological gap" between the object of knowledge and the knowledge claims made. This ontological gap is filled by theories about reality. Through theory there emerges an indirect connection between science and reality. Theoretical claims made about the world can be improved on. This is the basis for the fallibilist critical realist epistemology (Sayer 2000: 2).

### **2.2.2 Critical realist epistemology**

Another premise of critical realist epistemology is that we can never claim to know the world fully; knowledge of the world is fallible or corrigible (Archer 1995a, Sayer *ibid*). One reason for this corrigible epistemology is that knowledge of the world is concept dependent. The world can only always be known and explained in terms of the concepts that are available to us (Sayer *ibid*). Furthermore, it is always possible to "dig deeper" and to uncover more fundamental causal mechanisms than are known at any particular time.

CR is also sometimes described as *transcendental realism* since it is through transcendental reasoning that the researcher comes to an understanding of causal mechanisms. Causal mechanisms are not observable, but they are "causally efficacious" (Willmott 2002:8). Thus, according to Willmott (*ibid*) CR or transcendental realism "makes claims as to the necessary conditions that make (the social world) a possible object of knowledge". The researcher asks transcendental questions such as "how must things be for X to be possible?" Thus teachers only exist because of the existence of pupils. It is through transcendental reasoning and through the causal criterion that transcendental reasoning operates (Wilmot *ibid*).

Critical realist research aims to explain why things are the way they are through an explication of the generative causal mechanisms of events in the world. In this regard Sayer (*ibid*: 43) asserts the idea of explanatory adequacy as a measure of whether an explanation is regarded as truthful. Sayer (*ibid*: 42) says that “Realists do *not* need to suppose that knowledge mirrors the world; rather it interprets it in such a way that the expectations and practices it informs are intelligible and reliable”.

### 2.2.3 The role of language or discourse in critical realism

Danermark *et al* (*ibid*: 27) note that language constitutes “one of the most important tools in the search for knowledge of reality”. Similarly, Fairclough, *et al* (*ibid*: 2) argue that critical realism cannot afford not to pay attention to “the nature and significance of semiosis” of which language is a component. It is one of the means through which meaning is conveyed or exchanged. Language is also the means we use to reflect on human endeavours. “... by means of language we can communicate, discuss and compare our experiences with those of others. As a consequence we may perhaps also change various things in our practice and so make new experiences which are in their turn communicated, and so on” (Danermark *et al* *ibid*: 28). Fairclough *et al* (*ibid*: 2) suggest that it makes sense to pay attention to the issue of semiosis since the issue of the causal efficacy of reasons is one aspect of semiosis at work within a critical realist analysis. Thus, they argue that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one tool that CR analysis can draw on since it is compatible with CR and also provides a means for explicating the role of semiosis in social interactions.

Through language, knowledge of reality is communicated. However, there may be competing interpretations of what is communicated (Sayer *ibid*). Fairclough *et al* (*ibid*) argue that “semiosis has real effects on social practice, social institutions, and social order.” As such it is important to note that the starting point for knowledge production is the concepts that are already part of the cultural conspectus. Danermark *et al* (*ibid*: 30) come to the conclusion that there is an “intrinsic and mutual relation between concept / knowledge, the practices that we as human beings are involved in, and the world that our practice deals with. It is because of this relationship that language is one of our most important instruments for exploring reality”. Since my data sources constitute a series of meaning making encounters such as interviews as well as curriculum meetings, it is important that language or semiosis as a causal mechanism

within the CR framework is foregrounded. Semiosis, it is argued, is “a part of social life, but it does not exhaust the latter” (Fairclough *et al* 2002: 3).

In the next section I turn to Archer’s theory of social realism which provides the theoretical framework for explicating processes of social change or reproduction.

### **2.3 Social Realism**

This discussion on social realism draws mainly on Archer’s *Realist social theory: the morphogenetic approach* (1995a) and *Culture and Agency. The place of culture in social theory* (1996).

Society is made up of structural, cultural and agential emergent properties (Archer 1995aa, 1996). For Archer there are internal and necessary relationships between emergent properties (Archer 1995aa: 168). Structural emergent properties (SEPs) depend primarily on material resources, including people; cultural emergent properties (CEPs) develop as ideas, beliefs, values, rules and so on become part of the cultural landscape (Archer 1995aa: 176 – 180, Archer 1996: 107), while agential emergent properties (PEPs) come about as people interact in different contexts that require them to exercise different sets of powers as part of new groups or where individuals’ interactions are challenged within the natural, practical or social realms of reality (Archer 1995aa: 184). Emergent properties and powers can interact with each other and in the process produce yet more emergent properties. Thus SEPs come into being and change through the influence of ideas which are of course CEPs held by agents. Thus emergent properties come about and emergent powers are exercised in the interplay between structure, culture and agency (Archer 1995aa, 1996).

In the case of the JMS Department the PEPs of the senior lecturer, Anna, enabled her to assume the role of curriculum leader when she entered the department in 2002. As a senior lecturer she was a powerful structural agent and as a result of her experiences of curriculum development in another context she was able to introduce new ideas or CEPs into the context (see 6.2.1, 7.4.2 and 7.4.3).

### **2.3.1 Against conflationary thinking**

Archer (1995a, 1996) argues that the social world is made up of ‘parts’ and ‘people’. The parts are the social structures or the cultural system while the people are those who operate within a particular structural or cultural system. She developed the notion of *analytical dualism* that signifies her departure from forms of theorising about the relationship between structure and agency that tend to conflate the relation between the two (Archer 1995aa: 14, 1996: *xiv*). She argues against three forms of conflation, namely, upwards (that sees society as an aggregate of individuals); downwards (that sees individuals as being determined by society) and central (that sees the two as mutually constitutive so that it becomes impossible to discern the relative impact of one on the other) (Archer 1995a, 1996, 2000). In contrast to the ‘flat’ ontologies underwritten by methodological individualism, methodological collectivism and structuration theory, the analytical dualism and morphogenetic approach developed by Archer (1995a: 57 – 64), provides a stratified ontology and an explanatory methodology that allows for distinctions to be drawn regarding the relative influence of structure or culture on agency or vice versa (Archer *ibid*, Sayer *ibid*).

#### **2.3.1.1 Analytical dualism**

Archer’s response to conflationary thinking and theorising is analytical dualism that, for analytical purposes, keeps the parts and the people separate in order to gain the ability to theorise about the extent (and subsequent results) of the influence of the parts on the people and the people on the parts. She stresses that the dualism is analytical only since the suggestion is not that the two are ontologically or philosophically separate. The emphasis on analytical dualism necessitates a foregrounding of time in social analysis (Archer 1995a: 15, Archer 1996: *xvi*). This will be discussed more fully (see 2.5 below) where the morphogenetic approach is explained.

### **2.3.2 On social structures**

Archer accepts that social structures exist, that they are relatively enduring and that these structures are ontologically prior to and independent from the people operating within them (Archer 1995aa: 96). Structures are irreducible to the people who brought them about or the

people who operate within them (*ibid*: 15). Thus Archer contends that people are born into or enter into a pre-structured context. Structure is understood to include social institutions, (sedimented) social practices, roles, positions, and so on (*ibid*: 95). Archer talks about social structures being the product of the “doings” or activities of the “long dead”. Structures, like all aspects of the social world, are stratified. The different strata that make up structures all have their own emergent properties and powers (Archer 1995a, 1996). Archer argues that current actors are not responsible for the way the social context is at the present time (Archer 1995a: 152). This is a point of contention between Archer and Sibeon (2004), who argues that current actors who have been in a particular context for some time may be complicit in the way a particular structure is at a particular time. In the case of the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS reported on in this dissertation, the socio-cultural discord was inherited by the lecturers had been appointed since 2002. However, the curriculum development processes were initiated by an actor appointed in 2002. This actor thus contributed to developing a new social context for agents to operate in, with new social structures to act within and new ideas to consider.

Archer argues that structures are activity dependent (see also Willmott 2002:26). Thus structure is relatively autonomous from agency because structural conditioning is anterior to social action (*ibid*). This is not the same as Giddens’ (1984) notion that structures are virtual and that they only become real when instantiated by people (as discussed in Archer 1995aa: 63). For Archer structures are real, but they require the activity of agents to be reproduced or changed. Structures exist independently of people and they do not require people’s understanding or “discursive penetration” in order to exert causal influences on people (*ibid*: 252). Archer asserts that one does not find out about the social structures that exist within a context only by asking people about them since people’s understandings of structures might be partial (*ibid*: 177). She suggests that it is through transcendental argument that the social analyst comes to understand the nature of and the relationships between various structures within the social system (*ibid*). Agents new to Higher Education and to Rhodes University may not be aware of the structures that govern curriculum development and teaching and learning more broadly within the institution, nor might they be aware of the history of the conditioning context of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. The reasons for the tension between MS and MP staff and the way those tensions play themselves out in curriculum deliberations, may not be fully understood.

Structures, like people, are causally efficacious; thus they condition people's actions (*ibid*: 43, 60). That means that they can create enabling or constraining conditions for actions. However, they do not determine what people do. Thus, structures are not reified entities; they cannot act, but are dependent on people to either endure or change and they delimit the nature of the actions that are possible within the given structural context. An example of this is the limited time available to MP on the timetable which restricts the level of complexity and expertise that can be achieved (see 7.5.3 and 7.5.3.1).

Existing structures and the various strata of structures create particular situational logics for people within which they are required to act (*ibid*: 216 – 229). Agents act based on their vested interests in sustaining a particular status quo (*ibid*: 90); in addition, the extent to which they are able to influence conditions is dependent on the nature of the power they are able to wield within the context. The level of power is in turn dependent on the material resources that agents can bring to bear in their efforts to either reproduce or change structural conditions (*ibid*: 176). Moreover, vested interests are often linked to material resources that agents may gain or maintain through change or reproduction. All lecturers in the JMS Department have a vested interest in promoting their field of specialisation. However, some lecturers have more power than others to exert their influence in curriculum discussions (see 7.6).

Archer's theory of structure is based on four logical propositions:

1. There are internal and necessary relations within and between structures (SS).
2. Causal influences are exerted by the social structure (SS) on social interaction (SI).
3. There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the level of SI.
4. Social interaction elaborates upon the composition of SS by modifying current internal and necessary structural relationships and introducing new ones in the process of morphogenesis. Where social structures are reproduced, internal and necessary relations between SS are maintained (*ibid*: 169).

Structural emergent properties (SEPs) work at different levels and the interplay between the people and the parts are evident at these various levels. In the social world people occupy different positions (through birth or through voluntary or involuntary placement) which

imbue them with certain powers (*ibid*: 177 – 185). These positions structure life chances for people. Thus people are born into contexts of advantage or disadvantage. Attached to positions are certain material resources and therefore vested interests. People occupying the positions may wish to maintain their positions and interests or may wish to improve their situation in life. If the properties and powers of a position is such that people are unable to articulate their needs and organise in order to gain further interests they are what Archer terms Primary Agents (*ibid*: 185). If they are able to articulate and organise around their needs then they become Corporate Agents who are in a position to advance transformation through their bargaining power which is vested in, for example, their material interests or their social power. Primary agents have powers to influence if they are part of a big enough group to have an impact on social structures. Carter and New (2005:5) call this “demographic agency”. Some MP lecturers, who may have less cultural capital than others because, *inter alia*, they have not studied beyond the honours level, can be considered primary agents since they have limited power to argue their case in a way that would command the attention of the more powerful corporate agents in the department (see 7.6). There is a group of more vocal MP lecturers who are engaged in advocating that the JMS Department be split into two separate departments, a Department of Journalism Studies and a Department of Media Studies.

Social roles have structured powers and consequences particularly if they are “necessarily and internally related” to other roles (Archer 1995aa: 186). Roles belong to the level of the structural while their occupants are part of the level of the social. Roles need to be seen as distinct from those who occupy them. Certain properties and powers are inherent in particular roles, such as vested interests, while people have the ability to occupy roles in unique ways based on their own characteristics, skills, ambitions, etc. Within a role the emergent properties of the role (SEPs) and those of the person who occupies the role (PEPs) come together and occupiers of roles, through the PEPs they bring to the role are able to modify the roles or to reproduce them. Lecturers in the JMS department all have vested interests in students developing an interest and expertise in their fields. As such they will endeavour to ensure that students spend enough time to be immersed in their practical specialisation or theoretical fields, in order to develop the requisite interest and knowledge. Lecturers will therefore be protective of their share of the time-table and will fight to ensure that the time is protected.

Agents are endowed with certain life chances that make it more possible for some than for others to step into certain roles (*ibid*: 202). When people are fully developed actors they are able to bring their own sets of skills, creativity etc. to the roles (*ibid*: 187, 190). The occupant of the role may be able to flourish in a particular role and use his or her skills, creativity, ambition, desires, etc in order to develop the role. Alternatively, these properties and powers may be stifled by structural constraints such as those imposed by other actors who occupy other roles or through other constraining mechanisms within a system. Through exercising their agency within a role, agents may change and they may be able to transform the role and other aspects of the social structure within which they operate.

At the systemic level various structures stand in relation to each other. The relations between various structures that make up complex systems are referred to as systems integration (*ibid*: 188). Incompatibilities or complementarities exist between structures and these may be internal and necessary (this means that one is dealing with an emergent structure) or the relations may be external and contingent (*ibid*: 189)<sup>4</sup>. In the case of a high degree of complementarity between various structures, this is referred to as high system integration. System integration is low where there exist high levels of incompatibilities between structures within a system. As with structure, in general, system integration is anterior to social agents and it thus confronts agents with constraints or enablements. In social analysis it is important to maintain the differentiation between systems and social integration (*ibid*: 189).

The institutional level is where the issue of social integration becomes crucial (*ibid*: 188-189). Social integration can contribute to the reproduction or the transformation of institutions and in cases where there is morphogenesis of agency, significant changes to institutions may ensue through the interplay between agents and the institutions within which they operate. Thus various promotive interest groups may work together or against one another in order to promote their own interests or to undermine the interests of another group in order to gain ascendancy. This happens at the socio-cultural level. The cultural context within institutions is important and the logical relations between ideas at the cultural level can be instrumental in helping to sustain or change a particular institutional context.

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<sup>4</sup> Sibeon (2004) does not agree with Archer that only internal and necessary relations produce emergent structures. He believes that even external and contingent relations are emergent as these may also have causal implications for the agents involved in those structures.

The following table (*ibid*: 190) illustrates the relationship between system and social integration, indicating the nature of the agents who are influenced by various levels of social structure:

SYSTEM INTEGRATION		SOCIAL INTEGRATION	
Systemic	_____	Interplay	_____ Populations
Institutional	_____	Interplay	_____ Organised groups (corporate agency)
Roles	_____	Interplay	_____ Individual actors
Positions	_____	Interplay	_____ Collectives (primary agency)

**Figure 2: Analytical dualism in social theory**

Systems and social integration are discussed further in 2.5.1 below.

### 2.3.2.1 Necessary complementarities

This situational logic exists when the necessary and internal relations between systemic structures are congruent, harmonious and “mutually reinforcing” (*ibid*: 219). Within such contexts it is in the best interest of agents involved to maintain the status quo since disruptions would result in mutual losses. Thus, the situational logic promotes *protection* and results in morphostasis. The mutually beneficial situational logic inhibits innovation and thus the “internal, necessary and complementary” relations ensure the maintenance of the vested interests of all agents and actors. Within Rhodes University the culture of collegiality is prized highly and is effective in staving off a managerial approach to running the institution. The Department of JMS’ relationship with the media industries is in part complementary since the external sources of funding make it possible for the department to grow and creates visibility for the department within the media community; however, in some respects this relationship has some incompatible dimensions (see 8.4.4.1).

### **2.3.2.2 Necessary incompatibilities**

In this case the internal and necessary relations between institutions are incompatible and thus the configuration carries the seeds of change. This kind of context conditions agents towards “strategic action” in order to shift the context towards a more compatible systemic organization (*ibid*: 222). Thus, while one set of agents might occupy themselves by working towards the realisation of their vested interests by working towards change, another set of agents will be motivated to work for the containment of dissent through devising a compromise within the structural context. However, it is unlikely that the delicate balancing act that is required to uphold compromises will hold and this situation is more likely to result in “substantial changes, or indeed, turning into another type of structure” (*ibid*: 225). It is likely that the multiple curriculum structures in the JMS Department will have to undergo some kind of change as in their current form, they constitute a structural constraint by virtue of the time-consuming nature of working within and between multiple curriculum development structures (see 7.5.2).

### **2.3.2.3 Contingent incompatibilities**

Contingent incompatibilities exist because of the open nature of society and no system is entirely immune to influences from outside (*ibid*: 225). The situational logic which ensues is one of elimination. It makes sense that agents would want to eliminate extraneous influences that threaten to disrupt systemic integration. The relationship that exists between the Department of JMS and the media industries can, in some respects, be categorised as a contingent incompatibility since it places the department within a situation where the industries have expectations which at the moment seem contrary to what the department is willing to offer. In some respects the relationship is compatible, since it brings necessary resources, but it compromises some agents in a number of ways: it threatens the intellectual boundaries between the university and industry and therefore threatens the nature of the curriculum (see 8.4.4.1).

#### 2.3.2.4 Contingent compatibilities

In an open system the effects of systemic influences that are contingent, yet highly compatible, will penetrate a structural context. The situational logic that ensues is one of opportunism. Thus, agents within the system will endeavour to extract gains from the available structural opportunity since it may imbue the current structural context with resources which may enable some agents to realise their interests (*ibid*: 229). Within the context of Rhodes University, for example, institutional resources to enhance the quality of teaching and learning are available through the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL). Some members of staff have done courses and qualifications through CHERTL and this has enabled some lecturers to improve their own teaching and make informed contributions to the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS (7.5.1).

#### 2.3.3 Implications of structural configurations for institutions and systems

Archer (*ibid*: 227) argues that the open nature of society makes the interrelation of various structures, institutions and systems a matter of contingency. What is important to note, though, is that not all agents are involved in all the various clusters of institutions that constitute a system. This has implications for the nature of social interaction:

For it conditions whether allegiances are superimposed or cross-cutting and thus influences different possibilities for alliance in pursuit of institutional reproduction or transformation. Simultaneously, alliances are not simply a matter of numbers but are strategic groupings. Therefore, the presence of a plurality of vested interests in institutional relations which entail different types of situational logic, will have a direct effect upon the strategy which can be endorsed conjointly. It delineates those who *can* ally in promotive action for the defence or change of a particular institutional operation (*ibid*: 228 – 229).

Archer has argued that her morphogenetic theory is a way of bringing together structure, culture and agency (Archer 1995aa, 1996). Culture is the element that links structure and agency since people's conceptions or ideas about social structures influence their disposition towards those structures (Archer 1995aa: 195). Social structures come about and are maintained through the people's ideas; however they can also be sustained and justified by

means of manipulation and coercion (*ibid*: 175). Culture, or ideas, are similarly stratified and range from big doctrines that have the potential for extensive discursive penetration of a population, to single propositions that can impact relations between groups of agents or even individual actors (*ibid*: 185).

## 2.4 On culture

For Archer (1996: xv) culture is roughly the same as Popper's World Three Knowledge; that is, 'the contents of libraries'. Popper delineates three worlds: World One pertains to the physical world and relates to "*physical* states and processes" while World Two relates to "*mental* states and processes" (Willmott, 2002:45). As a World Three entity, culture "refers to the *products* of human mind. Such products range from sculptures, paintings and ancient plays, to highly complex theories. All 'World Three' products *qua* products possess the dispositional capacity to be understood (and used) (*ibid*)".

For Archer (2002: 45), the cultural context is made up of the ideas, beliefs, values and so forth that exist within a particular context and that stand in logical relationships to each other. Willmott (*ibid*) states that "Popper is more concerned with *objective* knowledge, viz. hypotheses, arguments, unsolved problems". In addition aspects such as myths and superstitions which are not part of the world of logic also form part of culture, but these aspects of culture are played out within socio-cultural relations between people. Archer argues that, once an idea has been lodged on the cultural register; even if it is not activated or used at a particular time, it remains there to be rediscovered and used by social actors. It is, however, at the level of logic that the items in the CS have the ability to constrain or enable the actions of agents (*ibid*).

As is the case for social structures, the cultural system exists independently of people; it is anterior to the current context and is the product of the activities of past agents. Cultural items exist independently of their discursive penetration by agents. Thus Archer, like Popper, talks about knowledge with or without a knowing subject (in *ibid*: 46). In fact, agents within a particular context have differential understanding and knowledge of prevailing ideas. For social analysis, only propositions are used, those ideas about which truth claims are possible. Archer (1995a) argues that "claims to truth" have particular significance for the CS (see

Willmott 2002: 49). Propositions can be subjected to the law of contradiction (Archer 1996: *xvi*). Ideas can stand in a relationship to other ideas that are either complementary or contradictory. The logical relation of ideas to other ideas has socio-cultural import and thus influences agents' actions (*ibid*: 106). As stated earlier these logical relations exist whether social agents are aware of them or not, or only partly aware of them. It is precisely this differential knowledge "spread" that makes it possible for powerful agents to manipulate others or for contradictory items to be "hidden" from agents (*ibid*: *xvi*). Alternatively, they may be aware of the contradictions but choose to ignore them. The issue of how agents are able to live with contradictions is a matter for empirical research of the relationship between structural, cultural and agential powers and properties.

Archer's theory of culture is based on four ontological propositions:

1. There are logical relationships between components of the CS.
2. There are causal influences exerted by the CS on the S-C level.
3. There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the S-C level.
4. There is elaboration of the CS due to the S-C level modifying current logical relations and introducing new ones (*ibid*: 106).

For ideas to have an influence on the social context, they must have holders (*ibid*: *xvi*). It is the ideas that people hold about things that place them (the agents) in particular situational logics (*ibid*: *xx*). Archer discusses four sets of situational logic in both the structural and cultural domains. In the domain of structure the situational logic relates to the relations between different parts of the structural system. In terms of the cultural domain, the situational logics pertain to the relations between ideas. Situational logics depend on the complementarity or contradictoriness of structural elements or cultural items or ideas (*ibid*: 145). Thus, if we refer to ideas, they can plunge their holders into one or more of the following situational logics: constraining or necessary contradiction; concomitant or necessary complementarity; competitive contradiction or contingent complementarity. In terms of the world of ideas, the second set of situational logics may occur independently or they may be derived. Thus the competitive contradiction may be the outcome of socio-cultural struggles if the proponents of the two ideas A and B are unable to reach a compromise that both sides find acceptable. Similarly, the contingent complementarity

derives from socio-cultural interaction if social actors find the context of ideational systematization and reproduction stifling and proceed to seek new ideas to enrich the cultural arena. I shall proceed to discuss each of the situational logics in turn.

#### **2.4.1 Constraining contradictions**

Contradictory ideas exist in the cultural domain, however, if they are not noticed they have no effect. Thus when contradictory ideas are upheld by two opposing groups, upholding those ideas embroils their holders in the situational logic of the constraining contradiction, for upholding those ideas makes it difficult for S-C groups to function within their action contexts without being confronted by the contradictory influences of ideas. Ideas can exist in contradictory relationship to a range of other ideas, however, for the purposes of explanatory convenience, I shall discuss one idea, A, as standing in a contradictory relationship to another idea, B. The reason why ideas A and B create a problem-filled action context for their supporters is because invoking idea, theory, value etc. A, inevitably also invokes idea, theory or value B. Thus idea A cannot exist within the cultural conspectus without idea B. Since the two ideas are inconsistent, they plunge their holders in a conflict-ridden situation. The conflict can be managed, or resolved, through effecting compromise between the ideas. The process of effecting compromise is a socio-cultural process, involving actors in relation with other actors who have to perform corrective measures or syncretic manoeuvres in order to make the two ideas more consistent with each other. The contradiction cannot go away, but it can be repaired so as to become an apparent contradiction.

If ideas A and B are experienced as a constraining contradiction it is because idea A cannot exist without account being taken of idea B; A depends on part of B for its existence; however the existence of B is problematic for A. The adherents of A recognise that they are dependent on B, but their aim is to influence the proponents of B so that B undergoes shifts to make it more amenable to the purposes of A. Thus the situational logic within which the supporters of A and B find themselves is one of correction that prompts ideational syncretism. Shifts in ideas need to be achieved so that the holders of the two contradictory sets of ideas can find a way to live with the contradictions. This correction may take place in one of three ways:

- (i) Proponents of A can try to get proponents of B to shift their ideas so that B becomes more consistent with A ( $A \leftarrow B$ ). In this case the supporters of A work at developing a version of B that they can live with. Thus B becomes  $B^1$ . If proponents of B accept the new version of their idea, then that is the end of the syncretic moves and life can go on. However, to make  $B^1$  stick requires socio-cultural work. If  $B^1$  is unacceptable, then followers of A have more work to do to achieve a version of B that is acceptable to both groups. These syncretic moves may go through a range of stages until a form of B (say  $B^n$ ) is arrived at that can be made to stick socio-culturally. However, acceptance of the new B may not last and if the new item cannot be made to stick the S-C disquiet could lead to further syncretic endeavours, such as the conceptual stretching that is evident in the next attempt at ideational correction.
- (ii) Mutual correction and compromise between the two ideational positions can take place ( $A \leftrightarrow B$ ). The process of seeking this “sinking of differences” that is the hallmark of syncretism can be a long one that can last for decades, years or months. In some cases various forms of syncretism may occur. This type of syncretism may be regarded as a morphogenetic syncretism as the versions of A and B that are eventually made to stick are no longer the original ideas and it could be the case that two entirely new items have been lodged onto the CS through a process of “concept stretching” (*ibid*: 165).
- (iii) Proponents of B would prefer the kind of syncretism that leads to A becoming more consistent with B, thus ( $A \rightarrow B$ ). This situation ensues when various attempts at the reinterpretation of A have failed and have been countered by adapted versions of B that have thus sustained the constraining contradiction. Thus the followers of B are able to force those partial to A to adjust their thinking so that idea A becomes  $A^1$ . Since supporters of A are not prepared to abandon A, then several versions of A may be worked through before a workable solution is found and ideational unification is achieved.

The direction of the correction is dependent on a range of factors, including the nature and level of the material resources available to the proponents of the various positions and the

power that the holders of the various ideas wield. These factors influence to various degrees the bargaining power held by the various groups of agents.

Successive attempts at syncretism lead to ideational shifts through the various forms of syncretism. According to Archer (*ibid*: 168), “syncretism is often a rolling stone rather than a fixed resting place providing shelter for adherents to A”. If after a series of attempts syncretism is not achieved, the social agents may decide to desert the cultural arena in pursuit of a different context that they find more congenial since no one is forced to stay the course of the syncretic endeavour. Or they may pursue their belief, theory, value, etc to the exclusion of the contradictory element. Multiple desertions have aggregate effects. In addition, those agents who may choose to desert the cultural arena may have honed their skills of defending their beliefs, theories, arguments, etc. The longer the attempted syncretism lasts, the more discontented agents may grow. The result is increasing schismatism and sectarianism; thus ever-increasing socio-cultural unrest. In that case, what emerges from the constraining contradiction is growing pluralism at the CS level through the counter-actualization of the rival idea, B, and at the S-C level a cleavage forms. If the idea grows to fruition and the proponents assert their viewpoint in opposition to idea A, then a competitive contradiction emerges. (For a more extensive discussion of constraining contradictions, see *ibid*: 148 – 153; 154 – 157; 158 - 170)

In this case study, aspects of MS theory are experienced as contradictory to MP. However, since it is a department of journalism and media studies the two courses have to co-exist. This co-existence is problematic for MP lecturers as well as for students (see 6.3.1, 8.7.4 – 8.7.6).

#### **2.4.2 Competitive contradictions**

When a competitive contradiction derives from a constraining contradiction then the situational logic is one of elimination. In other words the social groups have moved beyond trying to effect a compromise between the various ideas. Now their aim is to eliminate the contradictory idea from the cultural conspectus so that their idea becomes the only salient one. The way in which rival ideas fight for prime position is through the supporters of idea B launching an attack on idea A. A process of debate ensues. This is contra to the process of negotiation and discussion that was the hallmark of the constraining contradiction where the

outcome sought was a sinking of differences rather than an accentuation of such distinctions. A process ensues whereby the proponents of B aim at discrediting idea A through pointing out all its negative aspects. In this process of devaluation those partial to A assert their own positive features in counter distinction. Those partial to idea A will then launch a counter attack at B. Through this process both ideas are refined and their proponents become highly skilled at promoting their ideas. Instead of the elimination of one of the ideas, what happens is that idea B becomes firmly established within the cultural domain. Elimination is, however, rarely the outcome of the (sometimes vicious) fights that take place where a competitive contradiction if noticed is brought into full socio-cultural awareness through a process of attack and counter attack.

An interesting result of the divergent ideational context is that many people become part of the on-going debate. Some of these agents may get to the point where they attempt to find a syncretic solution to their differences. However, as Archer (*ibid*: 225) warns:

A genuine syncretic solution to a competitive contradiction generally comes from a line of thought or research far removed from the rivalry. Only rarely, and then after substantial creative work, does it emerge from the maelstrom of hostilities and here the least probable outcome is a discovery that the truth lies dead centre.

(See *ibid*: 203 – 209 for a discussion on competitive contradictions.)

There is an on-going debate amongst the lecturers in the department between those partial to a schism between journalism studies and media studies and those who wish to maintain the status quo. A number of MP staff would like the JMS Department to split; thus, they argue, for example, that the current situation where MS and MP are supposed to be taught in an integrated way is not working well, particularly at the lower levels of the degree (see 2.1.4). In addition a split would offer both MP and MS the opportunity to teach the theoretical perspectives they consider appropriate to greater depth. At higher levels of the degree the level of complexity at which both MP and MS can be taught is limited at present. A complete credit in MP in each year of the degree would also ensure that MP lecturers have adequate time to “train” students in their area of specialisation (see 2.1.7.1)

In contrast to the problem-ridden action contexts which result from the contradictions discussed above, the existence of complementarities create problem-free contexts for their followers.

### 2.4.3 Concomitant complementarities

If the ideas held are in a relationship of necessary complementarity to each other it means that idea A is dependent on idea B for its existence. B enhances A and the relationship is mutually beneficial and satisfying for their holders. The action context is experienced as problem-free. Therefore agents will endeavour to strengthen the mutually advantageous relationship through a process of systematization. There may even be a conscious effort to keep new ideas out of the cultural arena as they may threaten the reciprocal relationship. The ideas that exist in the cultural arena are strengthened and systematization occurs through a process of what Archer terms “cultural embroidery” (*ibid*: 158).

Thus socio-culturally agents will aim to reproduce the dominant ideas while discouraging the exploration of new ideas which are seen as threatening the advantageous complementarity of the cultural system. The situational logic for agents is one of protection (*ibid*: 158).

The concomitant complementarity starts when complementary ideas are sought for incorporation into the cultural conspectus. For a time, more and more complementary ideas are incorporated into the CS through a process of systematization, resulting in the whole set of ideas becoming increasingly sophisticated and refined and the distinctions between ideas become finer and more subtle. The vocabulary used becomes very specialised and it becomes a more complex process to capture, describe and manipulate the complex set of ideas. Socio-culturally more and more people are drawn into the cultural fray and eventually it becomes more and more difficult to incorporate new ideas into the complementary set. At this point the original set of complementarities become refined through a process termed “cultural embroidery”. The internal connections between the ideas become refined and it becomes ever more difficult to incorporate new complementary ideas into the conspectus; a process of boundary formation thus ensues – “(t)ight and sophisticated linkages eventually repel innovation because of its disruptive capacity” (*ibid*: 177). Through the situational logic of

protection, rival ideas and challenges to the conspectus are kept out, resulting in cultural morphostasis (*ibid*: 177).

As the ideas, theories, beliefs etc. become more sophisticated and more “dense” it becomes increasingly difficult for new recruits to find their way into the dense conspectus. What emerges then is a cultural élite – a small number of knowledgeable agents and a mass of agents who may not have the resources or wherewithal to stay the course to develop the required specialist knowledge to be able to become part of the élite. There also emerges a group of agents who become disenchanting marginals who will either remain on the margins of the cultural arena or who may become opportunists and scour the cultural system for new complementary ideas. Thus is born a context of what Archer terms “cultural freeplay” where contingent complementarities are sought out by marginals. When they find a complementarity they wish to align themselves with, they may then “migrate” to a new ideational arena. (For more on concomitant complementarities, see *ibid*: 153 – 182).

Some MP lecturers who find some parts of MS theory contradictory have explored journalism specific theory that would complement what they teach in MP. They now argue for enough curriculum time to teach journalism theory. While they do not have that, they insist on students studying their theoretical approaches in addition to the theories that the MS lecturers teach as part of the MS courses (see 8.8).

#### **2.4.4 Contingent complementarities**

The contingent complementarity is the situational logic that conditions action for continuous morphogenesis. Ideas A and B are logically consistent but invoking the one does not necessarily invoke the other. It requires active involvement of cultural agents to perceive the logical complementarity. Archer notes (*ibid*: 219) that “a contingent complementarity is detected (on the derived scenario) because somebody has gone out of their way to look for one and with some idea of what they were looking for”.

Because agents are free to seek and align themselves to new ideas, theories and ideologies, opportunists align themselves with ideas that they are able to integrate into their existing ideational context. Thus these agents do not move away from the “traditional” terrain when

they make connections with contingent ideas and integrate them into the CS (*ibid*: 220). However, new ideas cannot simply be transposed from one context into another; a process of careful ideational synthesis is required. Thus intellectual work is required to enable successful integration of the new ideas. If the synthesis is successful, new specializations are developed since cultural agents elaborate on the complementary ideas and become progressively more absorbed in the new ideas. A result is increased specialization and the institutionalization of new cultural items. According to Archer "... the sequence of exploration-specialization-institutionalization appears generic to the contingent complementarity as it stems from the successful synthetic endeavours of those first detecting it who then seek formal recognition for their achievements" (*ibid*: 263).

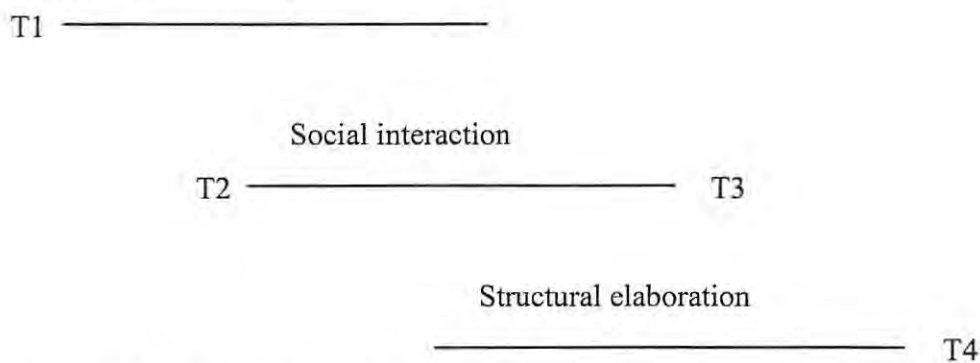
Different marginals align themselves to different ideas and thus sectionalism may result at the socio-cultural level if there are too many divergent specializations among agents. The range of ideas that exist to choose from is attractive for those who are not part of the cultural élite since they offer the promise of more reward than if agents were to remain on the margins of the CS (*ibid*: 224). When the élites become aware of the threat to the cultural density they try to filter ideas, but once ideas have become part of the CS they have forever changed it and "choice replaces certainty" (*ibid*: 224). As Archer notes, "... the contingent complementarity is our only example of *unremitting* morphogenesis from the four concepts examined" (*ibid*: 267). In the case of JMS, new areas of practice and study emerge as new technologies make available new avenues for producing the news. The use of cellular telephone technology, for example, has enabled the emergence of "mobile news" as a field of study and practice. (For more on contingent complementarities, see *ibid*: 219 – 224).

## 2.5 The morphogenetic process

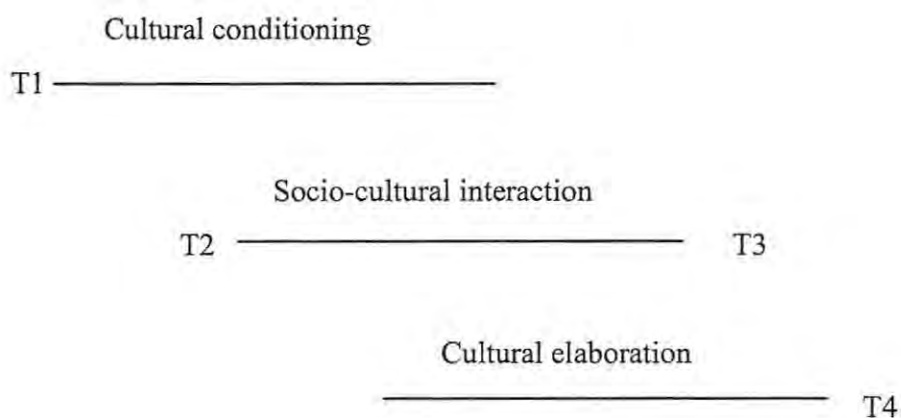
Morphogenesis is a theory about change – structural, cultural, social and agential change. Archer delineates three distinct 'moments' in the process of social change or reproduction. The first stage denotes the start of the process ( $T^1$ , where T stands for time) (Archer 1995aa: 89).  $T^1$  is the structural or cultural context into which agents are born or into which they enter. This situation is not of their making, but it is the context that *conditions the actions* of these agents. *Social interaction* happens during the time period  $T^2$  to  $T^3$  (*ibid*: 90). It is during this time phase that social agents are able to have an influence on social conditions within the

constraints or enablements presented through their vested interests, bargaining power, material conditions and so on. Whether change or reproduction ensues from the social interaction depends on the interplay between structural/cultural and social integration or conflict. T4 is *the outcome* of the social interaction and it is also the start of the new T1 and thus forms the conditioning influences of the next cycle of morphogenesis (*ibid*: 90). The figures below show the influence of time across the various stages of the morphogenetic processes for structure, culture and agency.

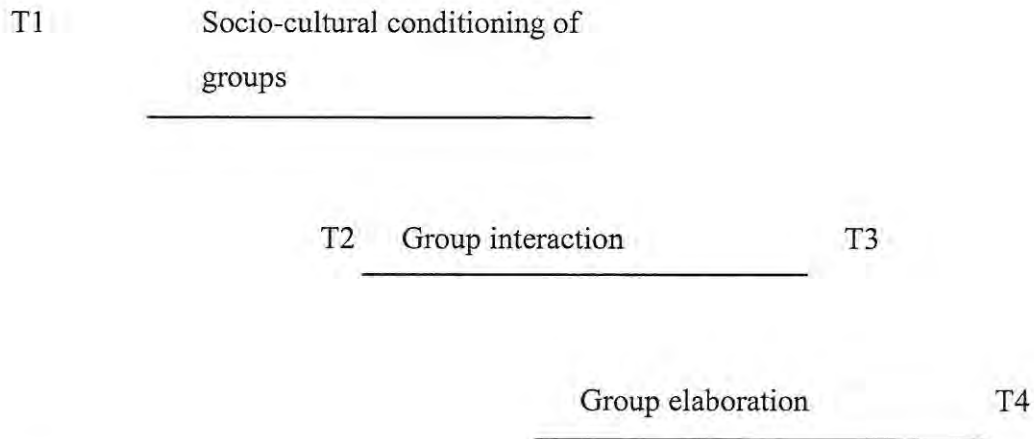
Structural conditioning



**Figure 3: *The morphogenesis of structure* (*ibid*: 193)**



**Figure 4: *The morphogenesis of culture* (*ibid*: 193)**



**Figure 5: *The morphogenesis of agency* (ibid: 194)**

Structure, culture and agency operate in a dialectical relationship with one another and morphogenesis takes place on a number of levels. Archer (*ibid: 74*) describes three levels of morphogenesis: there is morphogenesis, when social interaction results in certain changes at the structural or cultural systems level. Thus social interaction has particular results. Double morphogenesis refers to the process of the development of agency from primary agency to corporate agency. Agency is always referred to in the plural. Agents are part of social groups (see 2.3.2).

Primary agents are part of social groups who are unable to articulate or act on their needs. This could be as a result of their demographic profile, such as not having the material or other kind of resources to change their social position. Double morphogenesis indicates the process where primary agency changes into corporate agency, i.e. when groups are in a position to articulate and act on their needs. People have the capacity to develop or change their ideas (and concomitantly their positions) because of their reflexive ability and creativity. Even though agents may be ‘born’ or ‘thrown’ into a social context, the personal emergent property of reflexivity provides the impetus for wanting to seek changes when the current social context is less than desirable.

Corporate agents, because of their membership of particular groups may have developed or gained the capacity to fight for a particular ideational position or may have acquired the material resources or the bargaining power to be able to take a position and fight for that position within a particular social context (*ibid: 260*). Individuals who occupy particular

social roles are referred to as actors. A third process of morphogenesis is the process of the morphogenesis of individuals from being corporate agents into actors who have the capacity to occupy and imbue a position in a particular way (*ibid*: 225).

The processes that happen across the time period T1 to T4 are not distinct from one another. They overlap since, for example, agency is influenced by and acts on structures or cultures in an ongoing way. However, analytical dualism allows the social researcher to isolate the different processes in order to be able to analyse the extent of the influences of structure, culture and agency on the change process (*ibid*: 166 – 168).

Morphogenesis is the process of change within and across the three sets of emergent properties that make up the social world, viz. SEPs, CEPs and PEPs. These three sets of emergent properties and powers operate continuously in society and they interrelate all the time. However, they are also relatively autonomous of one another and therefore may not operate in harmony. SEPs, CEPs and PEPs meet in the realm of social relations. Analytical dualism (see 2.3.1 and 2.3.1.1) enables the analysis of the various morphogenetic cycles to take place independently and for the confluence between them to be explained (*ibid*: 192).

To summarise: the morphogenetic processes take place in three cycles across the three sets of emergent properties. T<sup>1</sup> is the context of social, cultural or socio-cultural conditioning. T<sup>2</sup> to T<sup>3</sup> denotes social interaction which takes place against a background and within a context which was formed prior to the interaction. However, the interaction has the generative potential of transforming or maintaining the status quo. T<sup>4</sup> is posterior to social interaction and denotes the social, cultural or agential elaboration. As noted above, T<sup>4</sup> then forms the context that conditions the next morphogenetic cycle and presents the next set of agents with either an enabling or a constraining context within which to operate (*ibid*: 89 – 90).

### **2.5.1 System and social integration**

Morphogenesis is possible because of the invariance of system and social integration (*ibid*: 171 – 172). Following Lockwood (1964), Archer shows that social systems sometimes operate together smoothly and in a well integrated manner; at other times, though, there is disjuncture between the levels of integration (order or conflict) within (or across) the

system(s) with integration at the social level. In the words of Willmott (2002: 32), “In short, social integration refers to the orderly or conflictual relations between actors; system integration refers to the orderly or conflictual relations between the parts of any social system”. Situations can arise when various elements of social systems are in conflict with one another. However, the conditions within the social system are not necessarily mirrored within the society. So there can be a context of system integration, but social unrest, or vice versa (Archer 1995a: 171).

		High	Low	
Social integration	High	Necessary complementarity	Necessary contradiction	Morphostasis
	Low	Contingent complementarity	Necessary complementarity	Morphogenesis

**Figure 6: When morphostasis vs. when morphogenesis (ibid: 295)**

When system and social integration co-vary, society changes little or is reproduced. However when, for example, social systems operate smoothly, but there is unrest amongst the people within the system or there is conflict between some parts of the system or there is malintegration at both the systems and the social levels, then the conditions are set for transformation or morphogenesis. It is through the analytical separation of the parts and the people that it becomes possible to see how the structural and social conditions influence one another.

Archer’s morphogenetic approach provides the ontological grounding and the “methodological specification” (Willmott 2002:32, Archer 1995aa: 172) for Lockwood’s theory to be applied to the examination of social change.

### 2.5.2 Structural and cultural conditioning and the interplay of agency

Structure and culture are said to have causal efficacy, however, “agents are the only efficient causes in social life” (*ibid*: 195). It is only through the actions of agents that the constraining or enabling powers of structures and culture can be realised. Agents, through their ability to reason about and reflect on their context and through their powers of creativity are able to accept, reject, resist, or circumvent the effects of structure and culture.

The effects of structure and culture depend amongst other things on “their reception and realization by people” (*ibid*: 195); thus structural and cultural conditionings are mediated through agents. In their activities agents come up against social and cultural forces and they exercise the powers of their agency (PEPs) in confronting the constraints or enablements of structure of culture. Agents are, of course, differentially endowed with the capacities, either material or ideational, to deal with structure or culture. Thus some agents are more able to resist constraints and to forge ways through or around constraints than others through material power, the degree of vested interest in the context or through the knowledge they have of the context or through their own powers of imagination.

The structural context into which agents come, results from the actions of previous actors (or, if one is following Sibeon (2004), of those self-same actors, but in an earlier time) and thus it presents real or objective constraints for action. Similarly actors are confronted by a set of dominant ideas, beliefs, values, practices, etc which limits the ideas and practices, for example, that can be transformed or ignored whatever the case may be. An important element in the conditioning context relates to the way it is conceptualized by agents. Sayer (2000) argues that our understanding of the world is context dependent. Because of the different life histories of different agents, they conceptualise the world differently and therefore are able to envisage different possibilities of acting within or upon the world they encounter (Sayer, also Archer 1995aa: 197). Social or cultural conditions therefore can be misconstrued or misunderstood or misinterpreted. Thus the way things are is independent of the way they are experienced or described by people (*ibid*: 197).

People possess the emergent power of intentionality which allows them to develop projects. It is the relationship between the projects of agents and the objective realities of the structural

and cultural conditions that are either constraining or enabling for agents. The positions within which agents find themselves in relation to the structures and culture explain why some conditions might be constraining for some and enabling for others, since some positions are imbued with greater powers (material or ideational) than others. Thus structures and cultures condition the context for action in different ways for agents who are differently placed; thus creating different reasons and directions for potential action (*ibid*: 195 – 200).

In addition, certain projects that people conceive of might be congruent with structural or cultural conditions in which case the environment will be enabling, or they may be incongruent resulting in a constraining context. Thus structures and cultures can enable or frustrate projects. A project of one group may also be frustrated by another group who may find the project threatening to their own promotive interests. Projects may therefore be socio-culturally frustrated too. According to Archer (*ibid*: 199), “the generative powers of the ‘parts’ and the ‘people’ are both necessary conditions for the development in question, but only together do they supply the sufficient conditions for the accomplishment of the project”.

Structure and culture condition or shape social contexts and therefore agents’ actions, in multiple ways. The first of these is what Archer terms agents’ *involuntaristic placement* in social contexts. The social world and particular social contexts, from macro to micro contexts, (*ibid*: 201) are the results of the intended and unintended consequences of past actions. Thus the position into which one is born, or the social context into which one moves when one changes jobs is as it is and not what current agents choose it to be.

(Structural and cultural emergents) account for what there is (materially and culturally) to be distributed and also for the shape of such distributions; for the nature of the extant role array, the proportions of positions available at any time and the advantages/disadvantages associated with them; for the institutional configuration present and for those second order emergent properties of compatibility or incompatibility, that is whether the respective operations of institutions are matters of obstructions or assistance to one another. (Archer 1995a: 201).

Archer (*ibid*: 201) notes that this is how things are throughout life. If one changes context, one is just exchanging one set of affordances and constraints for another. Even where agents do voluntarily act to influence their context, this does not change the conditioning effects of structure and culture. Once within contexts and within particular roles and positions,

structural and cultural conditions influence the context and aspects of the context may change. In addition, what is termed “second order emergent properties, relations between institutions or organizations” impact by providing either congruent or incongruent conditions for action or influence (*ibid*: 202).

Through the involuntaristic placement in social contexts agents acquire *vested interests* attached to their situations. Agents may have vested interests in either maintaining or changing their contexts based on their involuntaristic positioning. For Archer (*ibid*: 203) “vested interests are embedded in all socially structured positions” and each context and position has material and ideational distributions that imbue the context and thus the positions and the agents who hold those positions with advantages or disadvantages which they may wish to maintain or work towards modifying. Archer (1995: 204) quotes Porpora (1989) who argues that “actors are motivated to act in their interests, which are a function of social position”. Porpora (*ibid*) observes that actors do not always act in their own best interests and that if they do not, they suffer the *opportunity costs* of their actions.

A further way in which structure and culture condition action is through the opportunity costs attached to actions. People who experience their context as positive in relation to their vested interests would want to act to maintain their current conditions or to improve aspects of it in order to enhance their interests. Similarly, when agents experience conditions that are perceived as negative, they will want to eradicate those aspects that are deemed to exert damaging effects. Agents are therefore not determined to act in their best interests but they pay the price if they do not (Archer 1995aa: 205). Different opportunity costs accrue for the same course of action for those differently placed in society or in a particular context. That is why people differently placed make very different choices relating to the same issue. Structure thus conditions decision-making (*ibid*: 207). Archer puts it thus: “... different groups have different degrees of freedom and face differentially stringent constraints when they contemplate the same project from their different positions” (*ibid*: 207). In addition, she states, that “the connections between the antecedent setting of life chances, the vested interests associated with them, and the opportunity costs predisposing towards different projects can account for divergent social trends amongst those variously situated” (*ibid*: 208).

According to Archer (*ibid*: 208) the conditioning context does not force people to act, but instead forms part of the reason why people act in certain ways and not others. People act as a result of “the confluence of the powers of the ‘parts’ and those of the ‘people’ (*ibid*: 209). Thus agents, through their reflexive capacities and their capacity for self-monitoring weigh up structural and cultural conditions in order to choose the most appropriate reason for a subsequent course of action; thus agents balance the material and the ideational or the normative (*ibid*: 212), the structural and the cultural in their decision-making processes. People interpret their context, and they are constrained in their interpretations by the prices they pay based on their assessment of situations. It is therefore fair to say, as Archer (*ibid*: 209) does, that “the objective distribution of costs and benefits conditions both interpretation and action”. Each decision has trade-offs. The decision either accrues benefits to or creates impediments for the agent. The context delimits the *degrees of interpretive freedom* afforded agents; they are constrained by the material costs and benefits to vested interests. Archer notes also that agents are not influenced only by material benefits or constraints and sometimes forego benefits or vested interests for moral or altruistic reasons. For Willmott (2002:15, acknowledging Archer 1995aa; Buckley 1998 and Porpora 1989) “stringent constraints versus degrees of freedom attach to structured positions; they are objective and have to be weighed by actors. The reasons for carrying out one’s duties are objectively structured and place a premium on their execution and a price on their disavowal.”

In the context of curriculum policy implementation Willmott (2002:17) further argues that “any discussion of [curriculum policy implementation] must make reference to the differential degrees of bargaining power that derive from prior structured interests and their interplay over time”.

A range of influences condition the structural and cultural contexts for agents. It is not only *first order emergent properties* (Archer 1995aa: 325), that is, the results of past actions on structure and culture, but also second order emergent properties, (the results of the results) that condition action in different ways for different sections of the population. The particular course of action that is decided upon depends on the combination of those influences that condition action. The way in which emergent properties impact on different sections of the population may in fact result in polarisation of the population since the conditional influences

impact the vested interests of different people in different ways. Thus the structural and cultural conditions may guide people towards different directions for action.

*Second order relations* within and between structures and cultures can be coherent or riddled with tensions (*ibid*: 188, 325). These relations can be of a necessary or contingent nature; and they can be either complementary or constraining. This means that elements or components can be in a relation of contingent contradiction; necessary contradiction; necessary complementarity or contingent complementarity. Thus agents who are embroiled in structural or cultural contexts find themselves in the midst of the situational logics resulting from the relations between structural or cultural elements. When agents are in a context where the structures are in a relation of necessary complementarity, then there is no need to want to change the way things operate. Thus necessary complementarity conditions morphostasis. In all the other cases, there may be reasons for agents to move to change the conditions. Thus the situations which agents find themselves in provide “strategic guidance” (*ibid*: 216) for action.

There are also *third order emergent properties* that pertain to those relations between structures and cultures and which are, of course, mediated through agency (*ibid*: 225, 228, 325). I noted above that structural and cultural integration do not necessarily co-vary. There can thus be high levels of structural integration co-existing with low levels of cultural integration or vice versa. Such conditions of disjuncture are ideal for processes of morphogenesis to be set in motion. Archer (*ibid*: 216) argues that “it is possible to show how quite distinctive *situational logics*, which predispose agents towards *specific courses of action* for the promotion of their interests, are created by the relations within and between the various SEPs and CEPs”. Different situational logics predispose agents towards different kinds of strategic action in order to serve their interests. Thus they can be moved towards positions of compromise (concession), competition, protection (defending) or opportunism (*ibid*: 217).

	Contradictions		Complementarities	
	Necessary	Contingent	Necessary	Contingent
<b>Situational logic</b>	Correction	Elimination	Protection	Opportunism
<b>CEPs</b>				
CS level	Syncretism	Pluralism	Systematization	Specialization
S-C level	Unification	Cleavage	Reproduction	Sectionalism
<b>SEPs</b>				
SS level	Compromise	Competition	Integration	Differentiation
S-I level	Containment	Polarisation	Solidarity	Diversification

**Figure 7: Cultural and structural morphogenesis / morphostasis at the systemic and social levels** (Archer 1995aa: 303)

The following explanations constitute ideal situations when there are either perfect conjunctions or disjunctions between structure and culture. It seldom happens that these ideal situations exist, since as in most cases, in-between conditions will obtain.

### **2.5.2.1 The conjunction between structural morphostasis and cultural morphostasis**

Archer (*ibid*: 309) notes that this kind of conjunction was the origin of the myth of cultural integration. She argues that cultural morphostasis signifies the power of systematization or syncretism at the level of the CS and the absence of oppositional ideas amongst a unified population. This makes the ideational context morphostatic. At the same time structural morphostasis is the result of a “monolithic form of social organization with a superimposition of élites and heavy concentration of resources” (*ibid*: 310) which prevents the formation of opposition. The subjugation of part of the population results in the continuation of the hegemonic structural arrangement. This situation is normally long-lasting since there are no strong alternative ideas for malcontents to adopt in the cultural conspectus. As such the static ideational context thus represses any possibility of opposition to the structural context.

Similarly, within the structural context, there are no marginal groupings ready to latch on to new or oppositional ideas in the CS. Therefore, primary agents will remain thus, while the structural élite only have the dominant cultural discourse at their disposal. As a result the

“ideational environment (is) highly conducive to structural maintenance” (*ibid*: 311). In turn, “structural morphostasis (through the control of marginality and subordination of the masses) in its turn produces an organizational environment which contributes greatly to cultural maintenance” (*ibid*). What is required for change is disjuncture between the CS and the SS which fuels social action towards change (*ibid*: 309 – 312)

### ***2.5.2.2 The disjunction between cultural morphostasis and structural morphogenesis***

Within this kind of situation there is a single very powerful cultural agent amongst a number of corporate agents with material interests which leads them towards divergent structural aims. Here, as in the above scenario, the CS remains hegemonic and the cultural élite succeeds in making the dominant ideas stick through systematization. There is control of the ideational context which prevents marginals from challenging the prevailing cultural hegemony. The structural system, however, is in the process of undergoing shifts independently of what happens in the cultural system (this can happen through the redistribution of resources, shifts in political alliances and so on). Thus, where culture and structure intersect (through social interaction) there is now a diversification of material interest groups who work towards advancing their cause through social interaction by means of, for example, “self-definition, self-assertion and self-advancement” (*ibid*: 313). In the meantime, the cultural context acts to retard the moves towards structural change. Cultural élites will try to persuade social groups or otherwise assert their cultural power to ensure resistance to structural changes; however, this will only have an effect on marginal groupings. Of course the realisation soon dawns on groups gaining assertion that the prevailing cultural context is not to their advantage, since they gain no material interest or status from keeping any cultural attachment to current ideas; in fact they have achieved material gain and status independently from the CS. However, at this point there are no countervailing ideas within the cultural conspectus, while there are negative consequences for upholding the dominant cultural ideas when comparisons are made with competitive groups. The unavailability of cultural alternatives (either through concealment or containment) forces the new élites towards syncretic moves. At this point the stronger SS still manages to sustain hegemony.

However, if the contradictions inherent in the CS come to light, then the new élite may either force a syncretic move that is to their advantage, or they may then attempt a process of counter-actualization of a new discourse. What then ensues is a new situational logic of elimination. Eventually cultural elaboration may result. Cultural elaboration will occur at the intersection between social interaction and socio-cultural interaction when a new material interest group introduces new ideas. Should they be successful in upholding the new ideas, this results in the weakening of the unification of the population. Thus, where ideas traditionally were reproduced almost without question, there is now a situation where ideas have to be actively legitimated. The active promotion of new ideas may then result in cleavage and sectionalism in the cultural domain. This kind of cultural elaboration requires the stimulation of structural changes in the first instance. New cultural groupings then form through the advancement of new, articulate corporate agents who are able to advance their cause (*ibid*: 313 – 315).

### ***2.5.2.3 The disjunction between cultural morphogenesis and structural morphostasis***

In this situation one powerful structural agent is confronted by a number of cultural agents who have come to hold diverse ideational positions. Thus, while cultural morphogenesis is in process, structure remains constant. This situation ensues when cultural groupings have, through processes of internal dynamics, reached the point of pluralism and sectionalization. The static structural context resists shifts, as a result of the stable distribution of material resources, despite the morphogenetic activity in the CS. Initially, the hegemonic structural organization would have resisted the introduction of diversification in the cultural conspectus. However, when the diverse groupings succeed in disrupting the existing CS it is because they have enough material strength and power to sustain the diversification of ideas. However, the emergence of these new ideas will initially be retarded by the powerful structural influences.

But, as Archer (*ibid*: 316) notes, given the fact that the two domains are relatively autonomous, “structural influences can restrain the emergence of new material interest groups, but they can do no more than retard the development of new ideal interest groups”. The diversification of ideas impacts on the S-C level; more primary agents are drawn into the competition between ideas and the previously homogeneous population now becomes one where various new corporate agents actively promote their ideas resulting in increasing

cultural diversification. The result is cultural unrest. This was previously resisted by the strong structural organisation. The new context is divisive and the new material interest groups present a threat to structural stability also since the people now have the ability to influence social institutions. This is because, as Archer puts it, “cultural actors are also structural subjects” (*ibid*: 317). Established social groups may attach themselves to new ideas if these prove to serve their interests. Competitive contradictions introduce cleavage and results in choices to be made, since not all ideas will be equally congruent with the current material interests and structural configurations. “Ideational change stimulates social regrouping” (*ibid*: 318). (For Archer’s discussion of this, see *ibid*: 315 – 318).

As I explain in Chapter 4, the HE context in South Africa has been changing rapidly since the run-up to the democratic dispensation. Some of the shifts include a new structural dispensation for the HE sector (for example, there were multiple mergers of institutions and as indicated, previously technikons became universities of technology). There were new expectations with regard to the structuring of university curricula and the university system is becoming a more massified one. Massification means that the student body is more diverse than ever before. This demands different approaches to teaching and learning. This latter shift is difficult for an élite, introjected institution such as Rhodes University. However, there are a number of powerful agents who are working hard to shift the culture of the institution. There is thus at present a disjuncture between structure and culture within the institution.

#### ***2.5.2.4 The conjunction between cultural morphogenesis and structural morphogenesis***

Here cultural and structural morphogenesis happens at the same time. Archer notes that this is a highly unlikely state of affairs, and thus represents an ideal type. It is more likely that change is initiated in one of the two domains and then soon after takes effect in the other. Thus, as is the case with the previous two, there are normally temporal discontinuities between the two phases of change (*ibid*: 319). This then, can be the resultant configuration for the outcome of either of the previous two configurations.

Within this configuration primary agency is transformed into “new, varied and more powerful promotive interest groups” (*ibid*: 318). Thus the numbers of corporate agents who are able to organise and articulate their interests increase, both within the SS and the CS

simultaneously. A range of material interest group scour the environment for multiple ideas with the aim of finding the one or more ideas that will best suit the structural arrangements they have in mind. At the same time, ideational interest groups are searching for material interest groups to take on their ideas. Within this fictional set-up there will be multiple ideas taken up by multiple material interest groups. If one of the powerful groups takes on an idea, they would then aim to integrate other interest groups into their structural domain. If one group manages to gain ascendancy, this means that other groups will suffer. It is likely that the material interest group, which integrates the new ideas, find the holders of those ideas to be akin to itself in several respects such as class, status and so on thereby accounting for its readiness to sponsor the ideas in question. What will ensue is a wooing of ideational groups or material interest groups who are less likely to want to give support. Processes of structural mobilization and cultural accommodation will result and “social interaction and socio-cultural interaction reinforce one another ... fostering intensified morphogenesis in both domains. According to Archer (*ibid*: 322) “social interaction and S-C reinforces one another, leading to morphogenesis after intense competition, diversification, conflict and reorganisation in the two domains”. However, she asserts that the process is not never-ending since the very fact of morphogenesis suggests that alliances have been forged resulting in a new conditional context.

The resultant context after the co-terminus morphogenesis depends on the spread of resources and the nature of social relations as well as the nature of the ideas accepted by the successful groupings (*ibid*), thus creating a particular social logic that agents have to confront. What also needs to be remembered is that even though much of the change processes occurred at the same time, each structure and cultural item still remain relatively autonomous and continue to be so during subsequent cycles. (See *ibid*: 318 – 324).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed aspects of Archer’s social realist approach to the analysis of social change. The theory enables an analysis of the interplay between structure, culture and agency in the process of social change or stasis. I have noted some examples of how the theory may be applied to the case study reported on in this dissertation. Archer’s theory is, of course, much more complex than this limited exposition of it allowed, however I have only selected

those aspects of the framework that I consider to apply to this case study. In the analysis of the case study of collaborative curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS at Rhodes University I use Archer's social realist explanatory methodology in conjunction with Bernstein's theories on curriculum and knowledge and Maton's extension of Bernstein's pedagogic device, *viz.*, the epistemic device. I now turn to this in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### Bernstein's theories of cultural transmission

#### 3.1 Introduction

Archer's (1995a, 1996) social realist theory of change with its relational depth ontology enables the researcher / social theorist to make sense of the relations between structure, culture and agency to describe the processes of social change or conditions that foster stasis. Archer (1995a: 303-324; 1996: 148 – 224) maps the kinds of relations between structure, culture and agency that lead to different change or stasis scenarios. The analysis of context-specific discourses and practices and “the implications for the relations between positions and the strategies for agents” within particular contexts (Maton 2005: 48) requires the use of substantive theories in conjunction with Archer's meta-theoretical framework. This is necessary also to enable the development of explanations of the emergence and nature of context-specific identities and how these condition action.

I have decided to use Bernstein's theory of cultural transmission with Archer's framework since the former provides “an external language of description for unambiguously conceptualising similarity, variation and change” within pedagogic contexts (Maton 2005: 64). Maton & Muller argue that “Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing enable not only the thick description prized in much educational research but also thick explanation” (2007: 17). Archer's explanatory methodology offers a generic theory of change and therefore requires an additional language of description and explanation that is context specific to the empirical context under investigation (Archer 1995a; Maton 2005). For my research it was necessary to find a language to describe “similarity, variation and change” within curriculum development and in relation to the knowledge domains of journalism and media studies in a higher education context. In this regard, Bernstein's theory of the transmission of culture and knowledge and Maton's legitimation code theory (LCT) which develops Bernstein's theory of knowledge (see 3.5 below) offer rich languages of description and explanation with a highly generative capacity.

As is the case with Archer's sociology of change, Bernstein's is a relational theory with a depth ontology grounded in critical realism (Moore 2004). In addition, Moore (2004) argues



that Bernstein's work is grounded in a social realist epistemology. Maton & Muller (2007: 14) recognise that "Bernstein dug beneath the empirical features of education to explore their underlying structuring principles (most famously in terms of codes) and then excavated further to analyse what generates these principles". Thus Bernstein (1996; 2000) was interested in exposing the underlying mechanisms of cultural reproduction and transmission.

Archer's theoretical framework described above, makes visible the stratification, differentiation and interrelation of contexts, agents and agencies when analysing change processes. Within an analytic framework that differentiates social structure (including social systems), culture and agency, Bernstein's work focuses primarily on the domain of cultural transmission. While explicating the processes of cultural transmission, Bernstein describes the relations within and between structure, culture and agency. I agree with Maton's (2005: 64) contention that Bernstein, in his theory of cultural transmission, emphasises the significance of the interaction of structural relations and agency for understanding social practices. However, Bernstein's analysis of agency is less nuanced and stratified than Archer's. With Archer's (1995a, 1996, 2000) morphogenetic approach it is possible to show how agents' emergent properties and powers can enable them to act on or within a structural or cultural context in order to effect change or create stability.

Wheelahan (2007) asserts that Bernstein's focus was on the social relation to knowledge. She argues, though, that the epistemic relation is equally important for access to disciplinary knowledge. According to Wheelahan (2007a: 2):

Bernsteinian theory and critical realism constitute complementary approaches that together provide insights into the structures of knowledge, the content of knowledge, and the relationship between knowers and knowledge, which includes exploration of the social conditions under which knowledge is produced, and the extent to which these processes are mediated by power.

In a critique of Bernstein's work, Archer (1995b) argues that Bernstein neglects the role of the educational system in his theorising. She posits that his focus seems to be on micro interactions within schools or classrooms and that he does not seem to transcend the micro to theorise how micro processes are conditioned by and in turn condition the macro systems level (*ibid.*). Bernstein, however, argues that his theory "attempts to integrate macro and micro levels of analysis, that is, interactional levels, institutional levels and macro-

institutional levels” (2000: xvi). Maton & Muller (2007: 15) observe that Bernstein’s theory “is driven by an abiding interest in social order and the nature of symbolic control, one reaching from the macro-structure of society to the micro-level of individual consciousness”.

Archer (1995b) furthermore criticises Bernstein for not paying enough attention to the role of politics and therefore conflict in cultural transmission. She argues that his theory regards micro contexts as being permeable and therefore allowing especially dominant class decisions about educational codes to filter down into schools without contestation. For Archer (*ibid.*), Bernstein’s theory creates the impression that there is a direct correspondence between macro-level ideas about instruction or curriculum and what happens in institutions and that teachers merely transmit the complementarity that exists between systemic and institutional ideas and structures. “Given his insistence on the importance of social conflict and power relations, it is thus rather surprising to find that the answer is not in terms of a struggle for educational control and that no politics of education is developed at *any* level whatsoever” (Archer 1995b:216). This is clearly a mis-reading of Bernstein.

Countering this critique, Bernstein (1995) cites a variety of research where the politics of cultural transmission is explicated. Within the South African context Wilmot’s (2006) research exposes the political struggles that ensue in the process of state educational policy implementation. Bernstein (1996, 2000) emphasises that where decisions about cultural transmission are made, ideology comes into play. He argues that pedagogic fields, i.e. the fields of production, recontextualization and reproduction are arenas of struggle and that the struggle is over control of the pedagogic device, since those who control the device are able to control what is transmitted and how.

Maton (2000) argues similarly that struggles occur over ownership of the epistemic device (a corollary to the pedagogic device) (3.5, 3.6 below) and that those who control this device can decide who is allowed to produce new knowledge and how they may do this. The research that is reported in this study demonstrates another example of a conflict-ridden struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device in the context of the revision of a curriculum for a professionally-focused journalism and media studies degree course.

Archer (1995b) also argues that Bernstein's work is overly theoretical and that it presents the English national education system as the norm rather than developing a comparative sociology of education. However, it is not difficult to counter these critiques as there exists a large corpus of empirical work from a diverse range of educational systems that show the wide applicability and thus potential for comparison of the theory (see, for example the work of Morais and Neves (Portugal, 2001)), Vitale (France, 2001), Singh (Australia, 2002) and Tsatsaroni, A., Ravanis, K., & Falaga, A. (Greece, 2003) for examples of the wider applicability of Bernstein's work). For Maton (2005) one of the strengths of Bernstein's theoretical framework is its generative capacity in that it enables researchers to theorise what they find in empirical contexts, but also to theorise beyond the empirical to consider possibilities not yet realised; that is, to think the "not yet thought" and to theorise how contexts might change, i.e. what modalities of the code could develop.

Despite Archer's (1995b) criticism of Bernstein's work, a number of key theorists have shown that his work is indeed underpinned by a critical realist orientation. It has also been shown that Bernstein's work is in keeping with a social realist approach to knowledge.

In the next section I explain those aspects of Bernstein's theory that are applicable to my study

### **3.2 Bernstein's theory of pedagogic relations and transmission**

Bernstein's (1975: 205) theory of pedagogy is used to analyse the structure of "three message systems": the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Over nearly four decades he continually developed his theory to greater levels of abstraction so that it has become able to generate explanations about a wide range of contexts. In his final publications (1999, 2000) he developed his theory of knowledge and disciplinary structures.

Underpinning his theoretical work (1975, 1996, 2000) is the examination and explication of the way power and control function within pedagogic settings and pedagogic relations. The pedagogic relationship is not limited to relationships within school contexts. Bernstein argues that "the models ... should be able to describe the organisational, discursive and transmission practices in all pedagogic agencies and show the process whereby selective acquisition takes place" (2000: 3). For Bernstein (*ibid.*) pedagogic practices include "relationships between

doctor and patient, the relationship between psychiatrist and the so-called mentally ill, the relationship between architects and planners”.

The curriculum planning process within an academic department can be seen as a pedagogic context since it is a process where “organisational, discursive and transmission” practices about a disciplinary field and its curriculum practices are negotiated. Thus, as in other pedagogic settings, the curriculum planning context is a site for the play of ideology and particularly the site for the struggle of control of what Maton (2000; 2005) calls the legitimation device. The legitimation device combines Bernstein’s pedagogic device and Maton’s legitimation codes. The pedagogic code is used primarily to analyse how existing knowledge is recontextualized and transmitted, while legitimation codes are used in the analysis of, in the first instance, the field of the production of new knowledge. However, they can be employed in fractal analysis. The legitimation device will be discussed in greater detail below. In what Bernstein (1975, 1996, 2000) calls his theory of educational codes he introduces the principles that influence the nature of pedagogic relations and curriculum, and later his theory of knowledge. In the next section I shall explain the concepts of classification and framing which form the basis of his theory.

### **3.2.1 Classification and framing**

*Classification* refers to the degree to which boundaries between categories such as agencies, agents, structures or practices are maintained; while *framing* refers to the “context in which knowledge is transmitted or received” (Bernstein, 1971: 205). According to Maton (2005: 48), “classification and framing enable knowledge and practices within higher education to be conceptualised in a non-reductive manner ... they are integral to and exert their own structuring significance on the field”.

Classification can be weak (-) or strong (+). In the university context where the boundaries between disciplines are kept separate, classification is strong. This is the case where there is a clear division between the content of disciplines such as sociology, philosophy and psychology. The disciplines are strongly insulated from other disciplines. Strong classification between categories creates, not only divisions between the content of the discipline but also divisions between those who participate in the various disciplinary

contexts. Thus strong classification creates a strong sense of identity and belonging for agents. When agents have been socialized into particular disciplines, their identity is strongly tied to those disciplines. Where there are attempts to weaken the boundaries between categories, be they knowledge, disciplinary, or even status categories, this may create resistance since it can threaten identities. In recent years there has been a move towards weakening the boundaries between some disciplines towards interdisciplinary studies.

Bernstein (1999, 2000) calls disciplines where classification is strong and where the focus is towards the discipline itself, *singulars*. Sociology, psychology, chemistry and mathematics are examples of singulars. In contradistinction to singulars, he talks about *regions*. With regions the boundaries between disciplines have weakened and knowledge from a range of disciplines has been merged to form a new field. Furthermore, there may be a focus beyond the discipline towards the “market” as is the case in professional disciplines such as management, pharmaceutical sciences and journalism and media studies, amongst others. Here the boundary between the “otherness” or “sacredness” of academic knowledge is no longer being kept separate from the “everyday” or “profane” knowledge of the market or professional practice (1975: 213). The nature of classification has implications for the division of labour in an educational context.

In summary, classification relates to power and to relations between categories. In the research reported on here classification has to do with the curriculum, while framing has to do with pedagogy.

*Framing* refers to control of relations within categories and refers to who controls the various aspects of the pedagogical context. It relates to who makes decisions about the selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria for assessment of the content. As with classification, framing can be strong (+) or weak (-). Where framing is strong, the teacher has control over the various aspects of pedagogy. Where framing is weak, learners have some control over some or all aspects of pedagogy. Or where it is strong, such as within a curriculum development process those academics with PhDs may have more control over what constitutes appropriate curriculum content.

The relative strength of classification and framing vary independently of each other. It is therefore possible to have strong classification and weak framing within a context. However, Maton (2005: 47) notes that although “C and F can vary independently, there are pressures within their realisations to align their relative strengths”. Strong framing is therefore usually accompanied by strong classification.

According to Bernstein (2000: xvii):

Classification strength ( $C^{ie}$ )<sup>5</sup> is the means by which power relations are transformed into specialised discourses, and framing ( $F^{ie}$ ) is the means whereby principles of control are transformed into specialised regulations of interactional discursive practices (pedagogic relations) which attempt to relay a given distribution of power.

The nature of classification and framing may be an area of contention within the pedagogic relation of a curriculum development process and may be strongly influenced by various pedagogic identities. The concept of pedagogic identities will be discussed below; however, in the next section, Bernstein’s notion of knowledge code will first be explained.

### 3.2.2 Knowledge codes

Using the concepts of classification and framing, Bernstein (1996) developed two modalities of the codes in relation to curricula. Where both classification and framing are strong, the result is a collection code curriculum. This means that the boundaries between different disciplines are strong and academics’ identities are tied closely to their disciplinary backgrounds. If, on the other hand, the classification and framing are weak, the result is an integrated code. This means that the boundaries between disciplines are weak and that there is integration between disciplines. In higher education interdisciplinary studies rely on an integrated code. Here the strong disciplinary identities have to shift to the background to make way for an overarching principle on which the integration is based.

The field of journalism and media studies (JMS) is interesting for examining knowledge code modalities. JMS consists of media production (MP) which is the practice component of

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<sup>5</sup> The superscript “ie” indicates that the impetus for the strength of classification or framing may be internal, that is, it may originate from within the field, or it may be external and may have heteronomous origins.

journalism where students learn various journalistic practices such as writing, design, photojournalism, radio journalism and television, and media studies (MS) which is the theoretical component of JMS. Partly because of the university within which this department is situated, the theoretical component of the course has always held a higher status than the practical component. Those who teach the MS courses have, as a result, had higher status than those teaching MP. This has been evident in the way appointments have been made in the past. MP teachers were sought for their practical expertise and not their academic knowledge or status. They often had honours degrees, or qualifications from technikons.

In the past the classification between MS and MP was strong; these two components, although related, were taught separately by different lecturers and often did not relate directly to each other. With MS the classification between different theoretical components of the course has also been strong. Thus MS has operated as a collection code, in which media studies teachers' identities are strongly tied to their disciplinary backgrounds, which may differ<sup>6</sup>. Within the MP stream, the classification between writing, editing, photojournalism and design has been weaker, which is signified by the name given to an approach that aims to integrate these aspects of journalism practice, *viz* WEPD. Classification between WEPD disciplines and the rest of MP has traditionally remained strong. In the JMS 4 curriculum development process (see Chapter 8) there was a strong inclination to soften the boundaries between television and radio as well.

### **3.2.3 Pedagogic Discourse**

#### **3.2.3.1 Pedagogic Fields**

In his theorising about the transmission of educational knowledge, Bernstein (1990, 1996, 2000) distinguishes between three pedagogic fields: the field of production, the recontextualizing field and the field of reproduction. The field of production is the field in which new knowledge is produced. This field is occupied by researchers in universities, research institutes, industries and so on. The recontextualizing field has two parts: the official recontextualizing field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF). This is the

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<sup>6</sup> In 7.4.4 below I include a quotation from John, the HoD and MS lecturer who talks about the various disciplinary backgrounds of MS lecturers.

arena where knowledge is transformed so that it can be taught. For school contexts, the ORF is normally situated in government education departments. This is where decisions are made in terms of the nature and content of the curriculum that will be taught; thus decisions about both the regulative and the instructional discourses (see 8.5.4) are made in the ORF.

The pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF) can be found in university education faculties and includes the research they conduct, as well as “specialized media of education, weeklies, journals, and publishing houses together with their readers and advisers” (Bernstein 1990: 192). Here the decisions taken within the ORF are recontextualized so that the recontextualized knowledge may be useable within the field of reproduction. However, within the field of reproduction, a further recontextualization has to occur. The process of knowledge recontextualization is a highly political process where contradictions and concomitant conflicts are often contested. These conflict situations are found within the ORF as well as the PRF and they are sometimes extended into the field of reproduction. According to Singh (2002: 577)

Agents within the PRF select and organise, according to the principles or rules of specific pedagogic discourses, texts from a number of knowledge bases or domains, such as subject knowledge, teaching knowledge, content knowledge of learners and knowledge of self (Turner-Bisset, 1999). In so doing, they attempt to regulate what it means to take up and enact discipline specific pedagogic identities ...

Like Bernstein, Singh (2002: 577) argues that fields of recontextualization are sites of intense struggle, particularly if the agents doing the recontextualization are strongly insulated from the ORF and have a measure of “autonomy over the construction of pedagogic discourses and practices”. The struggles about approaches to pedagogy are struggles about different pedagogic models (2002: 577). Thus, Singh (*ibid.*) argues that these are:

struggles over theories of instruction – that is models of the pedagogic subject (students), the transmitter (teacher, textbook, computer), the pedagogic context (classroom and curricular organisation) and the communicative pedagogic competence (modes of teacher and student talk).

These are struggles for control of the pedagogic device. Those who control the device have “control over a ruler (in the sense of controller as well as measuring instrument) and distributor of consciousness, identity and desire” (*ibid.*, Bernstein 1996).

An example of the nature of such a struggle is reported on by Wilmot (2006) whose research shows a process of agential disempowerment of school teachers as a result of, *inter alia*, not understanding the theoretical or regulative framework underpinning assessment policy documents and policy guidelines that present a “misreading” or misrepresent(ation)” of their theoretical framework. As a result of interactions with a lecturer from the local university education faculty to develop their understanding of the policy and its theoretical framework, teachers developed a sense of agency and made their own decisions about which aspects of the policy they were willing to engage with and which not. In the process, they developed informed responses to and about the process of policy recontextualization and the process of knowledge reproduction.

Within the university context the fields of production, recontextualization and the reproduction sometimes overlap. Agents whose identities might be tied up with the production of knowledge may find it difficult to allow others whom they perceive to be on the periphery of the knowledge domain to move into the space of recontextualizing and reproducing the knowledge from their fields. In the field of JMS those who write about the ethics of representation, for example, may find it difficult to acknowledge that knowledge about the ethics of news photography specifically may have as much validity as a more general ethics of representation from their theoretical vantage point.

Where agents are involved in struggles over the pedagogic device, power relations and ideology are implicated. Relations of power are established through the principle of classification, that is, the strength of the boundaries or insulation between categories of agents, agencies or practices. Power relations create legitimate social relations which are “challenged, contested and negotiated in the relations of pedagogic communication” (Singh 2002: 578). Furthermore, power and control relations operate not only within contexts, but also between them. The Department of JMS has relations with media producers and because of the degree of insulation between the university department and the media institutions, the

department to an extent is able to set its own agenda for the education and training of prospective journalists and media workers.

Tensions within the JMS department originate, in part, from struggles over the pedagogic and / or epistemic device. Bernstein (2000, 2001) argues that agency is tied up with identity and that the latter is linked, amongst other things, to disciplinary socialisation. The longer a person has been socialised into a discipline, particularly a collection code curriculum, the harder it will be to shift identities and the greater the likelihood of resistance to change. The softening of boundaries between fields also potentially threatens agents' sense of identities. In Chapters 7 and 8 I show several instances where lecturers struggle against the new identities they are required to forge within the evolving curriculum dispensation in the Department of JMS.

Linked to the pedagogic fields discussed above are the rules underpinning them and making the transmission possible.

### 3.2.3.2 *Rules*

Bernstein (1996) distinguishes between distributive rules, recontextualizing rules and evaluative rules. Distributive rules direct what kind of knowledge may be distributed to what kinds of agents, in other words, this rule limits access to knowledge. This rule enables decisions to be made about who may be allowed to think the unthinkable, i.e. what would be allowed to become "official knowledge" (Bernstein *ibid.*: 117) and who is allowed to transmit that knowledge to whom and under what conditions. Decisions about who may know what are invested with power. Classification of knowledge is mediated by rules of distribution. Through recontextualizing rules decisions about what is thinkable are made. This is where pedagogic discourse is constructed and where the "what" and the "how" of pedagogy are decided. Pedagogic discourse is the realisation of framing (3.2 above). Evaluative rules construct the criteria that will be "transmitted and acquired" (*ibid.*). Within the context of the research reported on in this dissertation all these rules are being challenged. For example, the content of the curriculum is undergoing shifts because of the decision to soften the boundaries between MP and MS. One of the implications of this shift is that both MS and MP lecturers now provide feedback on students' proposals for media productions. Some MP

lecturers, however, have expressed reservations about the relevance and usefulness of the feedback that MS lecturers are able to provide. They believe that MS lecturers respond to production proposals from theoretical perspectives that differ from those taught in MP classes. Thus, a different theoretical lens on the work of students potentially shifts the evaluative rules to be brought to bear on the production work of students and this threatens the knowledge base of the specialisations as well as the identities of the production lecturers (see Chapter 8).

Whenever there is a context for the transmission of culture, such as in the case of pedagogic transmission, there is an opportunity for ideology to come into play since cultural transmission is deeply ideological. Particularly in the case of recontextualizing, there is opportunity for struggle around decisions about what may be transmitted and how. If the less powerful are not in agreement with what the powerful wish to accomplish, there is an opportunity to engage in a struggle to do things differently. Who will be victorious depends on, amongst other things, the resources available, the differential bargaining power, the various opportunity costs, and so on.

The example from Chapter 8 referred to above shows ideology at play within a context of cultural transmission. How this struggle plays out is dependent on which agents are the most powerful, which ideas hold the greatest sway as well as what various agents have to gain or lose through the choices made.

There are criteria for recognising what particular contexts are for and there are criteria that allow the acquirer to produce the appropriate performances. Thus, in the case of a student (the acquirer in Bernstein's terms) studying, for example, anthropology and sociology, it is important that they recognise when a text is anthropological and when it is sociological. In addition, when producing their own texts, students must be able to realise the particular discourse required by anthropology or sociology (Reynolds 2008). In the JMS 4 context reported on in Chapter 8 (see 8.9) some lecturers recognise that the fourth year students are aspirant journalists and media workers, and within the university context they are also scholars; they therefore have to be able to operate within production contexts as well as within the more traditional academic contexts of seminars. Students have to be adept at

adopting two different identities, that of journalist and that of scholar of journalism and media.

In the next section I discuss Bernstein's work on disciplinary knowledge structures.

### 3.3 Vertical and Horizontal discourses

Vertical and horizontal discourses refer to forms and typologies of knowledge based on their organisational structure. Horizontal discourse is segmentally organised and highly context dependent while vertical discourse is hierarchically organised and context-independent. Horizontal discourse comprises everyday, practical or mundane knowledge, while vertical discourse is what can be termed academic knowledge. In terms of mundane knowledge, Bernstein (2000: 30) argues that its meanings "have a direct relation to a material base ... are wholly consumed by the context ... They lack the power of relation outside a context because they are totally consumed by that context". Horizontal discourse therefore limits the ability to engage in the "non-yet-thought" that is possible through engagement in vertical discourse where there exists "an indirect relation between meanings and a specific material base" (*ibid*).

Part of the rationale for embarking on a more consciously integrated curriculum for JMS was to enable students to use the theory to be able to engage in production practice in a much more critically informed, reflexive way (see 8.9 and 8.9.1). This kind of practice is potentially able to transcend the immediate context of its production.

Bernstein (2000) refers to the space between knowledge and its material base as a discursive gap that permits the yet to be thought. Thus vertical discourse is the site of the sacred. The structure of vertical knowledge can be either hierarchical as in the natural sciences, or it can be horizontal as is the case with knowledge in the social and human sciences. Hierarchical knowledge structures build on a foundation and knowledge development occurs when the theories become progressively more general and allow for the ability of the general theory to explain ever more of what is at the base of the knowledge pyramid. Hierarchical knowledge structures require a knowledge base to be built from the bottom up becoming progressively more specialized so that a theory is able to explain a large number of phenomena.

Diagrammatically Bernstein illustrates the idea of a hierarchical knowledge structure as a

triangle with the specialised theoretical constructs at the apex of the triangle able to explain an expanding range of phenomena at its base.

Horizontal structures are segmented into specialized areas can be acquired or transmitted alongside each other. These segments are often based on divergent epistemological and even ontological grounds and the theories are dependent on specific discourses or languages. Thus language usage and the nuances of the disciplinary language become increasingly more specialised. Diagrammatically, the range of languages comprising a horizontal knowledge structure is drawn thus:  $L^1L^2L^3L^4L^5L^6 \dots L^n$ .

### 3.3.1 Strong and weak grammars

A further refinement of the description of vertical discourses relates to what Bernstein terms their grammars. The idea of a grammar in the case of disciplines relates to the relative strength or weakness of their relation to the empirical world. Where the relation between knowledge and a signified or referent in the empirical world is stable, the discipline can be said to have a relatively strong grammar. Examples of such disciplines include economics and botany, while disciplines such as philosophy have relatively weak grammars.

Moore & Maton (2001) develop the application of the notion of strong and weak grammars when they use the terms in relation to languages of legitimation. In an explanation of the struggle for the epistemic device referred to above, they employ the idea of grammars to refer to the levels of compatibility and engagement between different “languages” in horizontal knowledge structures. In the case of disciplines that see their languages as encapsulating different perspectives on the discipline, the proponents of these perspectives are able to find common ground and are able to have conversations that allow for some level of integration between the different perspectives; however, once the different languages of the discipline are portrayed as representing different paradigms, this indicates a real struggle for the epistemic device and makes common ground near impossible. Where common ground or integration is possible, the grammar of the field is strong; where, as is the case with paradigmatic thinking, integration is seen to be impossible, a weak grammar operates.

In some respects MS theory seems to generate weaker grammar and it is therefore difficult for relationships to be drawn between that theory and the more practical concerns of the production specialisation work.

The knowledge domain within which lecturers practice plays a key role in the development of their identities, as does the higher education context (the state, the institution). This is what I turn to next.

### 3.4 Pedagogic identities

#### 3.4.1 Official identities

Bernstein distinguishes between official and local pedagogic identities. *Official identities* are those encouraged by the state through the control of inputs to and/or outputs from the education system. The nature of the “bias and focus” of educational reforms are implicated in the construction of different identities. Bernstein (2000: 65) argues that “curricula reform emerges out of a struggle between groups to make their bias (and focus) state policy and practice”. Under official identities he differentiates between recentering and decentred identities.

*Recentering identities* include retrospective identities which find their meaning in the past<sup>7</sup>. In contrast *prospective identities* focus on the future, but also have their basis in the past, although not the same past as the retrospective identity. Here the focus is on constructing identities that are able to manage cultural, economic and technological change (Bernstein 2000: 67). A past selected to encourage economic development and performance is reconstructed through this identity. It can be argued that pedagogies promote “appropriate attitudes, dispositions and performances relevant to the market culture and reduced state welfare” (*ibid*: 68). In the case of prospective identity there is strong control of both input and

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<sup>7</sup> Here the state recontextualizes past collective religious and cultural grand narratives in the present. This identity projection is particularly found in countries where there is an “incursion” of ideas from the West, such as the Middle-East and North Africa (2000: 67). In this case there is strong control of inputs into the system, however, not of the outputs. The system is based on strong classification and is hierarchical, stratified and discourses and practices are explicitly sequenced.

output of the educational system. In the case of the South Africa higher education system, there has been a distinct move to foster a prospective identity through inputs in the form of outcomes-based curriculum policy, the promotion of market-related programme-based qualifications, as well as in terms of outputs by setting targets for graduation rates in those areas perceived as necessary for economic and technological advancement of individuals and the nation<sup>8</sup>.

The prospective identity together with the decentred market identity tends to dominate the South African education system.

Bernstein classifies decentering identities in terms of a *decentred market (DCM)* and a *decentred market-therapeutic (DCM-therapeutic)* identity. These two identities are found in contexts where institutions have some measure of autonomy and can forge their own identities to some extent. In the case of the DCM an identity focused on increasing or maintaining the institution's position within the educational market is fostered. This identity is forged in relation to the economic exchange value that it carries. The institution develops programmes to attract students, to meet criteria set by the state or other external bodies and it aims to position itself optimally in relation to other institutions within the system. Within the South African context private higher education institutions fall within this category. Here individual agents are discouraged from projecting identities different to the dominant one since any challenge to the dominant identity projection may threaten the institution's competitive edge.

Within the state sponsored higher education system some (predominantly historically white institutions) have had the resources (physical, economic and in terms of human capital) to position themselves favourably within the "market" without changing their "discourse or its organisation to maintain their power and position" (*ibid*: 69) and they have been able to attract enough students to maintain their predominantly introjected academic projects.

In South African higher education the official identities that are being promoted are the Prospective and the DCM identities. The State is interested in developing citizens who are

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<sup>8</sup> Targets have been set to improve graduation rates in the areas of Science, Engineering and Technology from 25% to 30% and the numbers enrolled in Commerce from 26% to 30%, and to reduce the number of Humanities students from 49% to 40% (Ministry of Education 2001).

concerned about promoting the new democracy and who embrace the quest of the government to develop a non-racist, non-sexist society where economic empowerment is high on the agenda (Kraak 2002). Through the introduction and sponsoring of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) the state has attempted to engineer this new citizen. There have, however, been severe problems in recontextualizing state policy in the implementation of this policy.

Wilmot (2006) argues strongly that implementation has been problematic because of the incapacity at local level to recontextualize and therefore reproduce policy into appropriate practice. Allais (2003, 2006) shows that the adoption of OBE in South Africa was based on a misplaced belief that it would result in a “break(ing) away from the authoritarian ideology” of the previous apartheid education system. However, she argues with Muller (1996: 8) “that ‘constructivism, despite a certain rhetoric of liberation and autonomization, in the end acts to naturalise, and de-politicise, the selectivity of curricular knowledge’” (Allais 2003: 313). For Allais (*ibid*: 305) the aims of democratisation and the “neo-liberal economic agenda (are) incompatible” and the implementation of OBE and the NQF have resulted in the dominance of the pressures of the latter.

State sponsored identities operate in conjunction with or in some cases in opposition to local identities.

### 3.4.2 Local identities

For the purposes of this study Bernstein’s concepts of local identities are more pertinent, however local identities are influenced by the official identities the state tries to promote. He identifies three types of local identity, namely, *decentred* whose resources lie in the present, *retrospective* whose resources inhere in the past and *prospective (recentering)* identities which find their resources in relation to the future.

The two decentred identities are *instrumental (market)* and *therapeutic (professional)*. Instrumental identities are directed towards meeting the exigencies of the market and Bernstein notes that “the identity arises out of a projection on to consumables” (*ibid*: 73). This identity is stable only in relation to its mode of construction, but unstable in terms of its

focus on the present. Thus the markers for this identity are external and dependent on economic resources (*ibid*) and the relation to the self is tenuous and shifts as the market demands shift. Therefore, if the identity is destabilised for some reason, the decentred identity might be replaced by an identity focused on either the past or the future. It is conceivable that lecturers in certain professional or vocational programmes and some private higher education institutions would develop a market identity in order to be perceived as offering up-to-date programmes that would ensure jobs for successful graduates.

The *therapeutic identity's* resources are internal and underpinned by introjection since the self and the development of the self is the project of the actor and as such it is in many respects untouched by external contingencies. However, the construction is open to shifts dependent on the processes of internal sense-making. It is likely that if this process of internal sense-making is unsuccessful, the actor may look elsewhere for resources to aid the identity construction.

*Retrospective identities* are divided into fundamentalist<sup>9</sup> and élite identities.

An élite identity is lodged in a long-held or high culture. According to Bernstein the retrospective narrative envelops the self and agents find meaning in “exemplars, canons and criteria” and in the development of “aesthetic sensibility” (*ibid*). Bernstein suggests that this identity is “an amalgam of knowledge, sensitivities, manners, of education and upbringing” and it maintains strong classification in terms of hierarchies. It can also be acquired and developed through the process of education and through appropriating the markers from social networks. This identity requires an extensive period of apprenticeship into its mode of being. According to Bernstein élitist identities are underpinned by “narcissistic formations” as opposed to the “strong superego formations and communalised selves” that are required for the maintenance of the fundamentalist identity.

*Prospective identities* find their meaning in sponsoring new understandings or empowerment in relation to issues of gender, race or (geographic) region. The narratives that underpin this

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<sup>9</sup> The fundamentalist identity finds its meaning within the collectivity of religious, nationalist or populist beliefs and this identity can be all-consuming. In some context, this identity produces strong classification between the sacred and the profane. There may be movement between the sacred and the profane without contamination so that actors can participate in the profane world, without compromising the influence of the sacred.

identity are grounded in the future and in social categories and relations of solidarity or opposition, in contrast to the individualist inclinations of decentred identities (*ibid*: 76). Prospective identities find their origins in social movements and can be as consuming of the self as fundamentalist identities. Adopting a prospective identity requires an erasure of a past identity and the new identity is supported by the new group, also through political and economic activity. In addition the group is protective of itself and monitors access through gatekeeping and licensing. Bernstein states that “it may well be that it is more accurate to conceive of each social category (gender, race, region) as giving rise to its own arena of positions, struggling to dominate the narrative resource for the construction of authentic becoming” (*ibid*).

Examples of all these kinds of identities are found within an institution such as Rhodes University at the present time and in certain disciplinary domains and amongst some categories (the *élite* identity might, for example, be more visible amongst older academics in singulars with a knowledge (ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>-</sup>) or *élitist* code (ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>+</sup>) (see discussion of language of legitimation at 3.5 below), while in a discipline such as JMS members may exhibit characteristics of a prospective identity that promotes a non-sexist and non-racist awareness of the notion of representation. MS lecturers may also exhibit a predominantly *élite* identity, while the MP lecturers have to take account of the market to an extent, however, as shown in Chapter 8, this is something that they do with caution.

### **3.5 Languages of legitimation**

Whereas Bernstein’s Sociology of Education has focused primarily on relations *between* categories (agents, knowledge, fields), Moore & Maton’s (2001) sociology of knowledge enables an analysis of relations *within* knowledge fields.

Maton (2000) introduces the idea of languages of legitimation to signify the ways in which members of fields talk about or legitimate their fields. He has shown that within the broad field of higher education there are four codes around which languages of legitimation are built. Languages of legitimation concern the explicit or tacit “ways in which (agents) represent themselves and the field in their beliefs and practices (and) embody claims for knowledge, status and resources” (Maton 2005: 83). Explicit languages of legitimation occur

when agents make claims when “advocating a position”, while tacit languages of legitimation are embedded in “routinised or institutionalised practices” (*ibid*). Maton (*ibid*: 84) argues that “all practices and position takings” embed languages of legitimation and that whoever controls the legitimation device:

has the means to set the ‘rules of the game’ by making those attributes characterising their own practices the basis of legitimate participation, achievement, hierarchy and status. It is thus the focus of struggles among agents within the field. To control the device is to establish specific principles of legitimation as dominant, valorising certain practices and attributes over others and so hierarchically structuring relations between positions within the field.

Maton (2000) initially argued for a language of legitimation that focused on the specialisation of knowledge and knowers, however, he has subsequently proposed three additional codes as part of what becomes the legitimation code (e- mail communication: 2007). These are the autonomy, density and temporality codes. Bernstein’s concepts of classification and framing underpin the codes and thus enable specific “settings” for each code to be generated from the empirical context, as well as for the generation of possible scenarios. The legitimation device can be used to analyse “a whole field, groups of positions, specific institutions or disciplines, classrooms, and so forth ... (and) enable movement between macro, meso and micro levels of analysis” (Maton 2005: 86). In my study, I shall use the legitimation device in conjunction with Bernstein’s theories to analyse the field of JMS in relation to the institution within which it is situated, the field of higher education within the South African context as well as the way in which agents in these different settings operate.

I shall first discuss the specialisation code. According to Maton, using these concepts to analyse higher education allows one to see the field as dynamic and open to possibility; using all four the legitimation principles or codes constitute four different lenses that lead to a multi-perspectival image of the field.

### 3.5.1 Specialisation code

Whereas Bernstein’s theory of knowledge codes and structures analyses the relations *between* disciplines or fields, Maton’s theory (see for example, 2000, 2005, 2006) enables the analysis

of relations *within* knowledge fields. Maton argues that complementing Bernstein's concept of knowledge code with the concept of knower code enables a more complete understanding of the transmission of culture. As a corollary to the pedagogic device, he developed the epistemic device which enables one to analyse how actors specialise knowledge within fields and how actors themselves become specialised by fields. The epistemic relation (ER) is how a field constructs the relation between the object of study and a knowledge claim; the social relation (SR) is how a field constructs the relation between the knowing subject and a knowledge claim.

Therefore, it becomes possible using Bernstein and Maton's theories together to analyse not only relations *to* a field but also relations *within* a field of knowledge.

While Bernstein's theory of the pedagogic device enables one to analyse the struggles around the recontextualization and reproduction of knowledge, Moore & Maton (2001:178) argue that the epistemic device is the generative mechanism or the pre-condition for the production of knowledge. Thus, as in the case of the pedagogic device, those who control the epistemic device, control who may produce, impart or access knowledge.

#### *Classification and framing of epistemic and social relations*

Epistemic and social relations carry classification and framing values and a field can thus be strongly or weakly classified and framed in terms of the importance of knowledge in the field and strongly or weakly classified and framed in terms of who may make claims to knowledge. In combination, the various possibilities for classification and framing of ER and SR produce four possible types of codes: ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>-</sup> (knowledge code); ER<sup>-</sup>SR<sup>+</sup> (knower code); ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>+</sup> (élite code); and ER<sup>-</sup>SR<sup>-</sup> relativist code).

In fields that exhibit a knowledge code (ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>-</sup>), what you know is privileged and more significant than the disposition of the knower. Where a knower code is evident (ER<sup>-</sup>SR<sup>+</sup>), who you are, is more important than what you know, thus "dispositions, (whether) 'natural' or inculcated or resulting from one's social position" takes on significance (ER<sup>-</sup>SR<sup>+</sup>) (Maton 2006: 53). In fields that evince an élite code (ER<sup>+</sup>SR<sup>+</sup>) what one knows (specialist knowledge) as well as who one is ("the right kinds of dispositions") (Maton *ibid*) are both

significant. In contrast, where a relativist code is evident (ER-SR-), neither what you know, nor who you are carry significant weight and “one’s identity and consciousness is ostensibly determined by neither knowledge nor dispositions, a kind of relativist ‘anything goes’” (*ibid*). As a field, JMS evinces as elite code since it develops specialist knowledge and it specialises students towards a socially conscious, critically reflexive identity and a journalist or media producer.

### 3.5.2 Autonomy code

As noted above the specialisation code is one of four legitimisation codes established by Maton’s research on the emergence of Cultural Studies in British Higher Education (2005). The other three codes are those related to autonomy, density and temporality. In this section I shall explicate Maton’s use of the autonomy code. His concept of autonomy is about “the relations between higher education and other arenas of social practice, such as fields of economic production and political power”<sup>10</sup>. Maton argues for the need to distinguish between two aspects to autonomy, namely, positional autonomy and relational autonomy.

*Positional autonomy (PA)* has to do with relations between positions (such as agents or discourses) within a context or positions outside of a particular category. Thus one can examine the relations between agents within the field of JMS or the university in relation to agents from “state-sponsored funding bodies” or quality assurance bodies or from industry. *Relational autonomy (RA)* refers to the relationship between principles of relation to do with, for example, “ways of working, practices, aims, measures of achievement” within a context or with those from other contexts (Maton 2005: 87). Here one could examine the ways of working within the university context in relation to ways of working within journalistic industries. PA is about external classification and framing, or the relative strength of the boundaries between different fields or structures or agencies and their various practices, while RA is about internal classification and framing within a context such as the Department of JMS at Rhodes University.

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<sup>10</sup> The notion is derived from Bourdieu’s use of relative autonomy developed in the exploration of his relational field theory where Bourdieu elides the social and the symbolic dimensions of fields (Maton 2005: 696). In its original form, Bourdieu’s relational field theory, “is analytically stronger at analysing the structuring of the social system of a field (relational positions) than the structuring of its symbolic system (relational position-takings) (Maton 2005: 696). Maton criticises Bourdieu’s theory for reducing position-taking (or practices within a field) to an epiphenomenon of the “play of positions” within the field (Maton 2005: 696).

Discussing British Higher Education, Maton argues that the field (of Higher Education) has always been fairly autonomous and that outside influences have been absent or minimal.

However, in the South African context relational autonomy can be said to have been more weakly classified and framed than has been the case in British higher education. During the Apartheid years, HE, like all aspects of the South African society was restricted in certain respects by government decree. The system was differentiated to cater for different race groups and in some cases there was government interference in terms of the curriculum that could be taught to whom and where.

Since the new democratic dispensation in 1994, the system is no longer thus differentiated and the influences on curricula are different. In the current context, both institutional and academic autonomy is potentially threatened by external influences on the field of Higher Education.

In this study the impact on curriculum development of the relations between the discourses and practices of agents from within higher education and those operating within journalistic workplaces are examined. Agents who teach MS and those who teach MP seem to have different conceptions of the role of heteronomous influences on the curriculum and some of the struggles for ownership of the legitimation device have centred on the perceived importance afforded by the perceived relative strength of relational autonomy.

I have discussed the notion of autonomy which relates to the differentiation of fields from one another. In the study the concept is used to examine the relation of the fields of JMS within the university context with the field of journalistic practice in industry, for example. In the next section I shall discuss the concept of density that has to do with the “differentiation among positions within the field”.

### 3.5.3 Density

The concept of density derives from Durkheim who “demonstrated that changes in the ratio of population to territory (material density) tend to bring changes in the number of belief

systems and/or intensity of interaction within that space (moral density) which in turn affects the degree of the division of labour or differentiation between its constituent members” (Maton 2005: 89). Thus the notion of density allows for an analysis of positions within fields (Maton *ibid*: 88).

Maton distinguishes between two kinds of density: material density (MaD) refers to the number of units within a category or context and moral density (MoD) refers to the number of structural principles within a context, such as the different “positions, habituses, canonical hierarchies” (Maton 2005: 89) and so on which may be used to structure practices. A third dimension to the notion of density concerns “the relations between units within a context”. This idea is captured through the notion of differentiation. The number of people within a context (MaD) and the range of belief systems that operate within the context (MoD) influence the nature of the relations between the people (differentiation).

Whereas autonomy has to do with external classification and framing, the notion of density has to do with degrees of internal classification and framing. As with the other codes, classification and framing can be strong or weak. The way in which departments are structured in terms of the number and seniority of staff who teach different aspects of the curriculum (thus material density) is indicative of the value attached to the various aspects of knowledge and skills within the field (moral density) and influences the differentiation between agents within the context. In the case of JMS, for example, senior staff are concentrated within MS, while those appointed to teach production specialisations have in the past been appointed to mainly to junior positions. In addition, within the structuring of the curriculum, the space afforded to the various aspects of the curriculum can be seen as a reflection of the positions held by agents on the importance of various knowledge areas or skills. This is an aspect of material density that is strongly influenced by what is regarded as worthwhile knowledge within a university context. This aspect of the density code therefore links closely to Bernstein’s idea of pedagogic discourse (instructional and regulative discourses) (see 3.2.3 and 8.5.4).

#### 3.5.4 Temporality

Finally there is the temporal legitimation code that has three aspects to it. The first is *age*, which refers to relational positions within the temporal field; thus whether agents or agencies are young, old, new, etc.

This aspect of the legitimation device operates at a fairly tacit level in terms of languages of legitimation. According to Bourdieu (in Maton 2005: 92) agents' trajectories within a context impact strongly on its structure and how stasis and change is negotiated, while age also represents a structuring principle. If the discussion on identities above, Bernstein's retrospective and prospective identity orientations refers to temporal orientations to knowledge structures and aspects of change (*ibid*).

Fields or institutions can display strongly or weakly classified orientations to aspects of temporality. Within a fairly traditional university context, hierarchies and status are important markers. Staff members with doctorates, senior lecturers and professors carry higher status and therefore have more influence on decision making processes. The temporal aspect of age addresses the above. Thus how long agents have been in a field and their trajectories within the field are significant structuring elements.

The second aspect of temporality, *orientation*, refers to agents' positions *on* a field and this can be measured on a continuum from forward-looking to backward-looking. In addition, agents' orientation can be external (to positions beyond the field, such as the market or a profession) or internal (this includes orientations to aspects within the field, such as to teaching practices). Within the JMS department, those with industry experience seem to have different orientations to the teaching of the discipline than those who have limited industry-related experience. Production specialists seem to have more of an external orientation and this has an impact on what they value in the curriculum and in their pedagogy.

The third temporal dimension relates to *rates of change*, which can be either rapid revolution or static and unchanging (*ibid*). This aspect of change relates to the "space" that the institution, the disciplinary field and the department occupy within the field of higher education within the national and international contexts. Despite the influence of the state on

the field of higher education in South Africa, Rhodes University has chosen the areas in terms of which it wanted to change and the rate at which it would allow change. It was able to do this because of the relatively strong position it occupies in terms of academic status within the field and the fact that its student numbers have remained high in spite of the decision not to adopt the academic programme route as suggested by higher education policy.

Bernstein (2000) argues that his identity theory (discussed above), is incomplete and Maton contends that the underlying structuring principles of this theory are not explicit. It seems to me as if some of the underlying principles link to Maton's notions of autonomy, temporality and moral density. Thus, one could argue that his characterisations of the different identity types signify different degrees of relational and positional autonomy; of relations to the autonomy of knowledge; of temporality and different relations to structuring principles within and between contexts. It may thus become clear that languages of legitimation are intimately linked to agents' notions of their identities.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

According to Maton (2006: 58), legitimation code theory makes possible the analysis of "ways in which actors and discourses are specialised (and) helps shape the development, position and standing of knowledge formations and the opportunities available and constraints presented to actors within these fields". Bernstein (in Maton, *ibid*) argues that "relations within' have their own structuring significance, with real effects for the position and status of subjects in the curriculum, career opportunities for teachers and academics, and numerous other pressing, everyday realities".

As is the case with Bernstein's pedagogic device in the recontextualization of knowledge, the epistemic device, operating mostly in the field of production, is also an object of struggle. The struggle is for control of the device – those who control the device are able to control how knowledge forms acquire legitimation. In combination, the epistemic device and the pedagogic device form what Maton terms the legitimation device. Within a university department, as noted above, there is sometimes not a distinction between those who produce knowledge and those who make decisions about curriculum (who will teach what to whom

and how). Therefore it makes sense to examine the contestations around curriculum as a struggle for control of the legitimation device.

In this chapter I have argued that it is necessary to use Archer's explanatory methodology in conjunction with a substantive theoretical approach in order to analyse specific change scenarios. Since my focus is curriculum development within a particular field within the broad field of higher education, it makes sense to work with a theoretical framework concerned with the production, recontextualization and reproduction of knowledge. I have argued that Bernstein's theories of pedagogy, curriculum, identity and knowledge structures, together with Maton's sociology of knowledge are relevant for developing a nuanced understanding of the particular context and processes examined in this study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Curriculum and knowledge**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I turn to views that have been influential in shaping current thinking about curriculum in higher education at international, national and institutional levels. The research reported on in this dissertation concerns curriculum development within one department and one institution, however, academic practices within departments and institutions are conditioned by a web of structural and systemic, cultural and agential influences. It is thus important to consider the wider structural and ideational contexts that condition agential actions within the context of the Department of JMS at Rhodes University.

Theories of curriculum (whether implicit or explicit) are underpinned by theories of knowledge (whether implicit or explicit). The chapter will thus discuss theoretical work on curriculum and consider how theories of knowledge relate to curriculum. I shall discuss policy development relating to higher education curricula in South Africa and will show the extent to which institutional and departmental curriculum practices have been conditioned by these theories and policies.

Barnett (2000b: 259) argues that there are multiple influences on higher education curricula. These influences are to be found at the local, national and global levels and are both internal and external to higher education. They arise from particular academic, market and managerial orientations and are influenced by the past, the present and views about the future. They furthermore arise out of views of knowledge which are either “truth-oriented or performative”. Beliefs about epistemology and ontology and practice also play a role. Finally he argues that these influences can be context specific or context generic while agents within the system may endorse or be critical of influences. Barnett makes the point that reflexivity and the promotion of the self are important in the process of negotiating these various influences.

South African higher education has not escaped the changes that have taken place in higher education internationally. In this section of the dissertation I consider the cultural, structural

and agential influences on curriculum development at South African higher education institutions from the mid 1990s to the period reported on in this dissertation. This conjuncture is characterised by rapid social change within South African society brought upon by the change-over of government to a democratic dispensation in 1994. As a result of the new political dispensation in the country all structures of society had to be democratised and made accessible to those previously excluded from them by apartheid policies. The education sector, including higher education, entered a period of change which is still underway. Although the changes include, amongst other things, new funding mechanisms, the introduction of quality assurance processes, new management structures and new directives for programme and curriculum planning, the focus of this research is on curriculum development and therefore will only highlight those changes that have a direct or indirect impact on curriculum practices.

Later in this section I shall focus on how global, national and institutional responses to changes have impacted on curriculum development processes at Rhodes University and within the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, particularly from 2002 to 2006.

I start by reviewing some of the international influences on the direction taken by South African higher education.

## **4.2 International influences**

In this section I discuss how global influences external to HE impacted on the internal workings of the sector. While it was recognised that HE in South Africa required radical overhaul, HE internationally was also in the throes of change (Barnett 2000a, 2000b, Castells 2001). Light & Cox (2001) write about this conjuncture as underpinned by a shift in the status of HE from being 'in society', operating almost on the margins of society within the proverbial ivory tower, to a position of being regarded as 'of society'.

The new status of HE came about as a result of several cultural and structural changes within society at large and in terms of state interventions in higher education<sup>11</sup>. Internationally as a result of the influence of a postmodern worldview and a new global economic order there has been a weakening of major boundaries such as those between nations; between intellectual and manual work and between different kinds of knowledge; also between civil society and government and between civil society and higher education; and so on (see also Barnett 1997, 2000, Lockett 2001, Ensor 2002).

With this shift, civil society and government have become much more influential in terms of deciding the focus and direction of higher education. Governments in the western world have decreased their investment into higher education while at the same time demanding that their investment in the higher education sector provides a workforce able to function within the new fast-changing global order which is increasingly dependent on rapid production, dissemination and exchange of knowledge. The nomenclature of the “knowledge society”<sup>12</sup> or the “knowledge economy” has become common to describe this conjuncture. It is within this new “knowledge intensive” society (Moja 2004) that higher education has to function as an integral part *of* society, while becoming more dependent on business and industry to provide the necessary funding in the face of declining government spending. Societal demands on HE are tougher at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than they have ever been.

### 4.3 Local influences

Boughey (2004) explains that the post-1994 South African government had the task of unifying a higher education system that had been fragmented along the lines of race, language, geographical location (urban vs. rural), as well as along the lines of advantage and disadvantage.

The division between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions was linked to the divisions of race and location, so that well-resourced, advantaged institutions were historically white Afrikaans or English medium universities situated in urban areas. Black students therefore

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<sup>11</sup> State intervention could be indirect such as when funding is used to steer changes; institutions may then choose to move in the direction from which they will derive the highest return. Interventions can also be direct such as when a programme’s future hangs in the balance pending certain changes as a result of an audit process.

<sup>12</sup> Moore & Young (2001) note that it is not always clear what kind of knowledge is implicated in the invocation of the portmanteau of “knowledge society”. See also Muller (2000).

predominantly had “restricted access to quality higher education” (*ibid*: 2). The transformation agenda for higher education required a focus on *equity* together with a focus on *efficiency* in order to inhibit the enormous drop-out and failure rates<sup>13</sup>.

In spite of the large-scale local challenges that had to be addressed through new policy and emerging structures, global developments also had a significant impact on the direction of education policy. Moja (2004) and Moja & Hayward (2001) argue that the two sets of challenges had to be held in dynamic tension since South Africa was re-entering the global arena after an extensive absence during the apartheid era. Policy makers thus had to keep in mind that the country had to set itself up to become competitive within the global market place, since economic development was a major local imperative. It was argued that global competitiveness required educational advancement. The ‘high-skills thesis’ that was part of global educational and economic thinking was influential within the South African context (Kraak 2002).

Ideas around globalisation entered the South African policy discourse particularly through the work of Giddens and his colleagues (Giddens et al; Nowotny et al 1994). It was argued (Moja 2004: 28, following Castells 2001) that a knowledge economy required:

high level skills for participation in high technology environments, skills to adapt to unpredictable and volatile global product markets, problem-solving skills to anticipate flaws in production, skills to become life-long learners and an ability to re-tool, and multifunctional skill capabilities.

In addition, Moja (2004) asserts that the policy making process had to take account of global pressures such as “human resource development, including lifelong learning, high-level skills training, and knowledge production, acquisition and application” (Education White Paper 3) as well as the huge local pressures of establishing “a new social order, meeting national needs and responding to new realities and opportunities” (2004:21). Moja (2004) contends that global and local imperatives needed to be held in balance to allow for the redress of past imbalances, while ensuring South Africa’s re-entry to the international world. An implication

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<sup>13</sup> Scott, Yeld & Henry (2007) show that the participation rate of the 20 – 24 year old cohort of the South African population in HE, based on 2005 data is 16%. Of the 2000 cohort, 30% of the first time entering students had graduated by 2004, 56% had left the institutions they enrolled in, while 14% were still in the system.

of the tensions between global and local needs is that issues of equity and efficiency have to be held in constant tension. Increasing the number of black students, the number of postgraduates (particularly blacks and women), students in the area of science and technology (SET) and business have all since put pressure on the efficiency of the system (Boughey 2004; D'Andrea, Gosling, Scott & Tyeku 2002). Large numbers of black students are still underprepared for higher education as a result of their schooling and SET and commerce courses traditionally have higher failure rates than the humanities and social sciences.

#### 4.4 Curriculum in higher education

Several commentators have noted that within the scholarship of higher education the notion of curriculum is not given the attention it deserves. Barnett & Coate (2005) for example argue that in policy documents on higher education in the United Kingdom, the term *curriculum* seems to be missing. They demonstrate how the major reports on higher education, viz. the Robbins Report (1963) and the Dearing Report (1997) both neglect to give guidelines for or for higher education curricula. They also argue that the Higher Education Academy (formerly the Institute for Learning and Teaching), despite a Generic Centre focus on “imaginative curricula”, also did not pay sufficient attention to the conceptualisation of higher education curricula.

Within the South African context similar viewpoints on the neglect of the HE curriculum in the literature are evident (see for example, le Grange, 2006). Moja (2004: 22) asserts that government frameworks “have guided transformation at the system level, institutional level and an instructional level”, however there was no direct guidance regarding how curricula and instructional level needed to be reformed, save for the injunction to develop interdisciplinary programmes. Isaacs (2001: 137) notes that the introduction of the NQF and OBE was “about systemic change and not primarily curriculum change” and that “the existing paradigm in higher education and training (HET) often regards curriculum change as the equivalent of systemic change”. He (*ibid*) furthermore states that “standard setting ... and quality assurance often get confused with curriculum design, which is rightly the preserve of the educator”.

Ensor (2002, 2003, 2004) argues that South African policy documents *do* pay attention to curriculum; however, their messages about curriculum have been contradictory and therefore open to multiple interpretations. According to Lockett (2001) and the CHE (1999) much attention has been given to the form of HE curricula, but not much to the content, i.e. there have not been serious and sustained deliberations on the nature of the curricula that would be necessary to prepare people for the twenty-first century. South African HE policies include commentary and specifications about curricula, but these seem to be focused on form, not content, with the exception of publications by the South African Qualifications Authority (see for example, Nkomo 2000). In 2005 the South African Vice Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) published a collection on curriculum responsiveness within the South African context. This publication addressed issues of curriculum content and pedagogy.

#### 4.5 Higher education policy in post-apartheid South Africa

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) published guidelines on the prescribed outcomes based education (OBE) framework for higher education in South Africa (see Nkomo 2000). In this document SAQA specifies three types of learning that should be included in all curricula. Firstly, there is *fundamental learning* that will ensure that students are able to acquire the competence to complete their qualification. It is not clear from the description in this paper exactly what is meant by fundamental learning. However, Lockett (2001) argues that it might be a different way of suggesting the importance attached to generic or transferable skills. Secondly, *core learning*, that is, the content of the curriculum of a particular field or towards a profession or career. It should include both breadth and depth. Finally, *elective learning* – here students should be provided with the opportunity to choose areas of interest that will enrich their learning or that allow them to enhance their learning in relation to an area of specialisation within a qualification.

In addition, SAQA also stipulates that higher education should enable students to gain *applied competence*<sup>14</sup> that will allow them to use their *foundational competence* (propositional knowledge, or knowing that), *practical competence* (knowing how) and *reflexive competence* (knowing how you know that and how) within real-world contexts. Furthermore *critical-crossfield outcomes* or generic competencies need to be acquired and

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<sup>14</sup> *Applied competence* is similar to Biggs' *functional knowledge* (Biggs 1999).

demonstrated at all levels of the NQF (Nkomo 2000; Luckett *ibid*: 52). According to Ensor (2004: 340) the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been “at the heart of South Africa’s national policy framework from the mid-1990s”.

#### 4.6 Curriculum discourses

Ensor (2004) shows that both the NCHE report on Higher Education and Training (1996) and the White Paper on Higher Education and Training (1997) which is based on that report foreground two discourses on curriculum, namely a disciplinary discourse and a credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) discourse. The disciplinary discourse is an argument for the importance of disciplinary apprenticeship of novices into a coherent disciplinary field, while the CAT discourse favours modular curricular structures that would, in theory, allow students greater choice over their study programme and would also facilitate greater flexibility in relation to entrance and exit points. Furthermore, the CAT route would (again in theory) allow for greater transferability of “credits” between institutions. The National Qualifications Framework<sup>15</sup> that came into effect in 1995 through an act of parliament was the mechanism for the facilitation of credit accumulation and transfer.

As Ensor (2003) demonstrates, though, there is now less, not more, articulation between institutions than there was before the curricular changes in response to policy demands on curriculum since different institutions have interpreted policy directives in different ways and have stipulated very particular curricular guidelines for their various programmes, thereby limiting student choice in order to ensure curricular coherence and progression.

Ensor (2004: 345) discusses two other discourses relevant to curricula. These are a *professional discourse* and a *therapeutic discourse*. The professional discourse is relevant to professional programmes such as those in medicine, law and engineering. This discourse emphasises the apprenticeship of students into a knowledge area and emphasises vertical pedagogic relations and offers limited student choice in terms of the curriculum. This

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<sup>15</sup> The purpose of the NQF was to bring all education sectors into a single framework, from Adult Basic Education and Training, all levels of formal schooling, vocational training, and higher education. The NQF was also to facilitate the accreditation of prior learning in order to enable skills developed within the workplace to be accredited. In practice, there has been what has been termed an “implementation vacuum” (Cloete 2002) and the aims of the framework have not been realised. Ensor (2003) provides a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the NQF thus far and she argues cogently for the non-equivalence of vocational and academic knowledges.

discourse is also important for a discipline such as JMS and in this case there is not only an emphasis on pedagogical relations within the programme, but relations with the industry are also foregrounded. Furthermore, there is also a focus on the future of the profession and the contributions that students as prospective professionals, would be able to make to the field.

In contrast to the disciplinary and inward focus of the professional discourse, the therapeutic discourse is focused inward on the development of the self as opposed to the development of a body of knowledge. Students have a high degree of choice over content and the relationship between student and teacher is more horizontal and focussed on the development of “inner competencies” (*ibid*). This discourse is not very evident in HE except in courses that focus on life skills or within academic development programmes (*ibid*). This discourse may also be more evident within disciplines such as psychology and social work.

Ensor (*ibid*) argues that both the NCHE report and the White Paper (1997) argue for both models of the curriculum, but that the NCHE report seems to favour the disciplinary route, whereas the White Paper seems to favour the CAT route. However, Ensor holds that it could be argued that the latter’s stance ultimately calls for the coexistence of the two models. According to Moore & Young (2001: 448) governments have not been able to resolve the tensions between these two views of the curriculum and “it is not surprising that curriculum policy and its implementation is, at best, confused”.

Higher Education institutions interpreted the policy directives in various ways, and Ensor shows that in 2000 there were four different kinds of curricula in evidence within in the Science and Humanities faculties at universities in South Africa. Rhodes University did not change its curricula to conform to policy directives, however, they did register whole qualifications with SAQA<sup>16</sup> (Ensor, 2002, 2004). Rhodes argued that the best way for it to be responsive to the market was to offer what it had always offered since the student numbers had remained robust during a time when some institutions experienced a drop in their

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<sup>16</sup> The South African Qualifications Act required all higher education institutions to register their offerings with SAQA in terms of the National Qualifications Framework. Thus, Rhodes University registered the generic BA, BSc, BComm and BJourn degrees and produced broad outcomes for each of the degree programmes. In the case of professional programmes, faculties had to comply with the requirements of the Pharmaceutical council regulations for the degree.

enrolment figures<sup>17</sup>. This confirms Knight & Trowler's (2001) observation that institutions comply with external demands if they experience a push to do so, such as when state funding is dependent on meeting certain policy requirements. In the case of Rhodes University there was no real imperative to change the way of managing curricula, since the institution had a stable niche market and state funding was not threatened by not responding to policy directions in specific ways.

#### 4.7 Relations to knowledge and institutional status

Ensor's (2002; 2004) and R.S. Moore's research (2002; 2004) indicate that the way institutions responded to external demands depended on, for example, their positions within the HE landscape. Thus institutions that regarded their niche in the "market" as secure, complied in limited ways to these pressures. However, institutions that had experienced a drop in student numbers seized the opportunity to develop programmes that seemed more attractive to the prospective student body in order to ensure their survival.

Moore (n.d.) applies Levi-Strauss' notions of hot and cold chronologies to explain why successful, traditional institutions do not change. He argues that traditional institutions (he uses the University of Cambridge as an example) owe their success to their relation to knowledge. He holds that these institutions can be described as exhibiting "hot" chronologies in relation to knowledge innovations or "intellectual change". Moore (*ibid*) argues that it is precisely because these institutions have been so successful in their ability to generate new knowledge, that they have not experienced the need to change the way they operate. The chronology in terms of institutional change can therefore be termed "cold". Furthermore, he contends that institutions that have not been as successful in terms of their relation to knowledge have felt the need to engage in institutional changes. Despite many changes, however, Moore argues, this has not in any significant way changed the degree to which these rapidly changing institutions have contributed to knowledge innovation.

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<sup>17</sup> During the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s contrary to expectations of rapid massification, some South African public HE institutions experienced an unexpected drop in enrolments. This was ascribed to, *inter alia*, the increase in the number of private HE providers in the country, the fact that historically black institutions lost potential students to historically white institutions when the legal segregation at these institutions ceased, and lower numbers of high school pupils achieved matriculation exemption passes (Jansen 2004).

In Bernstein's (2000) terms, older English language institutions in South Africa can be regarded as exhibiting introjected identities and therefore they focus on the preservation of institutional and academic traditions, while more modern, and in particular some Afrikaans language institutions express a projected identity and they have been more ready to adapt to the required changes in order to survive in the new higher education and changed political context.

A significant observation that Moore (n.d.) makes is that institutional changes are often made with a view to increasing access or making the offerings of the institutions more relevant to, for example, the market with the aim of advancing those in less privileged positions, however, this aim is not realised. He states that the relative rate of access to social and cultural capital has not shifted significantly despite institutional changes. His conclusion is that it is the relation to knowledge that is the critical variable for institutional success. The issue of broadening access then becomes a pedagogical issue and ways of providing access to powerful knowledge have to be found. Bernstein (2000) and Wheelahan (2007a, b) argue that educationally disadvantaged students need access to powerful knowledge and the way to effect epistemological access (Morrow 1994) is through processes of visible pedagogy, i.e. pedagogical processes that make the codes, values, processes of knowledge production and acquisition explicit.

#### **4.8 Knowledge and pedagogy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

As noted earlier (4.5 above), even though South African policy documents argue for the need to change the form of curricula at HE institutions, they do not address the content of curricula. In other words, they do not address appropriate curriculum content and processes required to enable institutions to meet the needs of students and the nation in the twenty-first century. At least two international publications have indicated the need for curricula to shift in very particular ways to address the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The most influential of these is the work by Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny *et al* (1994) that argues that knowledge production takes place in many different sites and that higher education is no longer the prime site for knowledge creation. They argue that knowledge production is happening within problem-solving contexts and they call this mode of knowledge production Mode 2, in contrast to Mode 1 knowledge which is primarily theoretical knowledge. Gibbons *et al* (*ibid*)

claim that HE institutions have to shift their focus away from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge if they want to remain relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Within the South African context their work has been influential in the deliberations of the NCHE and contributed to an emphasis on the CAT discourse (Kraak 2002).

The idea of foregrounding Mode 2 knowledge attracted much criticism from South African academics. Muller (2000) argues that within the South African context it is important to maintain a strong emphasis on Mode 1 knowledge since, he believes, a shift to Mode 2 would further weaken an already impoverished education system. Similarly, Luckett (2001: 51) suggests that Mode 1 knowledge remains important, particularly in undergraduate programmes and that “high quality Mode 2 knowledge production depends on its researchers being able to draw on sound, multiple, disciplinary foundations”. Ensor (2004) argues that academics in South African HE institutions are choosing to maintain a focus on the disciplines as is evident from the nature of programmes offered in Science and Humanities faculties.

A second publication that examines emerging curricula in Britain and also champions a particular shift in curricula is that by Barnett & Coate (2005). They argue for a change in curricula and pedagogy in order to ensure that students are adequately prepared to function optimally in what Barnett (2000a, 2000b) terms a world of *supercomplexity*. Whereas complexity denotes a situation in which “we are assailed by more facts, data, evidence, tasks and arguments than we can easily handle *within* the frameworks in which we have our being ...” (2000b: 257), supercomplexity denotes a situation in which:

the very frameworks by which we orient ourselves to the world are themselves contested. Supercomplexity denotes a fragile world but it is a fragility brought on not merely by social and technological change; it is a fragility in the way we understand ourselves and in the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world (*ibid*).

Barnett & Coate (2005) contend that curricula need to focus on three dimensions, namely, those of knowing, acting and being. The knowledge domain refers to “discipline-specific competences”, which is the kind of knowledge required to become discipline specialists. By the action domain, they mean those competencies that are developed through ‘doing’ and this includes competences such as doing oral presentations, writing essays, and so on. The

domain of 'self' refers to the identity that students develop "in relation to the subject areas; history students learn to perceive themselves as 'critical evaluators', while nurses are encouraged to become 'reflective practitioners'" (Barnett, Parry & Coate 2001: 438-439). Barnett & Coate (2005) explain that in emerging curricula in the UK these dimensions are already in evidence and that different disciplines focus on the three dimensions in different ways.

Writing about the South African context, Luckett (2001) argues that an "epistemically diverse" curriculum is required to deal with the postmodern context. She identifies four kinds of knowledge that need to be part of an adequate curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are: propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, experiential knowledge and epistemic knowledge.

Propositional knowledge includes disciplinary knowledge and would entail "traditional cognitive learning"; practical knowledge or practical competence requires the application of disciplinary knowledge and would therefore entail "learning by doing" or "apprenticeship"; experiential knowledge or "personal competence" has to do with "learning by engaging personally" or "thinking reflexively" and epistemic knowledge or "reflexive competence" implies the development of metacognition and the ability to think "epistemically, contextually and systematically" (*ibid*: 55). Luckett proceeds to provide examples of how these different kinds of knowledge can be accommodated within the curriculum.

Luckett proposes a similar kind of curriculum and pedagogy to what Barnett & Coate (2005) argue for, but Luckett's conceptualising of an epistemically diverse curriculum is more robust and it is evident how that kind of curriculum and pedagogy can be operationalised. Luckett as well as Barnett & Coate emphasise the importance of reflexivity in developing the kind of subjectivity that would enable graduates to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Luckett (2001: 53) suggests that:

If the HE curriculum is to be 'higher' in any sense at all, then it is here, in the development of high levels of reflexivity (both individual and social) that HE should be distinctive. In fact, it is the competence of reflexivity which may save HE from offering an instrumental curriculum in which knowledge is valued only for its market price.

Elsewhere Barnett (2004) argues for a Mode 3 knowledge to be developed which he calls knowing-in-and-with-uncertainty. By this he means that even while operating within a context of uncertainty people will be able to thrive. He suggests that there is a need for curricula to enable students to develop the critical capacity to cope with the manufactured risks of reflexive modernity. This is in contrast to a view of the context as being one of technocratic modernisation where “information systems and other forms of expertise are being applied to more and more areas of life and leading to a world increasingly out of control of human agency” (Young 1999: 472).

What these authors argue for is in line with Archer’s (2000) view that to be fully human requires the interplay of what she terms practical, embodied and discursive knowledges. While proposing the primacy of practice, Archer argues that the individual’s personal and social emergent properties and powers are dependent on the development of adequacy in all three of these knowledge domains. Within the academy, the discursive (and in some professional courses, the practical) domains have been foregrounded. It should be noted that Archer argues that “the discursive” constitutes a form of practice. The kind of human being required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands that HE pay attention to all three kinds of knowledge. The globalised knowledge society demands high levels of reflexivity in all the domains of human being in order to develop the values and robust subjectivities (Barnett 2004) that will allow people to prosper in a context of fragility.

Barnett (2000, 2004, 2005); Barnett & Coate (2005) & Luckett (2001) all identify that there have been shifts in the way knowledge is regarded in a postmodern world. Barnett (2005) claims that in the postmodern context the world is “radically unknowable” and that knowledge is therefore always “fragile”, while for Luckett (2001: 54) “the postmodern condition subverts the traditional justifications for the university and signals the end to academic knowledge as we know it”. She further claims (*ibid*) that “(t)he notion of authoritative knowledge has been permanently undermined, for a postmodernist perspective suggests that all knowledge claims are local, partial and contextually specific”. Although Luckett seems to accept the postmodern viewpoint that all knowledge is relative, she evinces a stance that tries to rescue academic work from the hopelessness of postmodern relativism. She argues, following Griffin in Barnett & Griffin (1997) that

the postmodern celebration of difference and its incredulity towards grand narratives ... can be limited by a value commitment to social justice and political principle which lies beyond the text ... in our context it should be possible to develop curricula in which we recognise the variety of communities and cultures which HEIs serve, the need to speak a variety of languages and discourses and yet still build common multi-discursive, multi-purpose institutional communities which are underpinned by a commitment to common values (Luckett 2001: 54).

As I shall show below (4.10), a critical and social realist view of knowledge provides a way out of the insecurities imposed by the postmodern view of knowledge by focussing on the sociality of knowledge and recognising an alternative understanding of the objectivity of knowledge.

Moore & Muller (1999), Young (2000) and Moore & Young (2001) argue against the relativism inherent in what is termed “voice discourses” or “standpoint theories” which reduce knowledge to the perspectives of knowers (Maton 2000). Subscribing to such a relativist view of knowledge implies that there is no basis for legitimating knowledge, save from the standpoint of the knower. This way of looking at epistemology does indeed result in the world being experienced as “radically unknowable”. There is, however, a different way of arguing for the legitimation of knowledge, without negating the social basis of such knowledge.

#### **4.9 An argument for a social realist approach to knowledge**

Moore & Young (2001) argue that a social realist perspective on knowledge and knowledge claims offers a way out of what Alexander terms the “*epistemological dilemma*” (Alexander 1995 quoted in Moore & Young (2001:452). The epistemological dilemma inheres in the belief that “(e)ither knowledge ... is unrelated to the social position and intellectual interests of the knower, in which case general theory and universal knowledge are viable, or knowledge is affected by its relation to the knower, in which case relativistic and particularistic knowledge can be the only result”. For Moore & Young (2001: 453) the corollary to the epistemological dilemma is an *educational dilemma* where either the curriculum is given or always the result of power struggles between groups for the inclusion or exclusion of particular knowledge.

Moore & Young (2001) concur with Alexander's argument that "positivist theory and resigned relativism" are not the only alternatives and there is a way out of the epistemological dilemma. Alexander (1995: 91) claims that "theoretical knowledge can never be anything other than the socially rooted efforts of historical agents. But this social character does not negate the possibility of developing either generalised categories or increasingly disciplined, impersonal and critical modes of evaluation". The social character of knowledge does not preclude the objectivity of knowledge. In fact, they argue that it is a precondition for knowledge legitimisation. It is Moore & Young's (2001: 452) contention that the objectivity of knowledge is underscored by the existence of non-hegemonic competing traditions within complex knowledge fields and the process of peer review which provides a basis for the autonomy of knowledge that is not dependent on the personal or professional interests of the reviewers. Through the social legitimisation of knowledge, it transcends its social and historical production and therefore gains emergence and thus autonomy.

Moore & Young (*ibid*) further argue that postmodernists' reduction of knowledge to knowers does not recognise the existence of what they term external and internal interests in terms of the production of knowledge. External interests pertain to power struggles between groups while internal interest has to do with an interest in making knowledge claims. It is a cognitive interest based on cognitive norms and values<sup>18</sup>. For Moore & Young (*ibid*: 455) the replacement of cognitive interest by

sectional interests of power and domination ... renders invisible the social form of the 'knowledge producing' or 'knowledge transmitting' communities as distinctive specialist collectivities [and that] they are seen simply as homologues of some other social relationship (such as those between ruling and ruled classes, men and women, black and white, etc).

What is important then in legitimising knowledge claims from a social realist perspective is the investigation of the validity of the "codes and procedures" of the particular research traditions based in the work of research communities with an ever more global scope.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Schmaus "cognitive values specify the aims of science, while cognitive norms specify the means to achieve these goals. Both cognitive values and norms range widely. Cognitive values may include everything from a scientist's position regarding the ontological status of unobservable entities to the desire to solve a specific set of problems or to explain a particular set of facts. Cognitive norms may range from rules governing the forms of persuasive argument that can be brought in defence of one's theory in a journal article to procedures for manipulating 'inscription devices' in a laboratory" (1994:263 quoted in Moore & Young 2001:455).

These codes, values and procedures, as noted by Moore & Young are not reducible to “the interests of any particular social class, gender, national or ethnic group” (*ibid*). They assert that “some knowledge is objective in ways that transcend the immediate conditions of its production (as in Euclid’s geometry and Newton’s physics” (*ibid*: 454)). Thus, this kind of knowledge transcends experience and is generalisable (*ibid*: 453).

#### **4.10 Knowledge and the curriculum**

Moore & Young (2001) distinguish between two curriculum paradigms, the *neo-conservative traditionalist* and a *technical instrumentalist* paradigm. The traditionalist curriculum views knowledge as given, asserts the value of the canons and is resistant to change. The importance of learning lies in the development of a discipline that comes from immersion in a knowledge base, as in the monastic tradition. Furthermore this discipline creates a respect for the given body of knowledge and “respect for authority and protects traditional values” (*ibid*: 447). Neo-conservative traditionalism does not take into account the changing social context and the social and historical situatedness of knowledge and regards knowledge as “self-evidently there”. Thus, according to Moore & Young (*ibid*: 450) “curriculum changes are invariably *ad hoc* and pragmatic”.

The *instrumentalist* view of the curriculum sees the traditionalist curriculum as élitist, while asserting the need for the curriculum to meet the demands of the market and to be informed by the prospects of employability of students; knowledge and learning are thus means to an end. Unlike the traditionalist curriculum which has as an aim the development of educated generalists, the technical-instrumentalist ideal is that of a particular kind of society which at the present demands that citizens are trainable and flexible for the needs of the knowledge society (*ibid*: 448). Moore & Young (*ibid*: 448) note that instrumentalist notions of the curriculum and knowledge have grown over the last fifteen to twenty years and are now expected to be considered within the university sector as well (see 4.7 above).

*Postmodernist critiques* of the curriculum view all knowledge as interested and the interest they assert for traditional knowledge is that it preserves the power-bases of particular social groups. Postmodernists argue that knowledge is relative and therefore arbitrary, thus any

knowledge, “whether based on professional expertise, research or the experience of particular groups, is of equal value” (*ibid*: 449) and can form part of the curriculum. They urge for the inclusion of knowledge of and from those who have been previously excluded or silenced to be valued as part of the curriculum.

Moore & Young’s (2001) retort to the postmodernist attack on knowledge and the curriculum is based on an assertion that the postmodernists do not have an adequate theory of knowledge and that their disregard for traditional curricula is based on unsound reasoning. According to Moore & Young (*ibid*), “because (postmodernists) have no theory of knowledge as such, they can do little more than expose the way that curriculum policies mask power relations”.

In fact, Moore & Young (2001) assert that the sociology of education has not had an adequate theory of knowledge and that the neo-conservative traditionalists, the technical instrumentalists and the post-modernists all lack views of knowledge that adequately theorise the epistemological basis of that knowledge. Moore & Young (*ibid*) concur with the postmodern critique of the social and historical basis of knowledge claims, however, they disagree that this therefore means that knowledge lacks objectivity. They argue, with Alexander (1995) and Collins (1998), that the social basis of knowledge is the basis for its objectivity. The values and norms of the disciplinary groups that produce and validate knowledge are the basis for its objectivity and truth claims. Only knowledge that conforms to the values and which is produced through processes that are in line with the norms of the disciplinary community of practice is accepted as valid knowledge. Moore & Young (*ibid*) further argue that the technical instrumentalists do not have a similar social basis for the validation of the knowledge they wish to foreground.

The next section will focus on the relationship between the curriculum and ways in which knowledge is understood.

#### **4.11 Curriculum paradigms**

Grundy (1987) identifies three curriculum paradigms which have their basis in Habermas’ notion of *knowledge constitutive interests*. The first of these paradigms is the *curriculum as product* which has its basis in a technical interest to control the environment. This paradigm

is similar to the technical-instrumental view of the curriculum. In this view the curriculum is given and needs to be transmitted. The aim of the transmission is the development of a skill. The aim is the development of strategic judgement which leads to “correct action” or rule following (*ibid*: 62). Curriculum design is a rational means-ends process. The outcomes of the teaching and learning are set and measures are put in place to determine whether the set outcomes have been met. Knight (2001) calls this type of curriculum design technical-rational curriculum planning. This kind of curriculum does not take account of the particularities of the social context within which it is exercised. Although there is not a direct correspondence, it seems appropriate that neo-conservative traditionalists would favour following this curriculum paradigm.

Calls in South Africa and elsewhere for curricula to be outcomes-based have potentially pushed the conceptualisation of curricula into a technical rationalist framework and a process of curriculum development that relies on a process of rational curriculum planning (RCP) (*ibid*). Knight (*ibid*: 369) argues that RCP goes against the complex learning that is required within a higher education context where novices are inducted into the complex ways of disciplinary thinking. The complexity of higher learning lies in the “unending disputes, subtle concepts, large amounts of information to be organised and remembered, and the emerging understandings of the nature or structure of the subject area itself”.

The second paradigm is that of *curriculum as practice* with a basis in the hermeneutic paradigm which is interested in understanding that results in decision-making towards the common good. Understanding is reached as a result of human reason and judgement (Grundy 1987: 60).

Whereas the aim of the technical paradigm is in the development of a skill, the practical paradigm strives towards developing knowledge that is “‘owned’ by the actor” (Grundy *ibid*: 61) as well as “taste”. According to Grundy (*ibid*), “knowledge, judgement and taste combine to produce discernment which is more than a skill”. Within this paradigm practical judgment leads to “good” as opposed to “correct” action, rather than to strategic judgement which is foregrounded in the technical paradigm (*ibid*).

Luckett (1995) argues that working within the paradigm of curriculum as practice does not negate the need for curriculum planning and for the setting of outcomes at the planning stage. However, she proposes that the ways in which the curriculum plans play out are entirely dependent on the teaching and learning context and may need to be negotiated and even changed should it be necessary.

For Luckett the curriculum as practice is an appropriate paradigm for the curriculum within the South African context. She argues that Grundy's third paradigm, *curriculum as praxis*, which has as its aim the development of a critical consciousness which leads to emancipatory social action might be appropriate only within some postgraduate courses in the social sciences. However, this is an appropriate paradigm from which to approach curriculum development, since it foregrounds questions about why certain knowledge is included in the curriculum while other knowledge is excluded, as well as questions regarding whose interests are served by particular teaching and learning modalities and so on (*ibid*).

This is in keeping with Moore & Young (2001: 454) who propose that knowledge as such should be the basis of curricula, but contrary to the neo-conservative view that accepts knowledge as given, they argue that the "knowledge structures and contents need to be interrogated in a way that acknowledges their social basis *and* their capacity (or lack of capacity) to transcend it". Furthermore, following Schmaus they argue that the cognitive interest of knowledge be acknowledged as a basis for the social formation of disciplines.

Acknowledging the asymmetry between cognitive and other interests in the production and transmission of knowledge does not exclude the necessary consideration of the way in which external interests and power relations influence research and the curriculum and the need to interrogate the way in which "the forms of social organisation that arise from 'cognitive interests'" may be implicated in the way society is organised (*ibid*).

#### **4.12 Implications of a social realist approach to knowledge for the curriculum**

Moore & Young (2001:457) outline four implications of a social realist view for the curriculum. They assert the following reasons for the criticism against the traditional curriculum. Firstly, subjects and disciplines that form the basis of the social organisation of

knowledge have been regarded as “given” and they are used in the neo-conservative defence of the traditional curriculum. Secondly, subject and discipline based curricula are regarded by their critics as élitist and are associated with social and economic inequality. Moore & Young, contend, though, that despite the socio-historical conjunction of the rise of the disciplines and the increase in social inequality, it remains important to recognise that the knowledge produced extends beyond the conditions of its origins. They do not however, condone the view of knowledge as a-historical. Thirdly, they claim that the technical-instrumentalist critique of traditional curricula is not based on an epistemological rationale, but inheres in what is regarded as the uncritical acceptance of the authority of that knowledge as the basis of the curriculum. Fourthly, critics of the neo-conservative programme claim that traditional modes of knowledge production are too slow and therefore inefficient to take account of the needs of the current conjuncture; it is too élitist since it requires an extended period of apprenticeship. Therefore, the acquisition of skills and qualifications based on this model are not accessible to large numbers of the population. It is argued that traditional modes of knowledge production and transmission do not serve the needs of the global age which requires the rapid development of knowledge. The development of transdisciplinary, modular modes of curriculum, which combine academic and vocational studies and which foreground the acquisition of generic skills, are regarded as the appropriate response to the stubborn adherence to traditional, discipline-based curricula.

Moore & Young (*ibid*) articulate the shifts that are called for by technical instrumentalists in the following way:

- From insulation to connectivity between disciplines and subjects, and between knowledge and its application;
- From the separation of general and vocational knowledge and learning to their integration;
- From specialisation and linear sequencing as a curriculum principle to genericism and modularity;
- From hierarchical to facilitative approaches to pedagogy.

Young (1999: 470) argues that to some extent it is important for curricula to embody aspects of past curricula so as to give new generations access to existing knowledge. However, he argues for a curriculum of the future that provides:

- a transformative concept of knowledge which emphasises its power to give learners a sense that they can act on the world;
- a focus on the creation of new knowledge as well as the transmission of existing knowledge;
- an emphasis on the interdependence of knowledge areas and on the relevance of school knowledge to everyday problems.

Part of the rationale for the call to change curricula emerges from the fact that traditional curricula have not taken account of the social, political and economic transformations that have occurred over the last few decades. Technical instrumentalists, in calling for changes have taken their cue from employers who argue that workers require new kinds of skills for the knowledge economy. Moore & Young (2001: 458), warn, though, that the kind of curriculum called for by technical-instrumentalists lacks the “networks and codes of practice” that would confer legitimacy and ensure that the new approaches do indeed result in real learning of an appropriate standard.

For Moore & Young (*ibid*: 458 - 459) a curriculum that has its basis in social realism will ensure that the social networks, codes of practice and norms are upheld while account is taken of the changing needs of the new social context. Thus what is required is the development of appropriate networks, codes and norms that transcend (or perhaps underpin) the specification of outcomes. They further claim that all curricula will exclude some knowledge and that curriculum development requires careful consideration of the kind of knowledge and learning that is required. They therefore urge that both the uncritical acceptance of the traditional curriculum as well as a reliance on relevance are rejected and they propose that the curriculum does not merely serve the demands of the economy or the politics of the day. Furthermore, the curriculum needs to be developed in ways that will allow epistemological access to new learners while upholding the cognitive interests necessary for the production and transmission of knowledge.

I would argue that Lockett's proposal for an epistemically diverse curriculum discussed earlier takes account of the concern expressed by Moore & Young (2001). Moore & Young make a case for the importance of theoretical knowledge and argue that students should be encouraged to explore the connections between knowledge and their own experience as well as the relation between knowledge and the world of work.

#### **4.13 Critiques of OBE**

Boughey (2004) argues that the implementation of outcomes-based education in the higher education sector is necessary to achieve both equity and efficiency within the system. The NQF, established to facilitate access to education, necessitated the use of a mechanism to enable the registration and quality assessment of qualifications on the framework. The mechanism of choice was the learning outcome. It is possible to assess the levels of qualifications, teaching, learning and assessment through an assessment of the formulated learning outcomes and assessment strategies and criteria.

Boughey further argues that the communication of outcomes and assessment criteria to students helps them to understand the learning requirements of a programme. She acknowledges a criticism levelled at OBE by others (for example Knight 2001, Hussey & Smith 2002 and 2003) that the language of outcomes within the context of the complex learning environments of higher education does not necessarily clarify exactly what is required and she states that it might be necessary to discuss the meaning of the outcomes and therefore clarify the nature of the learning required.

According to Boughey the development of outcomes for whole qualifications allows lecturers across the three or four years of a qualification to see if, when and how all the various components of a course or qualification enable students to meet the outcomes of the whole qualification. It therefore constitutes a useful planning mechanism for curriculum development and it can be used as tool to communicate the course requirements to students.

Similarly, Ensor (2003) notes that approaches that conceptualise learning as discrete packages fail to take account of the verticality of the knowledge structures of disciplines. Such verticality does not fit into a process which divides learning into discrete units. Knight

argues that “complex learning ought to be coherent and progressive” (2001: 370). A modular approach, often based on outcomes, is criticised for compromising curriculum coherence. Thus, Ensor (2003) shows that some institutions have safe-guarded coherence and progression by building in sets of prerequisite courses within a programme.

Hussey & Smith (2002; 2003) argue that the setting of learning outcomes runs the risk of discouraging the kind of creative thinking of unintended and emergent learning outcomes that are the hallmark of higher learning and the production of new knowledge. A further critique of OBE according to Hussey & Smith is that it is not possible to specify outcomes so that their meaning is evident to those outside of the community of disciplinary practice. Even within a community of discipline experts, it may be necessary to explicate what is meant by particular verbs in any specific context. They argue, therefore, that for outcomes to be useful in any way they need to be understood.

It is necessary to communicate the nuances of meaning within the teaching and learning context; the teaching and learning processes aid the understanding of the meaning of the outcomes. Outcomes require engagement with particular teaching and learning processes to be fully understood.

OBE as conceptualised within the South African context requires the development of specific outcomes (outcomes related to the content knowledge) as well as critical cross-field outcomes. The latter are generic outcomes that are required to be developed and displayed at all levels of the education system, up to PhD level. These generic outcomes relate to the kinds of skills that are required within the workplace and they are believed to provide students with the ability to learn to learn and therefore to adapt to knowledge and technological changes. The notion of generic outcomes is attractive since South African graduates have been criticised for not being able to apply their theoretical knowledge within work contexts and being unable to perform skills that are thought to be generic (Boughey 2004). Within the South African context it is recognised that these critical cross-field outcomes need to be taught within specific disciplinary contexts, since the idea of generic skills is in effect a misnomer (Boughey 2004). Skills that are thought to be generic need to be applied in quite specific ways depending on the context of application.

Barnett 2004 calls generic skills a cul-de-sac. This is in line with Bernstein who believed that the notion of genericism was part of a move in education that requires the development of *trainability*, that is the ability to adapt to and take on ever changing requirements of the market. Bernstein warns that a focus on genericism to the detriment of theoretical knowledge leads to what he called “short-termism” and is detrimental to the development of identities that are focussed “inward” (Bernstein 2000). He argues that genericism creates outward focussed identities that look towards the market and consumerism for fulfilment.

Bernstein (1996; 2000); Young (2006) and Wheelahan (2006; 2007a, b) argue for the relevance of theoretical knowledge as part of vocational or professional training programmes – against the notion of genericism and the elimination of theoretical knowledge - since theoretical knowledge is significantly different from practical knowledge.

Maton (2009) terms the lack of transcendence between knowledge and its immediate context of application *semantic gravity*. Strong semantic gravity denotes the context-dependence of knowledge, while weak semantic gravity indicates the ability to abstract beyond the present context to enable linkages to be made with other contexts and with other knowledge in order to integrate and subsume new knowledge with already existing knowledge structures. Maton claims that strong semantic gravity leads to segmented learning, segmented knowledge and ultimately segmented lives. Maton (2009) agrees with Wheelahan that it is necessary for professional education or training to teach theoretical knowledge, not necessarily related to particular contexts since it allows the possibility of using that knowledge to think beyond particular contexts towards the development of new knowledge, or in Bernstein’s terms to think the not-yet-thought.

This research will aim to uncover how academics in the JMS department view knowledge, the relationship of theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge and the notion of knowledge for its own sake and how these views find expression in curriculum plans.

#### 4.14 Structural changes in HE that impact on curriculum development practices

##### 4.14.1 National structures

In this section I summarise the various structural changes that may potentially influence curriculum development at South African Higher Education institutions. All institutions were required to register their qualifications with *SAQA* in 2001. This required the development of outcomes for all qualification. Most institutions registered whole qualifications i.e. BA, BSc, BComm., MA degrees and so on. Furthermore, the HEQC requires that all new qualifications or programmes are *accredited*. In 2004 HEQC started to conduct *institutional audits* to assure the quality of the system. This includes audits of the management and internal quality assurance of programmes. The HEQC also conducts national reviews on selected programmes. It has been involved in reviewing a range of programmes such as the MBA and MEd degrees and also the Postgraduate Certificates in Education. Curricula, teaching and learning provision, student support, resources and so on come under scrutiny in such reviews.

##### 4.14.2 Institutional structures

Even before the establishment of the HEQC, some HE institutions in South Africa established systems for assuring the quality of all aspects of institutional life, including teaching and learning (Boughey 2004). This was done through a series of policies. In terms of teaching and learning, Rhodes University, for example, has developed the following policies for assuring the quality of teaching and learning: Evaluation of Teaching and Courses; Curriculum Development and Review; Assessment of Student Learning and Supervision of Postgraduate Degrees. For the purposes of this study it is necessary to outline briefly the requirements of the policy on curriculum development and review. The policy requires that curricula are written in outcomes format. It is a requirement that curricula are reviewed regularly and that they are revised at least every six years to ensure that account is taken of shifts in the discipline. The institution requires that departments regularly report on how they comply with these policies.

Within the higher education sector the new policy context created a disjuncture between culture and structure. New ideas have entered the HE sector from wider society and have

resulted in changes in the state structures governing HE. Changes in state structures necessitated cultural and structural changes in state governance of the HE sector as well as in relation to institutional governance. New institutional structures were formed to manage the new requirements from government and to ensure global competitiveness. In some institutions there were thus significant contradictions between the new managerial institutional structures and the established collegial academic cultures based not on the notion of management but on the practice of peer review (Quinn 2006).

#### **4.14.3 Departmental structures**

Some departments have established teaching and learning committees and committees to oversee the curriculum development processes. The Department of Journalism and Media Studies established a Curriculum Forum that meets quarterly to deliberate curriculum matters. Since 2003 the JMS Department has embarked on extensive curriculum development with the aim of revising the curriculum from first year to the coursework masters level. Thus far curricula for the first, second, third and fourth year have been revised, with each year of study being allocated a year for revision. All staff teaching courses at the particular year under revision could participate in the process. The relevant staff members then formed the Curriculum Committee for that year. Furthermore, the JMS Department established Year Boards tasked with the management of the curriculum as well as to consider any amendments to the curriculum as planned.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

Boughey argues (2004) that one of the outcomes of the move towards what Lemmer (1998) terms “corporate managerialism” in HE was the emergence of national and institutional quality assurance mechanisms. Quality assurance of academic provision requires, for example, academics to articulate outcomes and assessment criteria and therefore puts in the public domain that which many academics have regarded as a “private” domain. Course outcomes have to be aligned to programme outcomes and this, in theory, requires academics to communicate with others across specialisation and even disciplinary boundaries. Moore & Lewis (2004) note that new curriculum requirements make new demands on academics and

necessitate new curriculum management processes that academic leaders may not be skilled at.

R.S. Moore (2004) argues that academic identities which rest primarily within their disciplines have been highly resistant to change and the blurring of boundaries between disciplines inscribed in policy documents has not occurred in any significant regard. However, it is claimed that the effort required by the process of rendering curricula in a format appropriate for registration on the National Qualifications Framework, did result in more thought about what was being offered (Ensor 2002) even though in many cases, it did not result in any significant change in the content or processes of curriculum delivery.

## Chapter 5

### Research Methodology

#### 5.1 Introduction

As already noted, the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the processes and mechanisms that underpin curriculum development in an academic department in a South African university. In this chapter I shall explain the purposes of the study more fully, return briefly to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the study that I discussed in Chapter 2 and discuss the research design and processes.

The aims of the research were to:

1. document and develop an understanding of the processes of and mechanisms that enable or constrain collaborative curriculum development in an academic department;
2. explore the cultural, structural and agential constraints and enablements that contribute to or inhibit curriculum development;
3. explore the pedagogical implications of the curriculum discourses used in curriculum development meetings;
4. draw lessons about the dynamics of curriculum change from the analysis of the case;
5. provide an analysis of curriculum change processes that can be used by academics and education development practitioners to inform collaborative curriculum processes elsewhere.

A further aim of this project is to contribute to research within the field of higher education. Tight (2004) notes that, in general, higher education research tends to be a-theoretical or the theory employed tends to be implicit, particularly where the research emanates from education departments or higher education research centres.

One of the intentions for this research is to contribute towards providing an example of a theoretical framework that might inform higher education research as an inter-disciplinary exercise. The research is in the area of educational development and utilises social theory and sociological theories about knowledge and curriculum.

Concern has also been expressed that Higher Education research tends to ignore issues of structure and agency (see, for example, Ashwin 2008 and Clegg 2005). This dissertation is a contribution towards research into higher education that takes account of the influence of structure on developments in the sector. Very few studies on higher education have been undertaken using Archer's morphogenetic framework (see for example Clegg 2003, 2005 and Quinn 2006 and Quinn & Boughey 2008). Methodologically this research will add to the small body of research that exists at present which uses Archer's morphogenetic framework. Furthermore, as indicated in the introductory chapter, there is a need to develop knowledge and understanding about the meso level within higher education (Trowler 2005). Therefore, another aim for this project is to contribute to the understanding of meso-level activities at a higher education institution within the area of curriculum development. Barnett (2005) and others have indicated the need for better understanding of higher education curriculum processes. This dissertation is a contribution in that regard.

A further theoretical contribution of this dissertation is the application of the ideas on knowledge and curriculum developed by Bernstein and Maton to the area of higher education curriculum development as previously indicated. I am using the morphogenetic framework as a meta-theory while employing Bernstein and Maton's theories on knowledge and curriculum structures for the substantive analysis of the data.

Practically, as an educational development practitioner, it is my aim to develop knowledge about collaborative curriculum development practices of an academic department at a South African university, in order to enhance my own practice in working with academics and departments who engage in curriculum development. It is hoped that other academic development practitioners, academics and academic managers might benefit from the insights generated by this project. The practical aims of the research are therefore congruent with some of my personal aims.

## **5.2 Social realist research**

Like many others, I believe that it is important that the object of study is congruent with the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances of the researcher (Henning 2004; Sayer 1992). The research which forms the basis of this dissertation is underpinned by a

social realist ontology and as such asserts that there is a real world which can be apprehended, which is independent of our knowledge of it. This is the intransitive dimension of the study. It is, however, possible to obtain knowledge about the world. This knowledge is regarded as objective, though fallible. I argue that it is possible to come to an understanding of the world through examining, amongst other things, people's experiences of the world. This is the transitive level. In addition, from the critical realist perspective, the importance of understanding the deep structures of events and our experiences of events is asserted. Thus coming to an understanding of the causal mechanisms underpinning events is an important part of a realist research project.

Maxwell (2004a), quoting Miles and Huberman (1984) argues, contrary to a common view that only experimental research is capable of producing explanations, that "field research is far *better* than solely quantified approaches at developing explanations of what is called *local causality* – the actual events and processes that led to specific outcomes" (Miles and Huberman *ibid*:132). Maxwell suggests further that the use of data from multiple sites enables qualitative research to generate "powerful general explanations and can confirm causal models suggested by survey data" (Maxwell 2004a).

According to Maxwell (2004a, 2004b) the growing acceptance of the explanatory power of qualitative research springs from two developments: firstly, the adoption by a growing number of researchers of a realist philosophy that accepts that causality is the result of mechanisms and processes and not the result of observed regularities; and secondly, the recognition that there is a difference between the nature of explanations provided by variance oriented research on the one hand, and process oriented research on the other.

He argues (2004a: 248) that variance theory deals primarily with the kind of research undertaken through quantitative experimental methods and attempts to explain variables, and the correlations between variables, and analyses the "the contribution of differences in values of particular variables to differences in other variables". In contrast, process theory is concerned with events and the processes that underpin them. It has to do with the processes that result in one event influencing another and these processes cannot easily be subjected to statistical analyses. A process approach to research requires qualitative research methods aimed at the in-depth study of phenomena. For Miles & Huberman qualitative data, that is,

“naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” can provide researchers with “a strong handle on what ‘real life’ is like” (1994:10).

Critical realists argue against the limitations of the concept of causation based on observed regularities and claim that context and mental processes of participants are important for the development of causal explanations (Maxwell 2004a; Sayer 1992). The researcher therefore is not restricted to inferring the presence of causation through the co-variance of what is assumed to be cause and effect; but is able to observe some causal processes in operation in particular contexts. Furthermore, realists assert the reality of “mental events and phenomena” as causes of actions. The importance that qualitative researchers assert for the participants’ interpretations is underscored by this realist conception. Within the context that I researched it was possible to observe the operation of causal processes through the interactions of participants during curriculum meetings and through the references to other aspects of the contexts that influenced their arguments and decision-making. In addition, through the development of an analysis of the structures at work within the South African higher education system, Rhodes University and the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, it was possible to develop my understanding of some of the causal structural, cultural and agential mechanisms at work in the curriculum development process.

Critical realist research employs an explanatory methodology in that it attempts to provide explanations of events through the examination of causal mechanisms (Sayer 1992, 2000; Archer 1995a, 2000; and Maxwell 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

Miles and Huberman assert that “qualitative analysis, with its close-up look, can identify *mechanisms*, going beyond sheer association. It is unrelentingly *local*, and deals with the *complex* network of events and processes in a situation” (1994: 147, see also Maxwell 2004a). For Flyvbjerg (2004: 425) “from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur”.

### 5.3 Developing knowledge of social processes

It is possible for qualitative research to provide interpretations and explanations of agents' understandings of the world (Maxwell 2004a, 2004 b). It is important to note that it is *not* the aim of realist research to provide predictions since it is believed that, given the open nature of the systems studied by social researchers, it is not possible to provide predictions as might be the case when closed systems are studied and constant conjunctions may be noticed. Maxwell (2004b: 251) observes that "causal explanation, from a realist perspective, involves the development of a theory about the process being investigated, a process that will rarely be open to direct observation in its entirety". This theory needs to be part of the coherence of the research design, the identification of appropriate evidence that may support or dispute the theory and thus necessitate the development of alternative theories (Maxwell 2004a).

Social research is normally undertaken on or in open systems since the contexts or subjects that are studied are not isolated from other contexts or agents. While the study is taking place, influences from other contexts and agents may occur and the object of study may change as it is being studied. Agents, because they have the human capacity of reflexivity may also change as they are being studied. George Herbert Mead regarded, "the reality of social life (as) a conversation of significant symbols, in the course of which people make tentative moves and then adjust and reorient their activity in the light of the responses (real and imagined) others make to those moves" (Becker 1996 in Maxwell 2004b). However, social processes, according to Becker, are not easily observable. To emphasise the point about the complexity of observing and analysing social life, Maxwell (2004b: 254) quotes Dunn (1978:171) who declares that "there are still no cheap ways to deep knowledge of other persons and the causes of their actions".

Part of the difficulty with gaining knowledge about social processes is due to the fact that the objects of study of the social researcher are not constant as in closed, experimental systems. A further complication related to social research is what Giddens has termed the *double hermeneutic* (Giddens 1984). The researcher's aim is to understand and explain a social event or agents' experiences of events. The people who are involved in the events or who recount their stories act in accordance, *inter alia*, with their own interpretations of the events. Thus the researcher has to develop her own meanings based on the meanings of participants in the

research process or those operating within the research context. Miles and Huberman (1994: 9) suggest that any data “is a conceptual substitute of one’s own feelings and perceptions”.

Sayer (1992) argues for the recognition of the concept-dependence of objects. He asserts that no agent (including the researcher) approaches objects as if they were devoid of meaning. It therefore needs to be acknowledged that everyone imbues objects with meaning and that understanding the meanings attributed to objects and events is an important part of developing understanding of the social world. In this study I have therefore paid attention to the meanings research participants attached to various objects, structures, ideas and people. I was also cognisant of my own understandings and the meanings I attached to various aspects of the context.

In the context of curriculum development processes, each academic who participates in the process, has her own notion of what the process is about and what she aims to achieve in the process. The researcher has to take cognisance of the fact that, despite efforts at developing inter-subjectivity around the object of the process, it may not be possible to reach a situation where all the agents within a context think and feel exactly the same about the object of their activity. In addition, there are a range of interests operating that influence agents differentially. There are also different power dynamics operating that have an impact on how actors work towards or against a particular agreed-upon aim.

My aim is to explain processes and their underlying mechanisms. This aim is congruent with my ontological position that asserts a differentiated, structured and stratified reality, that is, a reality with a deep structure that is knowable through agents’ perceptions and viewpoints, but also through examining the effects of structures on the activities of agents within the specific context that I investigated.

Maxwell (2004b: 254) suggests the following three strategies for enhancing the social researcher’s ability to observe and analyse complex social processes: “intensive, long-term involvement, collecting ‘rich’ data and using narrative or ‘connecting’ approaches to analysis”. Having an *extended period of involvement with the research context and participants* (Maxwell’s first strategy) allows the researcher to build knowledge and

understanding of the research context across a range of events and this decreases the reliance on inference.

Miles & Huberman agree that collecting data over “a sustained period” allows the researcher to “go far beyond ‘snapshots’ of ‘what?’ or ‘how many?’ to just how and why things happen as they do – and even *assess* causality as it actually plays out in a particular setting” (1994: 10). I would argue that such involvement also serves to build relationships of trust between the researcher and the participants and it offers more opportunities to gather information, even within more informal contexts, such as over tea or during breaks in events. A further advantage of such extensive, long-term involvement is the development of rich data.

According to Maxwell the term “thick description” is often used when what is meant is *rich data*. Rich data (Maxwell’s second strategy) refers to data that allows the researcher to gain “a full and revealing picture” of processes and the meanings that participants attach to them. Rich data allows the researcher to produce a detailed description that illuminates causal processes. The better the researcher knows the research context and the longer her involvement with the participants, the better able she is also to infer mental processes from behaviour (2004b: 255).

Maxwell, following Becker (1970) comments that when there is rich data there is less danger of the researcher being deceived by participant misrepresentations (such as may happen in interviews or as may be evident in documents) or for researcher bias to influence the description and explanation. It is argued that the data collected for this research allowed me to explore what Flyvbjerg (2004) calls “the deep detail of the case” (2004: 425).

The third of Maxwell’s strategies for the development of causal explanations has to do with the way the data analysis is written up. I shall discuss his ideas around *narrative and connecting analysis* in section 5.9 below, which deals with data analysis. I shall now discuss the nature of my intensive long-term involvement with the research site and the opportunities I had for the collection of rich data.

My involvement with the research site has been extensive. As an educational development practitioner at Rhodes University I have worked with several academics from the department

of Journalism and Media Studies since the late 1990s. During this time, I have conducted many evaluations of courses and teaching at the request of academics in the department. I have also consulted with some academics about aspects of the curriculum design of individual courses. Other colleagues in CHERTL had similar involvements, and information about work in academic departments is often shared in order to develop the Centre's understanding of practices. I had been aware of the collaborative curriculum development process in the department since 2003; however I was only able to gain access to curriculum development activities towards the end of 2005.

The JMS Department decided to embark on a full-scale curriculum development process after at least two evaluation reports that they had commissioned indicated that it was necessary to create more coherence in the curriculum in order to address in a significant way some of the concerns of students. As a result of my sustained involvement with various members of the department I became aware of general student dissatisfaction about the nature of the JMS course. Many students register for the degree in JMS because they wish to learn to become media practitioners. They expect the course to be very practical and some are disappointed when they are confronted with the theoretical study of journalism and media.

The department has also often been accused by students of being disorganised; this seems to stem from the need to keep a theory-practice balance in the curriculum. A further significant causal influence was the arrival of a new senior member of staff with a background in education and an interest in the development of curriculum coherence. The JMS Department therefore, represented an interesting case for the study of collaborative curriculum development.

#### **5.4 Case study research**

The research reported on here is a qualitative study and documents the processes and the outcomes of a single, embedded case study. The object of my inquiry is the collaborative curriculum development processes in an academic department.

Various kinds of case studies have been described, for example, single cases, embedded cases, multiple cases and comparative cases (Yin 2003). Flyvbjerg (2001, 2004) discusses the value of what he terms *critical cases* for the advancement of knowledge. He suggests that one

way of assessing whether a case is indeed a critical case is to look for a case that constitutes either a 'most likely' or 'least likely' scenario or for something that "will either clearly confirm or irrefutably falsify propositions and hypotheses". I think that the case at hand could be said to be quite rare within the higher education context in terms of the centrality that curriculum development occupies within the department and in terms of the adoption of a collaborative approach to this task.

I would argue that my case study is both **intrinsic** and **instrumental**. Case (1995) distinguishes between intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. According to Case (*ibid*) if the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case it is an intrinsic case study. My intrinsic interest in the curriculum development in the JMS department is motivated by my ongoing involvement with the department in my capacity as an academic development practitioner. It is important to understand the dynamics that operate within a particular department if one is to engage with that department with any level of success. It may also be possible to use one's understanding of a particular context to help develop understandings of contexts that may be similar in various respects.

Yin (2003) argues that choosing a case carefully contributes to the ability to generalise from such a case. He (*ibid*: 424) further argues that even if it is not possible to produce formal generalisations from the particular case, the knowledge generated through the careful study of the case constitutes a contribution to knowledge within a given field or to the knowledge base of society in general. Flyvbjerg (2001) makes a strong argument for the importance of generating case knowledge and for practitioners to build knowledge of many different cases, as this adds to expertise. Practitioners use their wide case knowledge base to make expert judgements, which have developed beyond the rule-based judgements that can be made by people who are merely competent in their fields. Part of my motivation for undertaking this study was to develop that kind of expertise. Furthermore, I had an instrumental interest in this particular process because of my broad interest in pedagogic issues in higher education and in ways of supporting academics and academic departments in pursuing pedagogic projects. Curriculum development is one of the pedagogic practices that I need to understand in order to be able to assist academics as they participate in curriculum development processes – either on their own or as part of a collaborative process. Studying a collaborative process enabled me to understand the structural, cultural and agential issues that come into play

during such a process. It was suggested earlier that the changing nature of academic work and the weakening of classification between some disciplines, necessitate *collaborative* curriculum development amongst members of a range of disciplines. Understanding something about the dynamics that may come into play in such a context (analytic generalisation) is an important consideration in doing this research.

Case study research investigates a bounded system or a single unit as its object of investigation (Stake 1995; Merriam 2001). Thus the parameters of the case should be definable (Henning *et al* 2004) and delineated by the unit of analysis. Case (1995: 2) notes that a case has “a boundary and working parts” and could be seen as an “integrated system”, while Gillham (2000:1) argues that the boundaries of cases are not easily drawn. According to Henning *et al* (2004: 32) the aim of case study research is “to see patterns, relationships and the dynamic that warrants the inquiry” and there is therefore something worth uncovering. A case study can thus be seen a research project characterised by “issues (that are complex” and situated and where the relationships are problematic (Stake 2002:142).

Case studies are chosen “to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Henning *et al* 2004: 39) and with the aim of developing an *emic* or insider’s understanding of the case. In addition, case study researchers aim to provide “intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system (Smith 1978) such as an individual, a program, event, group, intervention or community” (Henning *et al* 2004:39). Maxwell (2004a, 2005) and Sayer (1992) argue that social realist research aims to provide more than descriptions; the aim is to provide explanations of processes, particularly causal explanation which uncovers the mechanisms leading to particular outcomes. It is not the outcomes that are the most important, though, but rather the *process* and therefore it is important to take account of and describe and explain “*how, where, when and why* things happen in the case” as answers to these questions form an integral part of the study (Henning *et al* 2004: 41). It is Yin’s (2003) contention that the most pertinent of these questions for case study research are how and why questions.

### 5.4.1 Context in case study research

As is the case with qualitative research in general, the context forms an integral part of the case. According to Henning *et al*, “the context is also more than part of the case – it is the case and the interaction between context and action ... is usually the *unit of analysis*” (2004: 41). Yin (2003) argues that context is “highly pertinent” to case study research. The context of the case is highly relevant and therefore the case needs to be examined in relation to its various contexts. Gillham (2000: 10) notes that people’s “behaviour, thoughts and feelings are partly determined by their context” and it is therefore imperative to study the context of action and interaction in order to understand agents. For Case (1995) one of the purposes of case study research is to come to “appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of (the case), its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts” (p. 16). One of the strengths of case study research and its foregrounding of context is that the “possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues is strong” (Miles & Huberman 1994: 10).

The curriculum development processes of the JMS Department constitute an interesting case (I suspect one could even call it a revelatory case) for several reasons. I am not aware of many studies where the curriculum development processes of an academic department have been studied in depth over an extended period of time and where the members of a department have allowed an observer to be part of their processes.

Furthermore, the department is interesting in that it prepares students to follow a career in journalistic or other media through the teaching of theoretical courses in media studies and several practical specialisations. The relationship between the theoretical and practical components of the JMS courses presents an interesting case revealing how academics work with the tensions of ensuring that their students are offered an adequate theoretical background and an acceptable level of practical skill by the time they conclude their studies in the department at the end of the fourth year.

I examined the fourth year curriculum development process which was embedded in a curriculum development process which has been on-going since 2003. From 2003 to 2005 curricula for the first, second and third year were reconceptualised. At the time when the data collection was conducted for this dissertation the process was effectively in its fourth year

and a further year of intensive work on the curriculum was envisaged for the following year. The department offers courses in journalism and media studies and students who graduate from the department work as newspaper journalists or in other media, such as radio, television or the world wide web. This bachelor's degree in Journalism and Media Studies, which has practical and theoretical components, is offered within a university that is considered to be an élite academic institution and this places limitations on the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge that may be included in the curriculum.

The theoretical courses taught within the degree are taught by theoreticians in the field of Media Studies, while the practical courses are taught by people who have practised as journalists. The practical specialisation lecturers are thus appointed for their practical expertise and not necessarily for their academic status. Thus the department consists of academics with different conceptions of the nature of the field, the nature of knowledge and the nature of the JMS course as a whole.

In addition, the department is relatively large in relation to other departments within the institution and has a powerful position since it has over the years been a draw card for students within the Faculty of Humanities. Other aspects of the critical nature of the case as well as elaboration of the points made above will become clearer in the section of the dissertation that deals with the analysis of the case.

For this in-depth study of a single case I examined the experiences of a small number of individuals involved in the curriculum development process in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. Information for analysis was gathered through observing and audio-taping a series of meetings where the curriculum for the fourth year (JMS 4) of the Bachelor of Journalism and Media Studies degree was developed. I interviewed all six members of this working group. I also interviewed seven other members of the department whom I judged to be strategic informants, who were able to contribute to my understanding of the relationships between the work of the JMS 4 working group and other curriculum development processes that had already taken place or were in process in the department. Furthermore, I analysed various texts relevant to the case, such as minutes of all the curriculum development meetings that had taken place in the department since 2003, the departmental vision statement as well as curriculum proposals developed by several members of the department. Maxwell argues

that textual analysis is an important part of case study research and that chronology and the connections between events and contexts are relevant (Maxwell 2004a: 248).

In order to come to an understanding of the curriculum development processes of an academic department, my aim was to uncover the meanings that participants in the process appended to the processes and to examine and explain how these meanings were evident in the curriculum processes. Further, the aim was to uncover the causal mechanisms that come into play at the various levels of the social world, *viz.* the empirical, the actual and the real. It was therefore necessary to examine events (the curriculum meetings), participants' experiences of the events as well as to analyse the interplay of structures.

## 5.5 Sampling

Collaborative curriculum development processes are rare in universities. The JMS Department is one of two large departments I know of at Rhodes University that have embarked on such a process. I gained access to the curriculum meetings of the first department, I conducted interviews with members of the department, but I realised that there would be major ethical problems in reporting on that case. I thus decided to find another case.

I was aware of the on-going process in the Department of JMS and tried to get access to the department early on in the process, however, the chairperson of the CF at the time, thought that members of the department needed to find their feet in the process before they might wish to allow an outsider to observe and study the process. I eventually gained access to the curriculum development processes of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the end of 2005 when I was invited to attend the final meeting of the third year curriculum development process in October of that year. This time around, I was granted permission to study their processes in 2006 when they were to overhaul the curriculum of fourth year of the Journalism and Media Studies degree.

Given the above explanation of my processes of gaining access to my cases it is clear that I employed a process of purposive sampling for this research.

### 5.5.1 Data Sources

Case study research makes use of multiple data sources in order to ensure that the complexity of the case is examined fully and the depth of the case is established. Gillham (2000) notes that no one data source is likely to be sufficient or valid on its own, while Yin (2003) argues that it is imperative that the researcher examines all the data applicable to the case, even if all the data will not find its way into the case report. Case studies take place within naturalistic settings, using naturally occurring data that is often collected “as it happens” (Gillham 2000: 2). Transcriptions of curriculum development meetings that I attended as a participant observer constitute a major proportion of the data I collected.

Merriam (2001) notes that the qualitative researcher is one of the primary sources of data collection, through the conducting of interviews, observation and document analysis as well as the chief maker of meaning within the research process (Alvesson & Sköldbberg quoted in Henning *et al* (2004:39). This makes it imperative that the researcher is explicit and reflexive about her aims, biases and values in order to enhance the trustworthiness of her study (Henning *et al* 2004:39).

It is crucial that the methods chosen are congruent with the research question and the nature of the inquiry (Henning *et al* 2004: 33). There thus needs to be particular logic to the research design and the methods chosen have to be the most useful for generating the appropriate kind of data to enable the researcher to answer the research questions. The range of methods need to form part of a congruent methodology; the methods need to “complement one another ... have the ‘goodness of fit’ to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose” (Henning *et al* 2004: 36).

#### 5.5.1.1 *Observation and audio tapes of curriculum development meetings*

In the case examining the curriculum development processes of the JMS 4 working group, I used data that I generated through the observation and recording of curriculum meetings. For Case (1995: 15) “the nature of people and systems becomes more transparent during their struggles”. These struggles revolve around what he terms “issues”. Case (1995: 17) asserts that:

Issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases. Issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out, the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, and the complex backgrounds of human concern. Issues help us expand upon the moment, help us to see the instance in a more historical light, help us recognize the pervasive problems in human interaction. Issue questions or issue statements provide a powerful conceptual structure for organising the study of a case.

I attended all but two of the JMS 4 curriculum working group meetings. The meetings took place weekly during term time from May to November 2006 and lasted approximately one and a half to two hours each. During these meetings I made notes of things that struck me about the process and which contributed to my on-going analysis of the case. I audio-taped all the meetings I attended and transcribed all the tapes verbatim. The purpose of these transcriptions was not to produce detailed conversation analyses of the meetings, but rather to produce data on a series of issues that emerged during these meetings.

I attended all the CF meetings for the year 2006. CF meetings took place once a term, usually towards the end of the term and lasted approximately one and a half hours to two hours each. These meetings were open to all lecturers in the department and decisions taken or ratified by this forum were regarded as binding on the department. Three of these meetings were transcribed in full and I took notes during the final CF meeting of the year.

In addition I attended two meetings of the third year board. Each meeting lasted approximately one and half hours. Year boards normally make decisions about the day to day running of a specific year. The third year board meetings I attended also made substantial decisions with regard to the third year curriculum.

I also obtained copies of the minutes of all the curriculum development meetings since the process started in 2003. I therefore have a full record of the issues and the decisions made throughout the lengthy process of curriculum design in the department from 2003 – 2006.

I interviewed all the members of the JMS 4 curriculum working group (except one who left the process mid-way and left the department at the end of 2006), as well as those lecturers who chaired the various year boards and who therefore had a large degree of the

responsibility for on-going curriculum development and review in the various years. I also interviewed the outgoing chairperson of the CF, the HoD and a senior member of the Media Studies (MS) team. In addition, I interviewed a second member of the MS team who participated in two meetings of the JMS 4 curriculum working group as a representative of the MS team. In summary, I interviewed thirteen members of the JMS department.

Using the analysis of these data I report on how and why particular curriculum decisions were made and how the views of the different agents influenced their role in the curriculum development processes.

#### **5.5.1.2 Interviews with participants in the curriculum development meetings**

According to Knight and Arksey (1999: 34) qualitative interviews allow the researcher to “explore ... things in depth (and to learn) about the informants’ perspectives and about what matters to them”. They provide an opportunity to have a dialogue with the interviewee and allow for the clarification of issues and for questions to be adapted to the specific individual. When the interviewer takes the trouble to build rapport and establish trust and openness, this has the potential to enhance the validity of the data (*ibid*: 52).

Semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately an hour were conducted with all the participants in the fourth year process as well as with other key or strategic informants in the department. I judged these strategic informants to have an understanding of the history of the department as well as of the background to the curriculum development processes which other members of the department did not have. Interview data allow the researcher to apprehend “how people understand themselves, or their setting – what lies behind the more objective evidence” (Gillham 2000: 7). Through the analysis of the data I show how the various participants in the curriculum development process understood the various processes.

It is important that the researcher treats interview data circumspectly since there are sometimes discrepancies between what people say they do and what they actually do. In this study, the data that emerged from the various curriculum meetings were sources that contributed to establishing the veracity of people’s espoused views in relation to their actions.

However, despite the possible problems with interview data they do constitute a way of examining people's understandings of themselves, their motives and their contexts.

I designed an interview schedule that I used as a basis for the interviews. Wengraff (2001) distinguishes between theory questions and interview questions and notes that the theory questions are used to construct interview questions in a language that is accessible and appropriate for the purpose, and likely to elicit the kind of information that would answer the theory questions. The main purpose of the interviews was to come to an understanding of how interviewees understood the notion of curriculum and the purposes of curriculum design, how they experienced the process and how they saw their role in the process of curriculum design, what factors they thought facilitated or inhibited the process and what they thought about the way the process was facilitated. My purpose was therefore to get interviewees "to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings" (Arksey and Knight 1999: 32).

Each interview required a different approach since all the interviewees had different interests and different levels of involvement in the process, different histories in the department and so on. I used the interview schedule as a basis to probe the respondents to talk particularly about the issues that interested them, while making sure that all or most of the concerns addressed by the schedule (see Appendix 2) were covered in each interview.

I transcribed all the interviews verbatim myself. This was so that I could begin the process of becoming familiar with the material. Furthermore, I thought it would be easier to produce an accurate transcription since I was present when the recordings were made and I was knowledgeable about the topics discussed. It was therefore fairly easy for me to decipher those instances when it was hard to hear and which would have been near impossible for a person unfamiliar with the context to decipher adequately. Since the aim of the analysis was not to engage in a close discourse analysis of the text, I did not include in the transcription the notational conventions used for conversation analysis, for example. I used NVivo, a computer programme to code and sort the interview data, however I found it very difficult to work with the large volumes of data from the curriculum meeting transcripts. I thus coded these manually.

Following a method of analysis developed by Dowling (1997) and adapted by Ensor (1997), Moore (2004) uses an interpretive device for the analysis of text. Dowling's approach uses 'positioning strategies', "where the 'authorial voice' of a text specifies a 'voice' or a social role" such as academic, theorist, curriculum specialist and so on, and "then positions that voice by associating it with practices, people or ideas presented as having positive attributes and distancing it from what could be seen as having negative attributes" (Moore 2004: 87). Moore and Ensor indicate that the researcher needs to be alert and should not take everything said by the interviewees at face value. Ensor (1997: 249) warns that interviews:

... do not straightforwardly provide windows on different worlds, be they inner or outer ones. Rather they are constituted through representations of these worlds through selective description and redescription. Or, putting it differently [interviewees] recruit selectively from different settings to establish their own positions.

Moore (2004) suggests that in analysing interviews one should be alert to inconsistencies in the way the interviewee constructs his/her position and one should be open to inconsistencies in the presentation and find explanations for those.

### **5.5.1.3 Documents**

I examined a range of departmental documents concerned with the curriculum development process as well as what Bernstein (2000) terms *mythical documents*, such as the departmental vision statement. Other documents included minutes of all curriculum meetings (including minutes of Year Board meetings and JDD meetings) since 2003, course evaluation data, e-mail communication between members of the JMS 4 working group, academic papers written by members of the department on issues of teaching and learning of journalism and media studies, various proposals by members of the department about the curriculum as well as a range of university policies and reports pertaining to curriculum issues.

### **5.5.2 Triangulation**

Some theorists argue that multiple data sources are used for the purpose of triangulation. Maxwell notes that the purpose of triangulation could be to corroborate data from various sources, however, it is more useful to see multiple data sources as a means of ensuring that

the researcher collects more complete data. Later I shall discuss the notion of validity in qualitative research and in particular validity in realist research as discussed by Maxwell (2004 and 2005).

Jick (1983) uses triangulation of data for the complementary purposes of confirmation and completeness. Arksey and Knight (1999) advise that it is important to have clarity about the purposes of triangulation. Each method of data collection has inherent strengths, biases and weaknesses (*ibid*) and knowing these allows the researcher to combine different kinds of data effectively. Denzin (1970) has developed the notion of multiple triangulation which includes methodological triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation. In this research project I used triangulation for the purposes of completeness and confirmation as discussed above. I employed the multiple methods of observation, interviews and document analysis. My data sources were individual lecturers, groups interacting in curriculum meetings and the data were collected over a period of approximately one year. Finally, I employed a range of theoretical perspectives as analytic lenses to make sense of the data collected.

Knight and Arksey (1999) state that triangulation “can increase confidence in results, strengthen the completeness of the study, ... enhance interpretability: one set of data gives a handle to understand another set, divergences can uncover new issues or processes that can result in turn in the development of new theories, or modification of existing ones, ...contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the focus of the study” (p. 25). Interview data and document analysis helped me to more fully understand research participants’ positions on specific issues.

## 5.6 Data analysis

In qualitative research data analysis happens through the inductive processes of abstraction, abduction and retroduction (Danermark *et al* 2002; Henning *et al* 2004; Scott & Usher 2008). **Abstraction** can be said to be akin to the process of experimentation in quantitative research in that the researcher abstracts or “isolates” a part of the object of the research for in-depth examination. The process is unlike the process of experimentation in that the part of the object that is “isolated” cannot be cut off from those people, structures and processes that

normally impact on the object. This is one aspect that makes qualitative research so different from quantitative, variance type of research. While the object is being researched, all the influences that normally impact on it remain active, therefore the qualitative researcher works on a changing object.

Abstraction is part of what Miles & Huberman (1994:10) refer to as **data reduction**. This is a process where the researcher focuses in on and selects data from field notes and transcriptions. They argue that the reduction of data is part of the process of analysis and occurs throughout the life of a research project from the time when the researcher selects what information to collect and what not to; it occurs in the process of writing analytic memos, deciding on themes and codes, and so on. They (*ibid*:11) summarise the process as “a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that the ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified”.

**Abduction** happens when the researcher recontextualises the data in terms of theoretical constructs that are applicable to the data and that help to clarify what is happening in terms of the object. In my research, for example, I use ideas about knowledge and knower structures to begin to elucidate why theory and practical lecturers think differently about what is required of the curriculum.

**Retroduction** is a process of transcendental argumentation (Bhaskar, 2008). Here the researcher asks what things must be like in order for the object of research to be the way it is. In other words, it is a process of coming to understand the necessary and internal relationships between objects. Thus, in terms of the curriculum development process, I ask, what must the conditions be like in order for the curriculum development process to be a process of serious deliberation for an academic department.

Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest a process of analysis that moves from data reduction to data display and finally to drawing conclusions and verifying them. I discussed reduction above. They (*ibid*: 11) suggest a process of displaying the data in the form of matrices, graphs, charts or networks as a way of organizing and compressing information in order to facilitate the process of drawing conclusions.

The process of drawing conclusions from the data and verifying those conclusions, is regarded by Miles & Huberman (*ibid*) as two sides of the same coin. The process of drawing conclusions includes “noting ... regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions” (*ibid*).

### 5.6.1 A scheme for organizing data

I use Archer’s morphogenetic framework to analyse the data together with the substantive theory. This framework suggests an analysis of structure, culture and agency over time. Thus for T<sup>1</sup> I did an analysis of the structural, cultural and agential conditions at the start of the JMS 4 curriculum development process. In order to do the structural analysis I used a range of secondary sources (historical accounts of the transformation of higher education in South Africa as well as secondary and primary documents that describe the institutional responses to national imperatives). In terms of structure and culture this allowed me to place the study within a larger context of national and institutional structures and ideas around curriculum as well as to look at the particular conditions that applied within the department of JMS at T<sup>1</sup>. I paid particular attention to the data to develop an understanding of the constraints and the enablements of structure, culture and agency within the context.

I then undertook a similar analysis at the points T<sup>2</sup> – T<sup>3</sup>. This is the heart of the analysis for this study. I examined the agential interactions within the context of structural, cultural conditions. Here the play of ideas and how agents negotiated their different perspectives in terms of the nature of higher education, the nature of journalism education and training, the nature of knowledge, the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and the knower and so on, were examined. Thus my examination of social interactions was informed by theoretical insights from my study of Bernstein and Maton. I examined how agents influenced the stability or changeability of institutional and departmental structures and culture. Doing this analysis allowed me to pay attention to the following of Bogden and Biglan’s (1992 in Miles & Huberman 1994: 61) categories within which to code the data:

- *Definition of the situation*: how people understand, define, or perceive the setting or the objects of the study;

- *Perspectives*: ways of thinking about their setting shared by informants (“how things are done here”);
- *Ways of thinking about people and objects*: understandings of each other, of outsiders, of objects in their world (more detailed than above);
- *Strategies*: ways of accomplishing things; people’s tactics, methods, techniques for meeting their needs;
- *Relationships and social structure*: unofficially defined patterns such as cliques, coalitions, romances, friendships, enemies.

The following three categories were also part of the analysis:

- *Process*: sequence of events, flow, transitions, and turning points, changes over time;
- *Activities*: regularly occurring kinds of behaviour;
- *Events*: specific activities, especially ones occurring infrequently.

## 5.7 Validity

Maxwell (2004b: 250) argues that the development of causal explanations is not “easy and straightforward” and is subject to a range of validity threats which should be taken cognisance of in the design of the study. He (2004b) discusses a range of strategies suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984) to draw and verify conclusions from qualitative research. He does not claim that they are foolproof or without problems and he suggests that they require further exploration and development if they are to be used in the creation of causal explanation. The first two of the strategies, intervention and comparison, are normally used in variance approaches.

In variance research **interventions** such as experiments and the use of control groups are used. However, Maxwell (2004a) suggests that field research and the researcher’s presence at the research site is itself a form of intervention and can be applied in the process of developing or testing causal theories about the object of the research. The study I am reporting on might be seen as an intervention in that sense.

The second of the strategies, **comparison**, is used in variance-oriented research through comparing intervention and control groups and in qualitative research through multi-site or multi-case studies.

Maxwell (*ibid*) suggests that less formal comparisons can be made by applying to the case under investigation, knowledge from the literature and the experience of the researcher in other settings at another time for the purpose of drawing conclusions or making inferences about causal mechanisms and their effects in the research context.

Yin (2003) discusses four tests to judge the quality of research. He discusses three techniques to assure the validity of case study research as well as how to assure reliability. Together with the three kinds of validity tests, he explains the “tactics” to be used in case study research as well as the stages in the research process where these tests and tactics would be relevant.

According to Yin many qualitative researchers find it difficult to establish **construct validity**. Construct validity has to do with assuring congruence between the objects of study and the methods through which they are studied. Construct validity can be assured through the use of multiple sources of evidence and thereby establishing what Yin (*ibid*) terms a “chain of evidence”. He also suggests that key informants should be asked to review the report at the draft stage. The first two of these tactics are applicable at the data collection stage whereas the last one happens at the stage of the composition of the report.

**Internal validity** is threatened when “spurious effects” (Yin *ibid*: 36) are asserted. It is therefore a particular threat for explanatory case studies where the underlying mechanisms of a process are examined. The researcher therefore needs to ensure that the inferences made about the data and the case are adequate. Working against the threats of spurious effects and faulty inferences, the researcher has to engage in processes of explanation building and the use of rival or alternative explanations (see also, Maxwell 2004). These tactics are used during the data analysis stage. In addition to these two methods, Yin also mentions pattern matching and logic models and ways of countering threats to the internal validity of the research. However, I think that these may be more applicable to variance type research models. The process of retrodution is useful in assuring adequate explanations.

**External validity** is assured through the use of theory in single-case studies. Processes such as abstraction and abduction are useful in assuring external validity. Finally, he notes that reliability may be assured through the development of a case protocol and the development of a case study database. It is therefore important to describe the processes and steps through which the study was conducted

Maxwell (2004b, 2005) asserts that there are particular ways of assuring validity to develop causal explanations. These are the “modus operandi approach, searching for discrepant evidence, triangulation and ‘member checks’” (Maxwell 2004b: 257). Maxwell (2004b: 258) suggests that it may be useful to get feedback from others about one’s judgements or to search for “discrepant evidence or negative cases” in order to make a judgement call about whether there is a need to change or adapt a conclusion. He further states that using data from a range of sources or settings or using a range of methods helps to limit biases inherent in one particular source. In using multiple sources, the researcher needs to be aware that certain kinds of data carry the risk of “self-report bias” (Fielding & Fielding in Maxwell 2004b: 259). Finally, seeking feedback from others regarding the researcher’s conclusions, whether they are respondents or other colleagues is a good way of identifying problems with explanations, biases and assumptions made about data. I presented my analysis and conclusions to colleagues as a way of testing these.

## **5.8 Analysis and narrative**

For Flyvbjerg (2004: 430), narrative is an integral element of case studies since it is able to capture “the complexities and contradictions of real life”. He believes, like Nietzsche, that “one should not wish to divest existence of its *rich ambiguity*” (Nietzsche in *ibid*). In order to achieve this richness, Flyvbjerg (2004) argues that it is important to focus in-depth on events and to work with the minutiae of particular events so that the “deep detail” may be captured in the narrative. Flyvbjerg (*ibid*: 430) argues that “the contextual and interpenetrating nature of forces, is lost” when the researcher tries to sum up a case through “large and mutually exclusive concepts”. The narrative that emerges from this kind of case study is told “in its diversity, allowing the story to unfold from the many-sided, complex and sometimes conflicting stories that the actors in the case have told” (*ibid*). He (*ibid*) also relates the case through the lens of theories and “philosophical positions that cut across specializations”. It is

therefore inevitable that the case will be presented through “thick description” and that it will be hard to summarise (*ibid*).

It seems as if the realist case study researcher has to negotiate the pros and cons of presenting the outcomes of the analysis in the form of a story which presents the story of the case in chronological order as opposed to presenting an analytical story which uses abstraction and theory to look at events in terms of cause and effect. Seidman (in Maxwell 2004a) uses two strategies for the analysis of interviews: codes and themes are categorised and narratives are created in the form of ‘profiles’ and ‘vignettes’. Maxwell (*ibid*) also recounts Smith’s (1979) process of analysis which includes “comparing and contrasting, and looking for antecedents and consequences” while at the same time he also searches for causal effects or what he calls “the consequences of social items” thereby developing a picture of “a complex systemic view and a concern for process, the flow of events over time” (Smith in Maxwell 2004b: 255).

For the analysis of processes it is necessary to have a sense of the connection between events as well as the causal connections that operate within a specific context (Maxwell *ibid*: 256). What is being argued for is the presentation of the results through a combination of a focus on the configurational dimension of the analysis and the more episodic, temporal narration of events. One of the critiques against narrative is that it tends to background causality in an attempt to offer a flowing story and in the process narrative accounts can fail “to problematize their categories, interpretations and explanation” (Sayer 1992: 261). It was my purpose to present a narrative of a curriculum development process that makes space for a rich causal account of events and their underlying mechanisms. I therefore endeavoured to hold in balance the presentation of a theoretical account which according to Sayer (*ibid*: 262) “is more appropriate to abstraction of objects (relations, mechanisms, concepts) which are stable and pervasive” and “thick description (that) is more appropriate for accounts of concrete situations in which there is considerable historical and geographical specificity and change”. I contend that this description fits the nature of practices within a university context in transition.

## 5.9 Generalizations

Case (1995: 20) refers to three types of generalizations, “petite generalizations, focusing on a single case or those cases greatly similar. However, generalizations occasionally take the form of grand generalization, referring to large populations of cases”. He furthermore, uses the notion of naturalistic generalization which refers to the generalizations made by *readers* of case reports. The researcher may draw out those findings that might have implications for other settings (Arksey & Knight 1999). This means that the researcher does not argue for the general applicability of the research, but enables the reader to produce inferences from reading the research report concerning the extent to which the research findings may be applicable to other settings.

Maxwell (2005) asserts the importance of analytic generalisability. This means that the theoretical conclusions derived from the research may be applicable to other contexts. The case that I am reporting cannot make claims to any grand generalisations; however, I do assert that it is possible to draw analytic conclusions by using the theoretical analysis of the case to draw inferences about curriculum development processes in other higher education contexts.

## 5.10 Ethical considerations

I obtained the permission of members of the Department of JMS to conduct this study and to audio-tape meetings and interviews. Individuals had the option to withdraw permission for me to use the interview material in the research report. No one withdrew permission. The identity of individuals has been concealed through the use of pseudonyms. I have taken care in the way I present the narrative of the case not to reveal anything that might be damaging to individuals, the departments or the institution while attempting to maintain a critical perspective appropriate to inquiries within a higher education context.

## Chapter 6

### Journalism Education and Training within the university context

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain the context within which the research into the curriculum development processes of the department of JMS at Rhodes University reported on in this study takes place. Following a social realist research methodology I shall examine the ideational and structural conditions that shaped curriculum development processes in the department in 2006. I begin the chapter by examining recent literature on journalism and journalism education (2002 – 2008). Presenting a comprehensive analysis of the scope of journalism education or the state of play of the profession falls beyond the scope of this thesis. My aim is to provide a basis for understanding and interpreting the curriculum development processes in the JMS Department at Rhodes University and for that purpose a focus on more recent thinking is appropriate.

Following the review of literature on journalism education I examine the situational logics that ensue as a result of different groups of agents or actors holding particular (often divergent) ideas (See 2.3.2). It is important to assess whether, within the context of JMS at Rhodes University, these ideas constitute necessary or contingent, complementary or contradictory forces. Culture, structure and agency influence each other. Which one of the three forces exerts the most influence at any particular time is contingent upon the particular context. In keeping with the social realist approach I shall examine culture, structure and agency separately (Archer 1995a); this should enable me to make judgements about which aspect(s) of the culture, structure and agency were responsible for shifts in relation to the curriculum development processes in the JMS department.

The analysis begins by looking at some structural issues to do with journalism and journalism education, this is followed by an examination of the ideational context in relation to journalism and journalism education. I shall then examine whether, when and how structural changes occurred with the Department of JMS from 2002 to the beginning of 2006. Finally I

shall show that there were shifts in the agential context that also influenced the dynamics of the curriculum development processes in the department.

I use concepts developed by Bernstein (1996, 2000) and others on curriculum and knowledge and concepts from Archer (1995a, 1996, 2000) on culture, structure and agency as the external language of description to analyse the conditions of journalism education at the present conjuncture. The information and analysis from this chapter on journalism education are in turn used, in conjunction with the other external languages of description, to guide the analysis of the empirical data in the next two chapters.

I shall construct the ideational context by examining conference papers, seminar and other presentations and published articles written by JMS staff members and I bring these in relation to the national and international contexts through examining the writings of prominent scholars of journalism education, especially those quoted by Rhodes University staff in their writing. Papers written predominantly between 2002 and 2008 take cognisance of the state of play of journalism education and training nationally and internationally. Even though the focus of this chapter is on the context between 2002 and the beginning of 2006, the papers written by Du Toit in 2007 and 2008 shed light on ideas that were in circulation within the context during the time under discussion. This is evident from the interviews with JMS lecturers as well as from work published before this time. A commissioned report (Praeg 2002) on the work of the department is also used in the analysis. In addition, I have also used a report (Garman 2007) written by a member of the department on the teaching of writing across the four year Bachelor of Journalism curriculum. Even though the latter report falls outside the scope of the data collection time, it reflects the thinking that was developing during the period 2002 – 2006. I also refer to limited interview data with Journalism and Media Studies lecturers where appropriate (my analysis of the interview data is discussed extensively in the next chapter).

JMS at Rhodes University is not isolated from journalism education and training trends nationally or internationally, thus the shifts that influence journalism education internationally have an impact on journalism education in South Africa. In addition, there are pressures on South African journalism education that are not necessarily shared with the international world. For example, in South Africa ownership of news media shifted post

1994<sup>19</sup> from being minority white owned to an environment where more media houses are now owned by blacks or have links with international media conglomerates (Steenveld 2006). Furthermore, newsrooms used to be racially divided during the apartheid years and the number of black journalists was limited. There is now a concerted effort to increase the number of black journalists and editors in the country (Steyn & De Beer 2002). This ambition is not easily realised as the differentiated education provision during apartheid still has pernicious effects on the quality of matriculants<sup>20</sup> coming out of predominantly black schools and many black students find it difficult to finance tertiary education. At present, the Rhodes University JMS Department is predominantly white and female, a situation not conducive to the diversification of newsrooms that is sought. Steenveld (*ibid*) contends that this state of affairs has much to do with the changed politics of the department. She argues that a focus on the use of technology for journalism is likely to take the attention away from understanding journalism as such. She says, “It seems to me that the more sophisticated the technology becomes, the more time it takes to learn to use it, and hence the emphasis on ‘learning the technology’, as opposed to understanding journalism ... [and] the social uses to which it could be put” (*ibid*: 308 – 309). For Steenveld (2006) this shift in focus has as much to do with the need to learn the technology as it has to do with the [more moderate] political focus of some staff members who teach the media specialisations (interview). Before looking at the ideational context of journalism and journalism education, it is useful to look briefly at some structural issues.

## **6.2 The structural context of journalism education**

### **6.2.1 A tenuous position in the academy**

Joseph Pulitzer provided an endowment in 1904 for the establishment of one of the first schools of journalism in the United States (Macdonald 2006: 747). At the time of the endowment Pulitzer avowed that by the next century journalism would be an established part of higher education in the same way as law or medicine (Pulitzer 1904: 671 quoted in Macdonald 2006: 747). However, although journalism has been taught in many universities

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<sup>19</sup> In 1994 South Africa held its first democratic election following the demise of apartheid. The new dispensation ushered in structural changes to redress the multiple imbalances in society that existed as a result of apartheid laws.

<sup>20</sup> Within the South African context “matric” is the name given the final year of high school. Matric examination scores are used by universities to determine access to institutions and programmes.

across the world since the early part of the twentieth century, it has not attained the same status within the academy as medicine or law as Pulitzer had hoped. In fact, at the time of the curriculum development processes described and analysed in this dissertation, journalism education in South Africa, and indeed elsewhere in the world finds itself in a state of crisis (Macdonald 2006; Garman 2005).

The status of journalism in the academy has been described as “tenuous” (Macdonald 2006: 747). Theodore Glasser, (2006: 146) quoting James Carey, notes that in the USA many journalism departments find themselves “displaced to the margins” of universities. Part of the reason for this state of affairs could be that “nowhere else in the university do so many fault lines converge” as is the case with journalism programmes the world over (Reese and Cohen 2000: 216). This is, in part, because journalism programmes have to balance a number of interests such as the relation between journalism education *and* journalism industries; journalism as an institution predicated upon public service in the interest of contributing to healthy democracies *and* the bottom-line demands of the industry (Garman 2005, Berger 2006). Within higher education institutions, journalism educators have to balance the needs of educating and training journalists, with the demands of the academy (see, for example Macdonald 2006). Teaching and learning the skills of journalism practice is immensely time-consuming and difficult (Garman 2005) and made even more so by the limitations afforded by university time-tables (Macdonald 2006; Amner 2005). In addition, the time-consuming teaching schedules of practical specialisation teachers limit the possibilities for producing research which is one of the primary requirements of universities. This in turn limits the possibilities for promotion of specialisation lecturers and thus the status of specialisations as part of the academic endeavour.

Rhodes University was the first tertiary institution in South Africa to offer a qualification in journalism through its Department of JMS. The department was established in 1970 (Du Toit 2008) and until a few years ago it was the only university to offer both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in journalism; at other universities journalism was offered initially only at postgraduate level (Praeg 2002). The JMS department has the status of a flagship department within the university<sup>21</sup>. The School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes

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<sup>21</sup> The department’s flagship status is predicated on a number of factors: students apply to do JMS at Rhodes University because of the status of the department in South Africa and in the rest of Africa and thus it draws

(of which the Department of JMS is the largest section) receives generous funding from various news corporations and other organisations interested in the improvement of the quality of journalism education in the country (See for example, Department of JMS Annual Reports 2004 - 2008).

### **6.2.2 Journalism, a profession in crisis**

In the United States of America, as in South Africa, journalism is said to be in crisis. The crisis in journalism has been brought about, *inter alia*, by the growing corporatisation of the media. There is greater competition between media conglomerates and there are “uncompromising commercial imperatives now driving most media houses” (Garman 2005: 200). In the rush to get stories out first, (even senior) journalists have been accused of publishing inaccurate or incomplete stories (Macdonald 2006; Garman 2005). Garman mentions a few instances which, over some years, have resulted in the establishment of the view of journalism as a profession in trouble. For example, President Mandela expressed concern about white minority ownership and control of the media early during his presidency, while President Mbeki (the second president of the democratic dispensation) criticized the media for their reporting on government. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission held a special hearing on the media’s role in “creating a climate for apartheid” (Garman 2005: 200). The National Editors’ Forum commissioned a study into the poor state of South African journalism, particularly by junior journalists, while 2003 was termed South African journalism’s “annus horribilis” because some senior journalists struggled to stay within the bounds of “respectable journalistic practices and [there was a] generalised feeling of inaccuracy and lack of ethics all around” (*ibid*). In 2005, at a conference at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, some of “the profession’s most experienced and wisest ... journalists generally [felt that] the profession was in bad shape, that it lacked credibility and that possibilities for increased resources to change things were unlikely given the uncompromising commercial imperatives now driving most media houses” (Garman *ibid*).

Some media educators believe that one of the ways to remedy this situation is to pay attention to the identity of journalism as a profession and to the identity of journalists as professionals

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large numbers of students into the Faculty of Humanities. Furthermore, the department is involved multiple projects which are highly visible to the general public and the corporate world.

within training programmes (Macdonald 2006). In many universities, notably in the USA, Canada, and South Africa, journalism schools have been reviewing their curricula in an effort to improve the quality of journalists (Macdonald 2006; Du Toit 2006; Kyazze 2005). According to Macdonald (*ibid*) the Carnegie Corporation and the Knight Foundation in the USA have sponsored efforts towards the improvement of journalism education at universities. The aim of the sponsorship is to encourage “journalism schools ... to move firmly into the professional-school realm... to confer on their students not just entry-level job skills, but also a sense of the history of the profession and its importance to the public and the nation” (Carnegie Corporation, 2005, para 6, quoted in Macdonald *ibid*: 752).

In the South African context the issue of ensuring access to the profession to more black journalists is also one that requires attention as journalism education is being reviewed and restructured. The issue of providing epistemological access (Morrow 1994, 2007) to previously excluded or marginalised groups is a priority. Prinsloo (2003) presents a theoretical framework for curriculum development in the department in which she argues that the curriculum should also address ways of providing epistemological access to under-prepared students.

The Critical Media Literacy approach she suggests has been shown by others to be a useful one for engaging students at various levels of preparedness (see, for example, Boughey 2006). This approach will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

In the next section changes in the approach to curriculum development in the JMS department will be discussed.

### **6.2.3 New beginnings within the Department of JMS at Rhodes University**

In 2002 the JMS Department commissioned a report on curriculum development challenges as a way of garnering support for the envisioned Africa Media Matrix<sup>22</sup>. The Praeg Report

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<sup>22</sup> The Africa Media Matrix (AMM) is the name of a new building which houses the School of Journalism and Media Studies. The AMM provides office, teaching, computer laboratory, and teaching spaces for all the courses offered by the JMS Department. At the time that the report was commissioned money was sought for this project and it was argued that the building was necessary, *inter alia*, to facilitate the development of a more cohesive department and a more collaborative curriculum development process and teaching and learning programme.

(2002) constitutes an important baseline from which to examine the extent to which curriculum development practices as well as other contextual factors have shifted within the department since 2002. In 2002 divisions in the department across specialisation (and personal[ity]) lines ran deep and Praeg (*ibid*) recommended the immediate establishment of an academic discussion forum to facilitate whole-department conversations about curriculum development as a means to begin to ameliorate some of the schisms. This was one of the ideas that sparked the collaborative curriculum development project reported on in this dissertation. Praeg (*ibid*: 7) found that “the relationships between staff members – mostly between different clusters<sup>23</sup> – are fraught with tension and misunderstanding ... A palimpsest of acrimony inhibits any fruitful discussion on collaboration and integration”.

As a way to begin to heal the rifts between different sections of the department he strongly advised the development of a shared vision for its work and the establishment of agreement on what it regarded as its core business. In 2002 the JMS department engaged in the process of developing a vision statement. The vision statement<sup>24</sup> commits the department to programmes in the service of social justice. The vision statement has become the most important aspect of the regulative discourse that underpins the work of the department. It is often referred to in curriculum discussions and acts as a moral and practical compass for the work of the department. The stance articulated in the vision statement is a source of tension between the pedagogical aspirations of the department and the needs of the media industries that it prepares students for.

In the next section ideas relating to journalism education in the Department of JMS are discussed.

### **6.3 The ideational context of journalism education at the Department of JMS at Rhodes University**

In the 2003 paper referred to above, Prinsloo, a MS senior lecturer at the time, set out her views of how the departmental curriculum could prioritise the imperative of social justice in

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<sup>23</sup> Prior to 2002 curriculum development occurred in clusters. A cluster constitutes a group of specialist lecturers, such as MS lecturers, or those teaching particular practical specialisations; the practical clusters include: Writing and Editing, Design, Broadcast (radio and television) and New Media.

<sup>24</sup> The vision statement is contained in Appendix 1.

ensuring access to more under-prepared students. She subscribes to Singh's (2001) view that the policy injunction to higher education responsiveness<sup>25</sup> had up to that point been too narrowly interpreted by higher education institutions in this country to mean responsiveness to the market in the first instance. Prinsloo notes several points of commonality between her views and those of Singh. She argues, for example that the departmental vision statement requires the department to pay attention to providing not just formal admission but epistemological access to those previously excluded from higher education; she argues for the pursuit of a range of fields of knowledge "without undue focus on applied fields with commercial imperatives" and finally she notes the imperative for journalism to function as the "critic and conscience of society" (Prinsloo 2003:3).

In order to advance the above foci in the curriculum Prinsloo argues for a theoretical approach to the study of media that she terms Critical Media Literacy (CML). This notion is rooted in Gee's (2001) theory of identity formation within semiotic or socio-cultural domains. She argues (following Gee) that different semiotic domains each have their own "design grammars" and that those who belong to a semiotic domain can be seen as an "affinity group" (in Prinsloo 2003: 5). To become part of an affinity group requires a period of apprenticeship. These ideas are akin to Bernstein's (1996) notion of bounded fields, each with their own recognition, realisation and evaluative rules. Becoming apprenticed into the affinity group requires becoming familiar with these rules. Prinsloo also argues that it is possible for semiotic domains to stand in opposition to each other. This can sometimes result in people endeavouring to access an affinity group or semiotic domains experiencing conflict between the competing demands of the domains or groups. They may then not have the requisite "investment to succeed at it, [and they will] experience it as in conflict with the other semiotic domains that (they) inhabit" (Prinsloo *ibid*: 8). In my opinion Prinsloo's point can also be applied to the relationship between the practice of journalism and the critiques of journalism that is inherent in media studies theory perspectives from which students sometimes feel intensely alienated. Part of the media studies curriculum and the practical specialisations stand in a relationship of constraining contradiction to each other. This has an impact on both teaching and learning. More of the complexities of the "competing, and often

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<sup>25</sup> The notion of responsiveness is inscribed in the White Paper on Higher Education (1997) and the Higher Education Act. A nuanced assessment of the notion of responsiveness is provided by Moll (2004). Moll argues more a stratified view of responsiveness that requires, in the first instance, responsiveness to student learning. Other aspects of responsiveness that Moll argues for are: economic, cultural, and disciplinary responsiveness. Prinsloo's view is in line with this more nuanced conception of responsiveness.

conflicting, pressures” (Macdonald 2006: 747) will be discussed in relation to data in the next two chapters. It is imperative to note that the complexities of the situation within the department of JMS at Rhodes University are not unique to this department.

The next section will examine journalism as a knowledge field.

### 6.3.1 Journalism knowledge

A number of authors relate difficulties with establishing the content of the journalism curriculum. Journalism has been referred to as “that ever elusive object of study” (Skinner, Gasher & Compton 2001) and Macdonald (2006:757) calls it “a subject of no consensus”. Internationally there are different understandings of how journalism as a field of study needs to be constituted. In a short history of journalism courses at universities in South Africa, Du Toit (2008) illustrates the diversity of approaches to the teaching of journalism that have been in operation since the inception of journalism programmes in the 1970s. There is general agreement that journalism should be taught at university because it prepares professionals for a career that is predicated on public service (Du Toit 2007). Many journalism educators believe that the discipline should prepare students to practice the craft of journalism in the service of democracy; this requires that students be equipped with “knowledge of the ages” and that they should be allowed to develop the intellectual capacity to apply this knowledge to current conditions (Bleyer quoted in Du Toit 2007: 2).

Since the inception of journalism education at American universities at the start of the twentieth century there have been struggles over the epistemic-pedagogic device (see Chapter 2). According to Macdonald (2006: 746), “the function, content, and even the existence of journalism education have been a source of debate amongst journalism educators and practitioners for over a century” (*ibid*). The theoretical frameworks of their work are also a source of debate that culminated in an Australian conference about the various “media wars” in existence (Turner 2000). Turner (*ibid*: 354) refers to several articles by Keith Windschuttle published in “academic journals, mainstream news and comment magazines and newspaper opinion pages ... [and] keynote lectures at journalism education conferences in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, wherein the latter bemoans “the influence of poststructuralist textual theory on media analysis”. Windschuttle (1997, 1998) is also concerned about the

influence of cultural studies on media studies in the Australian context. According to Windschuttle (in Turner *ibid*: 354), “cultural studies as a body of theory ... was hopelessly relativist... denied the existence of history and [it] actively de-skilled the students it was supposed to train”.

A conference organised to find “common ground’ between the proponents of cultural studies and those of journalism and communication studies as the theoretical basis for journalism education, “rather than resolving the issues dividing the two groups, ... revealed the depth of division between them” (Turner 2000: *ibid*). Strelitz & Steenveld (1998) argue that cultural studies does not represent a “homogenous body of work” (p. 101) and that Windschuttle’s reading of cultural studies is “highly selective” (*ibid*). For them, the critical orientation of cultural studies to the study of media provides an appropriate lens for developing a critical, orientation towards the media which enables media critics to act as watchdogs of the South African media. They argue that this “watchdog” stance was particularly important during the apartheid era in South Africa and contributed to the salience of the work of, for example, Althusser and Gramsci in JMS curricula, particularly during the 70s and 80s.

There is agreement, though, within many university departments of journalism, and certainly within the JMS Department at Rhodes University with Bollinger’s<sup>26</sup> statement that “to teach the craft of journalism is a worthy goal, but clearly insufficient in this new world and within the setting of a great university” (Bollinger quoted in Dates 2006: 144). It is thus the endeavour of the department of JMS to establish a curriculum that develops in students the requisite skills to be good journalists, but which also enables them to be critical practitioners of their craft.

One of the reasons the education and training of journalists within universities has been an area of such strong contention over the years, is the nature of journalism as a profession. Journalism, like fields such as medicine, pharmacy, law and education constitutes a region, in Bernstein’s terms (Bernstein 2000). Regions are interdisciplinary fields of study that prepare students for a profession. Most professional fields of study are made up of a body of theoretical knowledge which comes from a range of relevant disciplines through which

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<sup>26</sup> In 2002, Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University halted the search for a new Dean of Journalism at Columbia. He established a task force to investigate the reform of the journalism school and its curriculum.

students are inducted into the system(s) of knowledge of a field (Young 2003, 2006). In addition the field has a set of practical skills and professional values into which prospective practitioners need to be inducted, upon which there will be a formal process of accreditation. Unlike other professions taught at university, there is no formal accreditation process into journalistic professions.

Furthermore, unlike the other regions mentioned, journalism as a field does not have a generally agreed-upon coherent body of knowledge which makes up the curriculum. This is also the case within the South African context specifically, as is clear from Du Toit's (2007) discussion of a diversity of theoretical approaches underpinning journalism programmes at South African universities.

A further complicating factor is that the knowledge in many journalism programmes comes from other regions - media studies, cultural studies and communication studies are regions themselves.

Despite journalism courses having been offered at American universities since the early 1900s and as a bachelors' degree at Rhodes University since the 1970s, journalism as an academic discipline is still underdeveloped (Hartley 1996 in Turner 2000). Hartley (1996: 39) calls journalism "the *terra nullius* of epistemology, deemed by anyone who wanders by to be an uninhabited territory of knowledge, to be colonized by anyone who's interested". And as a field of study it still does not have a universally agreed upon disciplinary canon. Steenveld (*ibid*: 307) notes that

...there hasn't been sustained academic discussion on what constitutes the body of knowledge that underpins the field of study. The term 'theory' is often used without clarity, and seems to have different meanings for those within the industry, those concerned with 'vocational training', and scholars of Media Studies or Cultural Studies.

Media Studies (MS) and Media Production (MP) lecturers at Rhodes have agreed that it is important to provide students with opportunities to develop the ability to think critically about the media and about their own media productions as well as to think about and learn how to use the media as a vehicle for social change. The vision statement that the department

developed in 2002 and which underpins the curriculum emphasises the use of media for social change. This regulative discourse is congruent with the view that many media educators hold. There is some consensus that it is important for media education to provide apprentice journalists with wide-ranging knowledge that will enable them to engage critically with their sources and to produce work that makes a contribution to society's engagement within a democracy (Skinner *et al* 2001; Zelizer 1997).

Du Toit (2007) examines the theoretical frameworks used by different journalism schools in South Africa. She concludes that the theoretical component of journalism courses is traditionally provided either in the form of communication studies that focuses on “quantitative audience surveys, effects studies, and experimental research” or cultural studies (in some schools of journalism referred to as MS or Critical Media Studies). As a discipline, Cultural Studies “insists on relativity and subjectivity” and therefore it is not surprising that the practice of journalism is studied from a necessarily oppositional perspective (Zelizer 2004: 103). According to Du Toit (2007: 7) “courses which draw on cultural studies may deconstruct the epistemological framework within which journalistic practice is based, but they generally also fail to assist students in developing an approach to their practice based in an alternative set of principles”. Du Toit (*ibid*: 13) notes that “Media Studies approaches journalism primarily as textual analysis, and the reception of such texts by audiences”. In addition to MS as described above, the department of JMS also incorporates the sociology of news, ethics, media law, media history and the politics of media as part of the study of journalism and media. Du Toit (2007) argues that the latter aspects of the media theory course do not create crises of legitimation for journalism practice in the same way as Cultural Studies perspectives do, because they focus on journalism as an object of knowledge<sup>27</sup>.

There are sets of skills that underpin the processes of news sourcing, information gathering, sorting and story structuring that apprentice journalists have to learn; however, journalists need not have expert knowledge about the subject matter that they report on, unless the reporting is on specialist forms of journalism such as economic journalism. The practices of journalism mentioned above are close to everyday forms of knowledge such as “gossiping, story-telling, etc” and this contributes to the tenuous status of journalism as a field of study in

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<sup>27</sup> As a result of the curriculum development processes MS courses in the Department of JMS now focus less on Cultural Studies and more on Journalism Studies.

the academy (Fourie 2005: 8). Academic knowledge is, in Bernstein's (1999) terms, codified, principled knowledge and is different to context-dependent, segmental, mundane, everyday forms of knowledge. The roots of journalism practice, according to Fourie (2005), lie close to the mundane. However, if the contention is that journalists' work falls within the realm of interpretation and that journalists require deep knowledge of the nature of society, then the connection with the sacred and thus the more powerful forms of knowledge becomes evident (see Chapter 3 for a discussion on mundane and sacred knowledge).

The nature of journalists' work requires them to have knowledge of the underlying mechanisms of what makes societies work in the way they do; they need to understand how power operates in various contexts. It is therefore important that student journalists are inducted into ways of thinking critically about the world. It is furthermore important that they engage with systems of meaning to which they are introduced, as part of the discipline of journalism as well as the humanities disciplines they study as part of their formative degrees and that they are able to forge connections between these and what happens in the world on a day to day basis in general and in the practice of journalism in particular.

Praeg (2002) finds it curious that the JMS department does not stipulate co-requisite theoretical knowledge from fields in the humanities in order to broaden students' general knowledge<sup>28</sup>. He states (*ibid*: 9) that "it is unclear how a department that prides itself on producing critical, informed and socially responsible journalists can limit students' educational experience to a predominant familiarity with media discourse – however critical of itself". He suggests, for example, that students should be required to do co-requisite modules in, amongst other disciplines, political science, philosophy, linguistics, sociology and anthropology. An example of a co-requisite module suggested by Praeg is one on *Violence in Africa* offered by the Department of Sociology at Rhodes University<sup>29</sup>. Praeg (*ibid*) suggests that doing such courses would counter the current political apathy amongst students which lecturers have expressed concern about. Amner (2005: 8) asserts that, "if

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<sup>28</sup> Students study JMS as one of two majors. They are free to choose the second major and the minor courses that make up their degree curriculum.

<sup>29</sup> It would not be possible for the Department of JMS to follow Praeg's suggestion given that students choose to register for "whole" courses rather than individual modules across a range of courses. However, given that MS is a region, it would theoretically be possible to include modules on specific topics or areas of study within the MS curriculum should this be deemed desirable.

journalism is viewed as a particular kind of democratic practice, it naturally belongs with political theory, which nurtures an understanding of democratic life and institutions". Steenveld (2006: 311) states that more needs to be done to develop the knowledge base of Journalism and Media Studies. She suggests that the following might be appropriate outcomes for journalism education within the South African context:

1. To understand how the texts produced are shaped by the history, economics, ethics of the organisational systems which produce them as well as the political, social, and legal systems in which the production organizations are embedded;
2. To be able to critique media texts in terms of their meaning, construction, and purpose;
3. To be able to produce a range of journalistic and other media texts that can be used in a variety of contexts, by diverse producers.

She suggests that the first outcome relates to the reasons institutions are the way they are; the second aims to interrogate why practices are as they are, while the third outcome relates to how to practice within various kinds of organisations. Steenveld does not exclude novel forms of practice as part of the JMS curriculum.

A further issue that complicates journalism education relates to the dominant epistemology of journalism as a practice. Traditionally journalism has been viewed as a practice that *objectively* reports the news. Parisi (quoted in Garman 2005: 206) suggests that from this perspective journalism is a form of "stenography of the real". This view does not recognise the extent to which journalists themselves are implicated in the making of the news and establishing the focus of part of society's conversation with and about itself. According to the latter view journalistic work is in fact, interpretive.

Within the JMS Department the traditional epistemological stance of journalism has been questioned. Garman (*ibid*: 201), for example, argues that the view of the professional journalist whose job it is to report objective truth needs to be challenged in favour of developing a corps of journalists who see themselves as a "community of interpreters" of the social world. She notes (*ibid*) that the department of JMS at Rhodes University aims to educate journalists to be "citizen journalists". Garman (*ibid*) states that they want students to

“...understand that they shape the forms and content of ... discussions, and to understand both their power to do so and the politics and constraints of their situatedness in the environments of media-making”. Du Toit (2007) contends that the investigative processes of journalism have much in common with ethnographic anthropological research. This methodology has more in common with an interpretivist view of knowledge making. A more appropriate way of viewing journalistic practice might be through the ontological and epistemological lenses of critical realism. Thus, journalists make decisions about what to report and how to report it, but they need to report “truthfully” their observations and the experiences of their sources. Furthermore, journalists are in the business of being critical about news and therefore having to uncover the underlying mechanisms - the “why” of news events.

Du Toit (*ibid*: 13) suggests a perspective on journalism education which aims to establish journalism as an academic discipline in its own right. This approach views journalism as “an intellectual practice that is capable of reflection on its own theoretical foundations”. As a practice journalism is a research-based activity that includes the “systematic gathering, analysing and communication of information” (Medsker 1996: 9-10, quoted in Du Toit *ibid*). Tomaselli and Caldwell argue for the need for the discipline of journalism, to “pay attention to the epistemology or research approaches to journalism itself” (2002: 22). For Du Toit (*ibid*: 16) journalism education should present students

... with a full range of options with regards to the epistemological and ontological frameworks that could frame their practice, and to provide them with an opportunity to experiment with the methods and techniques that are associated with these frameworks ... teaching should necessarily operate as a process of conscientisation, in which staff challenge students to reject certain aspects of traditional reporting practice, and to construct alternative methods in their place. This process of conscientisation should operate not only at a reflective level, but should ... also be experimental in nature. In particular, students should be challenged to engage in modes of research which offer them positions that are different from those of traditional reporting, and sets up different kinds of relationships with the communities they report on, and the audiences they write for.

In the next section ideas about the nature of journalistic and media practice comes under the spotlight.

### 6.3.2 What kind of journalism practice?

Amner (2005) says that journalism schools generally teach students the rules for producing mainstream texts, however, he contends that many other forms of journalistic writing would be appropriate for his students to learn so that they would be in a position to challenge accepted norms. The quality of mainstream journalism has been under attack from various quarters, both within and beyond the academy (Garman 2005). Amner (*ibid*: 3) argues that there is little consensus about “the purposes of journalism and how it should be practised”. He states (*ibid*) that the teaching of mainstream forms of journalism (such as news, features, etc.) might not be the most appropriate way to engage students and he proposes that curriculum spaces be opened up to allow students the opportunities to engage with a range of forms so that they would be able to produce “innovatory journalistic practice on the ground”.

Berger (2008) argues strongly against the view expressed by Amner. He maintains that the most important form that students should be taught is hard news (see Blog 2008). Amner’s argument (2004, 2005, 2008) is that hard news constitutes but one form of journalism and that it is important to engage students in the range of possible forms that they could employ. Amner (2005) argues, similarly to Chris Atton (2003) and Chris Curran (1996), that “radical” forms of journalism such as public journalism have the potential to teach students much about the democratic ideals of journalism.

In pursuit of the ideal of teaching students more democratic forms of journalism, the JMS department developed an ambitious semester-long third year course in Critical Media Production (CMP). This course brings together, “through critique – the Media Studies and Media Productions components of the third year curriculum” (Amner 2005: 8) in the CMP course. The third term of the third year programme constitutes the theoretical component, Journalism Development and Democracy (JDD), as well as the preparation phase for the fourth term of CMP which involves eight production lecturers and 1 MS lecturer. In addition, in recent years, a first year course on narrative and genre has been co-taught by a MS and MP lecturer. These courses constitute moments in the four year curriculum when the boundaries between theory and practice are permeated. Framing of the course is at times quite strong and at other times the input of students and the members of the community that are involved in the creation of alternative media productions weakens classification and framing.

### 6.3.3 Theory and practice

Berger (2007) argues that the issue of whether theory should be taught by journalism schools is no longer relevant or even interesting. Now the question revolves around what the most appropriate theory is to teach (whether it is journalism theory, media studies theory, cultural theory or communication theory or combinations of the various theories) and what the relationship should be between theory and practice.

Interestingly, Steenveld (2006) notes that within the South African context the split between theory and practice was not evident in the early years (the 1980s) of the Department of Journalism and later the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. The department was much smaller then and the only practical specialisations that were taught were Writing, Design, Radio, Film and Television. Lecturers taught both a practical specialisation and media studies. This may not have been ideal since it may have meant that some lecturers taught courses in areas in which they may not have been specialists. The shared regulative discourse that underpinned the work of the department was that of a politics of opposition to apartheid state sponsored and biased media. The critical stance taken by the department made sense within the context of the times. The practical work had an experimental focus since the aim was to teach reporting and television and film making that was contrary to the work seen in the apartheid state supported media. The theoretical (critical media theory) and the experimental practical work were therefore congruent and both lecturers and students found it easy to make the connections between these two aspects of the course.

Steenveld (*ibid*) identifies several developments that had an impact on the unity that existed in the early years of the teaching of journalism at Rhodes. The transition to a democratic political dispensation made the need for a unifying anti-government critical stance obsolete. A second development was the growth in the department, in terms of student numbers, the range of its practical offerings and the number of lecturers employed. As a result of the growth in the department, the teaching of theory and practice was split and lecturers specialised either in theory or in one of the practical specialisations. Thus, in Bernsteinian (Bernstein 1996, 2000) terms, boundaries were formed between MS and MP and as such identities were tied to areas of teaching responsibility. One of the unintended consequences of the separation of practice and theory in terms of who did the teaching and what was being

taught, was a growing rift between the theoretical and practical streams in the department. Since media practice as taught in the department was no longer so unambiguously oppositional to the politics of the day, the nature of the critical media theory taught was no longer seamlessly aligned to practice in the way it was pre-1994; in fact much of media theory began to constitute a constraining contradiction to the teaching of journalistic practice.

When considering the nature of practical teaching in journalism schools, writers often quote Theodore Glasser (2002) who proposes that the place of practice in journalism curricula needs to be carefully considered:

No one seriously denies that the practice of journalism requires students to practise journalism. I don't know – or even know of – a single journalism educator who would quibble with the proposition that the practice of journalism belongs at the centre of any viable journalism curriculum. But practice at what level, in what context, to what end? (Glasser in Steenveld 2007: 305).

Coming to some kind of consensus about this issue requires negotiation amongst colleagues and as such disputes develop around ownership of the epistemic-pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, Maton 2000). Garman (2005) explains that the dominant, positivist epistemology of journalism has made it difficult for writing teachers and media theorists to productively talk about how media practice and media theory can be taught alongside one another. According to Garman (*ibid*: 206)

In teaching environments, the epistemology of professional journalism makes it difficult if not sometimes impossible to have a productive dialogue with media theorists about news journalism, therefore making the teaching of these two streams of academia very difficult to place alongside each other.

She further argues (*ibid*: 206) that a focus on journalism as objective practice renders “invisible the practices of induction into a particular community of meaning-making, pretending that journalists are simply stenographers (following Peter Parisi 1992) of a passing reality rather than producers of a cultural product called journalism”.

Amner (2005), Garman (2005) and Du Toit (2007) all make arguments for the importance of straddling the apparent incongruence that exists between media theory and production work.

Contrary to Steenveld's experience of teaching journalism and media studies in the department in the 1980s, media theory and production work are currently, for the most part, distinct domains within the JMS Department. Amner (*ibid*) observes that students in the JMS 4 class have opportunities to have their work critiqued through the frame of media theory, but this is not done in collaboration with the production teachers. The one area where this divide is consciously straddled is the third year JDD / CMP course.

Amner (*ibid*: 3) argues against "the ongoing structural separation of teaching responsibilities along theory and practice lines" and suggests that this might be one of the reasons for the "underdevelopment of Journalism Studies as a field of study". He contrasts the "excellent Media Studies work theorising and critiquing the South African media landscape" with the "lack of theoretically informed work in Media Production or Journalism Studies, which might lead to innovatory journalistic practice on the ground." He (*ibid*: 1) proposes that to improve journalism it is necessary to develop theoretically informed approaches to practice.

Garman (2005: 202) writes that the lack of integration or congruence between theory and practice "(creates) schizophrenia in the students we share", while Amner (2005: 3) laments that his students and sometimes he himself "leave at the door the theoretical understandings taught in the media studies classroom".

Production lecturers, Frank<sup>30</sup> (interview, 2006) and Henry (interview, 2006), both argued that they taught theory, however the theory that they referred to was journalism theory, i.e. about the practice, representation, ethics, values and so on, of writing and photojournalistic practice. Amner (*ibid*: 2) regrets that "the 'proper' theoretical province of a 'production' lecturer ... is deemed to be the canonical 'theory' of writing and editing, including such areas as news values, the types and categories of news, or the various aspects of the reporting and writing process". According to Amner, "the parallel 'academic' and 'vocational' streams in the curriculum are taught by different academics and the relationship between them has historically been under-developed and sometimes even openly hostile" (*ibid*: 3). These strained relationships could, in part, be ascribed to struggles around the epistemic-pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, 2000; Maton 2000). However, Amner (*ibid*) and Garman (*ibid*) are both writing teachers who argue strongly for the integration of media theory in order to help

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<sup>30</sup> When I quote from interviews with staff members, I use pseudonyms.

students to develop an appropriately critical stance to their media productions. Amner (*ibid*) believes that his immersion into MS has enabled him to consider critically the range of news writing that is available in the media marketplace. Amner therefore has a dual identity that enables him to enter into debates around the epistemic-pedagogic device in ways which may be different to those of his MP colleagues.

Garman is critical of journalism courses with a primary focus on the development of journalistic skills. She says that these approaches “spend too much teaching time on ethics, media law and the inculcation of professional norms and skills” and not enough time on those areas of knowledge that will enable students / aspirant journalists “to position themselves critically *vis-à-vis* the practice of journalism”. Garman (2005: 199) argues for journalism to be taught as an “interpretive practice” which sees the work of journalists as positioned within the “wider world of culture and the dissemination of social meanings”. Garman’s (*ibid*: 201) conception of journalists as interpretive communities challenges the notion of professionalism that has for a long time framed the curricula of schools of journalism. She argues (*ibid*) for the education of “citizen journalists” who are able to:

... understand that they shape the forms and content of ( ) discussions, and ... understand both their power to do so and the politics and constraints of their situated-ness in the environments of media-making. And maybe even one day to be in a position of such power that they can enable the giving away of some of it to provoke greater multi-vocality, and different forms and formats of media in our public domains.

For Garman (2005), framing journalism education to foreground the power of journalists, would allow the integration of media theory in a more seamless way. This would enable the critique of media institutions, the texts that students produce and so on, within the broader framework of examining how journalists’ power is constituted and how they themselves might, within the socio-historical contexts within which they will work, be able to exercise their power or to understand how their power may be limited by the context.

The collaborative curriculum development processes that have been underway in the department since 2003 have had the effect of beginning to create more links between theory and practice. Du Toit (2007) welcomes the partnerships that are being forged between media theory and media production and the staff who teach in these areas. She asserts (*ibid*: 16), though, that the synergy that is sought between theory and practice “will only succeed if we

teach journalism production itself as an intellectual practice”. She believes that what is necessary for the success of such an enterprise is the conscious development of an epistemological and ontological framework within which to cast the examination of journalistic practice. Amner (2005) also argues strongly for media production to be taught as an intellectual enterprise. He says (*ibid*: 3) that “while I am a ‘writing and editing’ lecturer, I could also surely aspire to the label or identity ‘journalism scholar’”. He believes (*ibid*) that “it could legitimately be part of my academic mission to theorise and test journalistic approaches and techniques appropriate to South Africa...”.

An important point made by Du Toit (2007) is that journalism production needs to be studied as intellectual practice in the same way as the theoretical perspectives that underpin practice. This view is shared by Amner (*ibid*) who argues that the vision of the department suggests a critical approach to its work. This desire for both media studies and production lecturers to be involved in the critical and theoretical study of journalism challenges the traditional organisation of journalism schools. Turner (2000: 359) notes that “typically, the journalism educators provided the vocational training, while cultural or media studies provided the academic (or what was sometimes called the ‘degree level’) content”.

In the JMS department several “semiotic domains” or fields of study are part of the curriculum and this at times leads to crises of identity for some lecturers in the department. Amner (2004: 5) for example writes

...what disciplinary knowledge should be invoked ... And here we encounter the problem of “discipline”. What discipline am I referring to? Journalism Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies or Communication Studies, are all taught in our department (although they are often taught separately at other universities all over the world). All are eclectic ‘fields of study’ that have borrowed from a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. And my department houses several ‘fields of study’ under one roof.

#### **6.3.4 The status of journalism knowledge**

Given the current state of contention in relation to the knowledge base of journalism, it might be fair to say that the discipline suffers from a weak epistemic base and that this threatens its position in the academy and the impact it can make as a field. Journalism curricula and

pedagogy focus on both the epistemic relation to the object of knowledge as well as the social relation to knowledge (Maton 2002). There is therefore a focus on knowledge of the field as well as on the development of particular kinds of subjectivities. In the historical context sketched by Steenveld (2006), it seems as if the knowledge base as well as the practices of the field have been contingent on the socio-historical conditions that exist in particular moments in history. In the 1980s and early 1990s, lecturers chose theories of the media and encouraged production practices that demonstrated their oppositional stance to the socio-political conditions of the day. This makes sense since the dominant view of journalism in this department is of a profession which aims to “stimulate the discourse of democracy” (in Steenveld *ibid*: 303) and therefore the practices of the field need to respond to current contexts in order to serve its brief.

Steenveld (*ibid*: 307) quotes Skinner *et al* who argue that “journalism should be approached ‘as an institutional practice of representation with its own historical, political, economic and cultural conditions of existence’” They hold that “a journalism curriculum (should be) committed to explaining the historically contingent status of journalism (so that it) may help open doors to the possible” (2001: 357). Here they point towards the ideal of getting students to move beyond current contexts of practice towards the possibility of new practices. Based on recent work within the sociology of knowledge (discussed in Chapter 4) it may be argued that the contingent nature of journalism as a practice and the theoretical basis that it has claimed may be implicated in its tenuous status in the academy and the problems that lecturers face in constructing a more or less stable and coherent journalism curriculum.

Karl Maton’s research (2005) on the emergence of Cultural Studies in British higher education may offer a useful framework for examining the nature of knowledge in journalism and media studies as the position of the field of JMS may be somewhat analogous to that of cultural studies. Maton (2005) argues that Cultural Studies in Britain finds itself in a curious position where, as a knowledge field, it seems to be in a very healthy state. Conferences on Cultural Studies draw hundreds of delegates and in 2005 there were three peer-refereed journals devoted to the field. However, institutionally, the field is weak. At the heart of British Cultural Studies, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University had been threatened with closure twice. The first full degree in

cultural studies offered by the Portsmouth Polytechnic was, in fact, closed in the 1990s despite healthy student numbers (Maton 2002).

Maton (2005) argues that the field's legitimization practices may provide clues as to this curious state of affairs of the field being healthy and in danger of collapse at the same time. He shows that the field legitimises knowledge through a knower code of legitimation (see 3.5), thus in the field of Cultural Studies what is important is not so much *what* is said, but by *whom* it is said. He calls the field a perennial march of the previously silenced. He argues that the field has not devoted itself to cumulatively building its knowledge base; its focus on subjectivity has created a field of relative knowledge that is perpetually displaced by new voices who often re-invent what has already been discovered, cloaking it in a new voice. Steenveld (2004: 1) observes that media studies as an area of study "is marked by various fissures along the lines of domain of study, epistemology, methodology, politics, and language", thus providing fertile ground for segmentalism rather than the verticality which is required for the building of the field (Maton 2009). According to Maton (and Bernstein 2000) what builds a knowledge field, is not segmentalism, but rather verticality. Cultural Studies (and, it seems, media studies as a subset of cultural studies) thrives on segmentalism, while what it requires is a focus on its object of knowledge with the purpose of building the knowledge of the object vertically.

Where the theoretical basis of JMS is based in cultural studies, this has created some problems for journalism as a field of study. According to Keith Windschuttle Cultural Studies has been the "central disorganizing principle in journalism education" (1998 in Du Toit (2007: 7)). This is because as a field Cultural Studies is predicated on relativity and subjectivity. Du Toit (*ibid* following Zelizer) concludes that it "challenges the basic foundations on which journalism has built its own legitimacy as a profession" in that journalism's aim has been to report "objectively" on the world. Amner (2005) expresses concern about the oppositional stance of much of media studies at Rhodes. He argues that this theoretical framework alienates students from the very practices that they are attempting to be inducted into.

In her critical consideration of the alliances that journalism as a field of study within universities has made Du Toit (*ibid*) argues that the relation of journalism with a number of

disciplines in the humanities such as sociology, history, politics, and so on has been unproblematic and uncontroversial. However, the same cannot be said of the links with communication studies or communication science and Cultural Studies.

She argues that communication studies disconnects journalism from its processes of production and it is studied in terms of, for example, how audiences receive the stories. These studies are predominantly survey studies and are useful as an administrative tool in providing consumer reception data. Skinner *et al* (2001) argue for a productive marriage between journalism and communication studies, however, in their conception of communication studies, journalism students should be able to study journalism as a field with its own historical and political contexts of existence (quoted above). They argue that the critical study of journalism as a mode of communication could allow journalists to view their role in the field as one which carries power. Macdonald (2006) also expresses doubt that Communication Studies presents the answer to the more critical study of journalism.

Cultural Studies has come under attack for its role in undermining the very basis upon which the field of journalism is predicated. Whereas Communication Studies views journalism from a positivist perspective, Cultural Studies undermines the field from a predominantly poststructural perspective. In evaluation responses from students over the last number of years, many of them note that they are unable to see the relationship between the MS and the production work they do. However, Du Toit cautions against a simplistic analysis of students' disaffection with theory. She suggests that it might not be the result of the nature of the theory they study in JMS, but might be a general negative attitude amongst students who see university education pragmatically, as preparation for work; these students do not recognise the important role of theory in preparing them for life, or as Bernstein (1996) argues, to enable them to participate in society's conversation about itself.

The problem identified by Du Toit (2007) and earlier by, for example, Adam (2001) is that journalism has actually not been properly founded as a discipline, partly as a result of what Turner (2000) has termed its shotgun weddings, the alliances with other fields of study or disciplines within the humanities. Du Toit (*ibid*) argues, like Skinner *et al* (2001) and Adam (2001), that journalism can be studied in its own right. However, she also argues that

journalism has missed opportunities to form links with other disciplines, like Anthropology, which could have been more useful.

Anthropology, with its ethnographic research methodology, has much to contribute to the methodology of journalism, but this potentially productive inter-disciplinary relation has not been explored. For Du Toit (*ibid*), it is imperative that journalism is studied as a research practice and that the ontological and epistemological implications of such practice are interrogated with students.

Journalism, being a field in flux with a hitherto not universally agreed-upon theoretical framework is open to colonisation from agents within fields that may be marginalised or that seek legitimisation in the academy. Archer (1995a) shows clearly how constraining contradictions in academic disciplines can lead to polarisation and sectionalism within fields and that this state of affairs provides a fertile space for agents marginalised within the process to found a new field or to attach themselves to emerging fields. Because academics in the field of journalism have not focussed their energies on developing the field as a viable object of study, it still finds itself in the position of emergence as a field. Given its aim of serving democracy often through critique of those in power, it has therefore proven to be an ideal docking port for fields such as cultural studies and communication studies. As noted above, Turner (2000: 360) calls these linkages with these fields, journalism's "shotgun weddings". This description points to the incidental, unplanned and also ill-advised liaisons between fields. They seem, furthermore, to limit the possibilities for the development of journalism as an object of study in its own right and for developing verticality.

### **6.3.5 Demands on the journalism curriculum from the media industry**

Departments of journalism and media studies have to respond to the separate and incongruent needs of the academy and the media industry (Berger 1996). The call from industry is for journalists or media workers who are able to produce intelligent media. There has therefore been a call for journalism educators and trainers to get "back to basics" in order to address what is regarded as a growing problem of junior journalists who are unable to operate effectively in newsrooms (see for example, Kyazze (2005) and Fourie (2005)).

Garman argues (2005: 207 – 208) that the problem newsroom managers experience with junior journalists may not be a result of their lack of skills, but she suggests that it might be the result of their limited understanding of the “constraining practices” of the community of journalists. She agrees (*ibid*: 207) with Zelizer (1997) that

the practices of power, authority-building and control over autonomy which are implicit in the ways journalists have come to operate in the world and which are being promoted – although invisibly – through the teaching that goes on in teaching institutions. Unless these uses of power are made overt within curricula, students will continue to assume that it is natural to emulate certain practices and that the moral discourse aligned with such practices is not to be questioned.

Steenveld (2006) believes that the state of South African journalism education is the way it is in part because of the undue influence that industry has on higher education. In South Africa, businesses are required to give 0,5% of their salary bill towards a national skills development fund. Thus, the government has ensured the interest of business in training and development, but it has also resulted in industry demanding a say in the nature of education and training. In professional spheres that are governed by professional bodies, there has for a long time existed a symbiotic relationship between the education and training institutions and the professional bodies in the drawing up of curricula and in the organisation of practice opportunities for novice professionals. Journalism is a field without any regulating professional body, and as has been demonstrated above, there is little consensus about what professional education and training should comprise. In South Africa the South African National Editors’ Forum which is made up of editors and senior media academics and the Media and Publications SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority) are the two bodies outside the academy that influence education and training agendas. Members of training institutions are represented on these bodies. The relationship between academics and SETAs has not always been a happy one as many members of SETAs have limited understanding of the needs and values of the academy and are therefore not able to make constructive contributions to university curriculum planning.

Players outside the academy see the training of journalists as vocational training whereas there are multiple views about the relationship between vocational training and academic education of apprentice journalists across the range of “training” institutions. Some (such as

the postgraduate qualification at the University of Stellenbosch) see their purpose as providing skills training for journalists (Du Toit 2008). At Rhodes University there have over the last number of years been wide-ranging debates about the nature of the education and training that the Department should offer students of JMS. However, the Department has never seen its remit as providing only skills training. As noted above, the Department has a long history of aiming to provide young journalists with the capacity to critically appraise the media and to be able to critique their own journalistic work. Du Toit (*ibid*:1) notes that Rhodes University and the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (for example) have published work making reference to “examples of teaching projects which have served as critical interventions into (the) social context” (for example, Steenveld (2006) and Tomaselli (1991)).

Steenveld (*ibid*) argues that post-1994 South Africa has four very context-specific education and training needs in relation to journalism that do not necessarily exist in other countries<sup>31</sup>. Firstly, she contends that the South African relation to globalisation is different to that of other countries as a result of the country’s history of colonisation and imperialism. Secondly, South Africa’s relation to the new information or knowledge economy is also different given the country’s education and development history as a result of colonisation and apartheid. The third factor that she highlights is the relative newness of the democracy. An implication of the fledgling democracy is that the nature of the democracy needs to be forged and the media’s role within the democracy is in the process of being established. The media’s role *vis-à-vis* the apartheid government was clear, however, its stance towards the new government and the still fragmented and diverse society remains in flux. A fourth factor that has to be taken into account is the state of education within the country. South Africa still suffers the legacy of unequal educational provision and therefore of educational outcome as a legacy of the apartheid state. There exists a great diversity in the levels of preparedness of students who enter university and this requires curriculum and pedagogic strategies to redress the educational backlogs that many students still suffer.

These factors are important in terms of the nature of journalism education as preparation for a profession. There has been serious debate in the educational literature and in the literature on

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<sup>31</sup> It could be argued, contrary to Steenveld, that these factors obtain, to various degrees, in many fledgling democracies, particularly in the African context.

the sociology of education about the nature of vocational education. There is disquiet about the deleterious effects of a narrow outcomes or competency based approach to vocational training in South Africa and in countries like Australia (See Young (2003), Young & Gamble (2006), Wheelahan (2007)). It is argued that a narrow vocational focus which teaches students discrete context-dependent skills will lock them into understandings that are unable to transcend the particulars of the contexts of application. What is required to transcend context-dependent knowledge and practice is theoretical knowledge through which students engage with the systems of disciplinary knowledge that will enable them to use this knowledge in thinking about a wide range of contexts.

Within the USA and Canada it has been argued that the decline in journalistic standards has been brought about by media convergence. It has been suggested that the growing importance of the profit motive could be ameliorated by a focus in journalism education on the development of a strong ethical identity in journalists. Journalism educators Sauvageau and Adam (2004) and Columbia University president Bollinger (quoted in Macdonald 2006) postulate that journalists need to have strong values in order to be able to respond in appropriate ways to perfidious decisions by editors or owners of news media. Macdonald (2006: 755) calls this the “ethical reformist” proposal for journalism education and training. The other proposed remedy is ensuring an appropriate mix of vocational training with a liberal arts education. Macdonald (*ibid*) counters the ethical education thesis by arguing that it is naïve since it does not take into account the political economy of news media; this proposal, she contends, “... (does) not directly address the material, economic and systemic considerations that underlie journalism’s credibility crisis”. Journalists do not have the kind of power to counter or overturn editorial decisions.

Within the Rhodes University context, Garman (2005) also disagrees with the idea that developing the skills of apprentice journalists and providing them with enough knowledge of journalistic ethics and values will change the way they operate in newsrooms and make them more acceptable to news editors. She proposes that conceptualising journalism as a profession and concomitantly devising the education and training of journalists to enhance their professional capacities has been within too narrow a frame. She argues, following Zelizer (1997) and also Skinner *et al* (2001), that it is more important to make aspirant journalists aware of the power they wield in reporting news events and shaping the way

communities perceive what happens in the world. This power starts with the power journalists have to decide what constitutes news and decisions about how to report on the news. Within this frame it makes sense to include within the curriculum Skinner *et al's* (2001) suggestions noted above for an appropriate theoretical framework for the study of journalism.

Some journalism educators argue that part of the crisis in journalism education stems from the changing role of higher education in society (Steenveld 2006). In South Africa the changes in the relation between the state and higher education and between higher education and the market have taken longer to take effect given the isolation of South African higher education before 1994. Since 1987 state funding for higher education has been diminishing while the demands on HE institutions have increased (De Villiers & Steyn 2007). The knowledge economy demands that entrants into the world of work are able to access, use and even create knowledge within contexts of application. There have also been demands from industry that new entrants should be job-ready when they leave educational institutions, including universities.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

Within the official recontextualising field (Bernstein 1996) this new demand for job-ready graduates has been interpreted as implying that education or training needs to focus on work-related skills. In a number of countries the new education and training context has resulted in the development of national qualifications frameworks that have led to the development of nationally accredited qualifications for a range of vocational qualifications. In the case of the South African National Qualifications Framework a number of vocational qualifications are made up of a range of unit standards. These are “stand-alone” units of learning that, in combination, make up “whole” qualifications. The strongest criticism levelled against the unit-standards approach (in Australia these unit standards are known as training packages) is that their focus on the development of generic skills which are context independent or work-based skills which seem to be locked into very specific kinds of contexts.

I would argue, using Young & Gamble's (2006) and Wheelahan's (2007) development of Bernstein's distinction between the sacred and the profane, that it is important for journalism

education, like other forms of vocational education to have both an inward and an outward orientation - towards the academy *and* towards the industry for which students are being prepared. The arguments seem to revolve around *the extent* to which journalism education needs to look both ways. Furthermore, given the limited time afforded to media production in the undergraduate curriculum there are questions around the extent to which students can be taught to be good writers, photojournalists, etc. while also being taught the knowledge and skills required for critical engagement with the social and political contexts within which they will practice (Garman 2005)

Young (2008) and Wheelahan (2007) argue that it is important for students to be inducted into strong forms of knowledge as part of vocational education and training. Strong forms of knowledge constitute theoretical knowledge that is part of a whole system of meaning that allows students to participate in society's conversation about itself and to extend that conversation. They argue that these forms of knowledge provide students with the tools to think "the not-yet-thought" (Bernstein 1996).

A number of writers have noted that journalism as a field has not focussed sufficiently on its object of knowledge, which is journalism itself. How the field is constituted in terms of its theoretical base is still in contention (Steenveld 2006; Amner 2005), except, as noted by Du Toit (2007), where the theories have had a more direct relation to journalism as the object of knowledge. This is in part why the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS have, at times, been fractious. These deliberations constitute struggles for the epistemic-pedagogic device.

In the next chapter I analyse interviews in which key informants in the Department of JMS spoke about their views on and experiences of curriculum development between 2003 and 2006.

## Chapter 7

### **An analysis of agents' experiences of the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS: 2002 – 2006**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In chapters 1, 4 and 6 I discussed the conditioning context for the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS at Rhodes University. I argued that the collaborative curriculum development process embarked on by this department was contrary to common academic practice. In 4.1 I noted Barnett's argument that there are multiple influences on the higher education curriculum at local, national and global levels. The curriculum work in the Department of JMS took place against the backdrop of contestations internationally and nationally about the role of higher education in relation to knowledge and in relation to the market place. Furthermore, the purposes and nature of journalism education has also been under contestation (see Chapter 6). Within the local context of the JMS Department a range of cultural, structural and agential influences have also played a role in curriculum processes.

In this chapter I shall analyse key informants' experiences of the curriculum development processes which got underway formally in 2003. However, one can argue that the process was initiated with the development of the departmental vision statement in 2002. In the past curriculum development took place in the various clusters (see Chapter 1.3.1 for a discussion of this structural arrangement). There was therefore the potential for vertical curriculum coherence along cluster (specialisation and MS) lines, but there was no structure for ensuring horizontal coherence across the various clusters. Katherine, senior MS lecturer recalled the situation prior to 2003 in this way:

Each area was seen as quite separate so that prac areas were seen as prac areas and they did what they did and nobody ever knew what they were doing. Let's say the theory people didn't know what the prac people were doing and the prac people didn't know what the theory people were doing. And we had these two parallel sorts of things going on in the department.

This structural arrangement resulted in very limited knowledge and understanding across the department of what transpired both ideationally and pedagogically across the various courses taught in the department.

Before 2002 the department had three MS lecturers, one of whom was the HoD, who had the status of professor. At this time the other two MS lecturers were senior lecturers. Between 2002 and 2006 three more MS lecturers were appointed, one at the level of senior lecturer and another at the level of professor. In 2006 one of the longstanding MS senior lecturers was appointed to the HoD's position, achieved the rank of full professor and was appointed deputy dean of the faculty of humanities. The senior lecturer appointed in 2002 was promoted to associate professor in 2006. At this juncture only one MP lecturer had a senior post<sup>32</sup>. Thus the MS staff members were powerful cultural and structural agents in the JMS Department during the time frame that this research reports on.

Socio-cultural instability existed in the department prior to the start of the curriculum project. This conflict was concentrated particularly along the MS-MP divide. Over the years the department (with the help of industry sponsorship) had expanded its technological capacity and had been able to offer state-of-the art training in the various media specialisations such as Writing and Editing, Design, Radio, Television and New Media. From teaching and course evaluations done over the years, it was evident that students enjoyed doing the production courses more than they did MS and many failed to see the connections between theory and practice. This added to the socio-cultural discord within the department<sup>33</sup>.

## **7.2 Socio-cultural interaction**

Archer (1995a,1996, 2000) argues that socio-cultural interaction (S-C) is conditioned but not determined by the conditioning context. I shall discuss the S-C in two parts. In this chapter I shall analyse the interviews I conducted with lecturers in the JMS department during the first half of 2006. Lecturers were asked about their experiences of the curriculum development processes since 2003 when the first year curriculum was revised. In the next chapter I shall

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<sup>32</sup> This MP senior lecturer, who was a journalist before being appointed in the JMS Department, was appointed at this level. No MP lecturer has ever been promoted through the Institution's promotions processes even though a number have applied over the years.

<sup>33</sup> It is possible that negative perceptions of MS by some MP staff was evident to their students and this may have contributed to student perceptions of MS,

present my analysis of the JMS 4 working group and Curriculum Forum (CF) meetings. These meetings occurred in 2006. The analysis of the interview data provided insights that facilitated the analysis of the curriculum meeting data which I present in the next chapter.

Several commentators have critiqued the extensive use of interview data in research and particularly in higher education research. Clegg (2005: 160) notes for example, that there is “an over-reliance on interview data” in higher education research, while school research has a rich tradition of ethnographic and observational research. However, it is recognised by Archer (2000: 157) that social agents’ words have “causal power to affect things in the world of matter. Language then is an emergent property because it is a causally efficacious practice”. The interview data illuminate reasons for lecturers’ actions and elucidate their understanding of the conditioning context. Bhaskar (2008) argues that reasons are causally efficacious in social contexts. It is therefore useful to examine interview data in addition to any other data to explain why things are the way they are within a particular social context.

As will be shown in this chapter, part of the motivation for the collaborative curriculum development process was to try to influence positively the socio-cultural context in the department. Archer (1995a, 1996) suggests that, in order to understand the driver(s) of change, it makes sense to analyse the different aspects of the social world separately in order to be able to judge whether culture, structure or agency constituted the impetus for change. For Archer time constitutes an important aspect in the examination of social change. Unlike, for example, Giddens (1984) who believes in the mutual constitution of structure and agency, Archer asserts that this view locks the constituents of the social world into a conceptual vice that precludes the analysis of how change comes about. This chapter starts with a discussion of the cultural context within the JMS Department. This is followed by a discussion of the role of structure and finally, I shall consider the role of agency during the period  $T^2 - T^3$ <sup>34</sup>.

In terms of Archer’s framework for the conditions and processes for social change, the conjuncture at  $T^1$  can be classified as one of relative structural stability (although the department did have a high staff turnover rate, particularly of production lecturers) and social and socio-cultural disorder. Into this context arrived a powerful structural agent, Anna, with

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<sup>34</sup> While  $T^1$  denotes the conditioning context,  $T^2 - T^3$  refers to the period of socio-cultural interaction which can lead to morphogenesis or morphostasis. The end of one cycle is at  $T^4$ . This also marks the start of the next morphogenetic cycle,  $T^1$ .

personal emergent properties (PEPs) (see Chapter 2 for an explanation of PEPs) that enabled her (Anna) to make an impact on the S-C impasse that existed in the department at the time. This impact was in terms of the structural arrangements, the cultural environment as well as in terms of socio-cultural relations. Thus, as will be explained below, with the appointment of this agent, a period of rapid social change ensued as the recommendations of the Praeg Report (2002) (see 6.2.3) were being implemented. The structural changes happened fairly quickly and were followed by a period of intense cultural and socio-cultural activity.

### 7.3 The ideational context during T<sup>2</sup> – T<sup>3</sup>

I examine the ideational context within the department in terms of lecturers' understanding of journalism education, the notion of curriculum, the relationship between theory and practice, the collaborative curriculum development process itself, and collaborative pedagogy, amongst other things. I shall then discuss how the structural context influenced the curriculum and curriculum development from 2003 - 2006.

I start off by discussing the shift in the discourse of the department. Before the 2002 re-visioning of the work of the department and the start of the curriculum development process, the different sections of the department worked separately, as indicated above. There was also a different approach to naming the work of the various sections of the department. There was a clear division between “theory” and “prac” work. Theory was the umbrella term used to refer to the work of the media theorists, who taught MS. The implication of these naming practices was that the practical work done in the department was considered to be purely practical.

There was a time it was thought that “the staff who came out of industry didn't have a concept of what theory was. So they'd talk about theory and what they said and what they meant wasn't what we did. So there was even misunderstanding at that level. So the word itself was problematic” (interview, Katherine).

It was decided that the simple theory / practice designations did not signify how the department wanted to view its work. It was therefore decided to refer to MS and MP respectively, rather than speaking of *theory* and *practice*. Part of the reason was recognition

that MS had to take cognisance of the practical side of journalism, while MP was underpinned by theory. For Katherine:

[The new nomenclature] was about showing the relationships that implicit in practice there is theory and people who so-called taught the theory knew quite a lot about practice too. And we also started using the words specialisation, practical specialisation. Changing the language is also quite important in changing perceptions and as a means of building the relationship.

In her interview, Katherine explained that there was a conscious decision to change the discourse used in the department in order to help change the way the work and the people doing the work were perceived.

M. Barnett (2006: 155) notes that a curriculum that links practical and theoretical knowledge requires teachers to be involved in “‘boundary-crossing’ pedagogy”. They need to be familiar with the discursive practices in relation to theory *and* practice and they need to understand the thinking behind the recontextualisation of both the theoretical and practical knowledges included in the curriculum. According to M. Barnett (*ibid*) teachers

(need) a degree of insight into the scope and nature of the ‘reservoir’ of disciplinary knowledges on which the particular syllabus has drawn, as well as some of the realities of the workplace settings to which this (appropriately fashioned) knowledge is deemed to be relevant.

It therefore makes sense for curriculum development to be (at least to a degree) collaborative and also that the lecturers in the department are required to have knowledge of both the theory and practice of the field. The Department of JMS has shifted over the last number of years in terms of its hiring practices and it is expected that MP staff without masters degrees engage in masters studies in an area that would enhance their knowledge of their field. A number of MP lecturers have chosen to pursue masters degrees in media studies.

As noted in Chapter 6 one of the recommendations of the Praeg Report (2002) was that the department establish a departmental forum to discuss curriculum matters relating to both MS and MP. In the next section I examine ideas around the notion and the role of the curriculum in the department that emerged during the period 2002 - 2006.

## 7.4 Curriculum and curriculum development

### 7.4.1 Finding a common vision

From mid-2002 – 2003 the JMS department embarked on a process of developing a new vision statement (Rhodes University 2005). According to the 2005 Departmental Review Self-Evaluation<sup>35</sup> document (Rhodes University 2005: 5) the collaborative development of the new vision statement was done as “a response to the recognition by colleagues of the need for the different sections of the Department (specifically media studies and practical specialisations) to work more collaboratively than previously”. This process seemed to be an important one in the department and its product, the vision statement had become the touchstone for curriculum decisions in the department (*ibid*). The vision statement took one and a half years to develop according to the HoD, John. As noted in the previous chapter, Steenveld (2006) stated that in the 1980s and the early 1990s the kinds of divisions that emerged in the department were absent since the work of the department was seen as developing an understanding of journalism as an act of opposition against the apartheid government of the day. The new political dispensation removed the need for that kind of unified oppositional stance.

According to John, further complicating factors were the rapid development and expansion of media towards the end of the twentieth century as well as the increased commercialisation of media production. Thus, MP staff with mainstream industry experience may have come into the department just before and at the juncture of the curriculum development process with a more commercial orientation to production work than MP staff had had prior to the period of rapid media expansion and commercialisation. Thus the structural divisions between media studies and media production work in the department created a range of ideational divisions also. These will become clear later in this chapter.

In 2002 it was clear that mechanisms were needed to unify the different sections of the department. The vision statement was one of the mechanisms for creating a more unified culture in the department. Prior to 2002, as is evident from some of the interviews and from

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<sup>35</sup> Rhodes University conducts three-yearly departmental reviews. Each department has to write a self-evaluation document in preparation for the review.

the Praeg Report (2002), the department was divided along multiple lines. Many of these divisions persisted beyond 2002. Gary (Radio lecturer), for example, talked about the following divisions in the department:

[We're] talking about a department in which there is so little consensus about coursework, curriculum and perspectives on journalism that collaboration is made that much more difficult. Because in a sense there's a clash between lecturers which is a hurdle which one has to get over or manage ... (interview, Gary).

While Jason (MS lecturer) stated, "In this department there are multiple disciplines and people don't only speak from ideological, political assumptions about the world, pedagogy, the university ... but also particular and different disciplinary backgrounds. So there are multiple schisms" (interview, Jason).

The vision statement was therefore political in more than one sense. It served a function of shifting the divisive dynamics amongst staff, but it also signalled the department's stance regarding its role and the role of journalism in post-apartheid South Africa. In response to the vision statement and its role, Jason, a MS lecturer had the following to say: "So we began with a new vision and mission statement that then articulated itself as the founding document for a curriculum review process" (interview, Jason). Thus the explicit aim of the development of a vision statement was to create a unifying regulative discourse (see 3.2.3 and 8.5.4) for the department's curriculum and also for the various departmental projects. The curriculum development process was thus also a political process in the following sense:

I think at the beginning there was an intention for it to be deeply political and so those initial discussions were at the level of what ideas are we going to be using and what political positions are we invoking. So in the beginning there was an invocation of the South African Constitution, its values. And we clearly articulated where we positioned ourselves in relation to the institution of Rhodes University; what organisational culture we're going to have, how we stand in relation to the community, Grahamstown, and the country, South Africa (interview, Jason).

John remarked that one of the reasons it took such a long time to develop the vision statement was because the department wanted to ensure that the sentiments articulated in the statement were owned by everyone. The process involved "a lot of horse-trading and negotiations and

discussion ... and there was one draft and two drafts ... and I actually think it's a very good document". He said that the final vision statement therefore was uncontentious and that it would be very difficult for anyone to oppose the ideas encapsulated in it (interview, John).

As with all interview data, it is prudent not to accept the views of powerful agents uncritically. As John is HoD of the Department of JMS it was thus important in terms of this research that one of the lecturers, Gary, shared the view held by this powerful agent. Gary believed that there was wide-spread agreement on the course set for the department by the vision statement. He said:

I think that agreement should come out of a process of consultation with a wide variety of academic staff in the department about what it is that this department should produce. In this department there certainly is that – there is a very clear vision statement of journalists being self-reflexive, civic-minded journalists who position themselves as citizens (interview, Gary).

For John, the work of the department was still politically oriented. He said, "At a very deep political level we orient ourselves in a particular way and our curriculum then speaks to that and the kind of work we want to do in the department. And it orients both our students and our lecturers" (interview, John). The vision statement, then, was understood to be an important aspect of the regulative discourse underpinning the curriculum and pedagogy of the department. At the beginning of the curriculum development process it was used as a means of breaking down the boundaries between different agents in the department. There had been a softening of boundaries between theory and practice lecturers, however, the major aim of thoroughly integrating theory and practice had not occurred for a number of reasons that will become clear later in the chapter.

#### **7.4.2 Ways of understanding curriculum and the curriculum development processes**

One of the longest serving, senior MS lecturers, Katherine, noted in her interview that before 2003 the word *curriculum* was hardly used in the department. Although she trained as a teacher, the word as such was not part of her teacher training programme and certainly not part of the vocabulary around course planning in the department. Courses were planned in terms of who was available and what was thought to be necessary in terms of the various

years of the journalism programme. Katherine argued that work on the curriculum was used as a vehicle to achieve other ends in the department, such as to enable the healing of divisions amongst staff. This was borne out by, for example, the Praeg (2002) report (discussed in the Chapter 5), which suggested the establishment of a departmental discussion forum involving all lecturing staff in curriculum deliberations in order for the various sections of the department to begin to communicate around their common purpose. So, for Katherine, the curriculum development process was, in the first instance, a means of dealing with the divisive dynamics in the department:

If I think of my understanding of the dynamics in the department then for me the impetus would be around the tension between theory and practice. So how does one then use the curriculum as a means of understanding what we do and how we relate to each other; how the two relate to each other?

Anna, the first chair of the CF, viewed the curriculum as doing particular kinds of work. She described it as “the chariot ride you choose ... how do you choose to negotiate this huge terrain of JMS”. She argued that the department chose a “political trajectory” as part of the regulative discourse for the curriculum,

... that actually gives a solid theoretical framing and basis; ... that also relates to social justice throughout. So the issue of how the media construct ideological or discursive meanings is central to the way this department needs to work if it's within a university, if it's about social justice. That's the edge.

She furthermore noted that her experience of working within an education faculty led her to be interested in what she termed “conceptually driven curricula” and she wanted to work “from a framework which I wanted to kind of *see*” (Anna, interview). For Peter (Writing lecturer), the curriculum was, “an idea about what ought to be, what students ought to know, what they ought to be able to do. And it would involve those kinds of inputs, but also mechanisms for assessing the extent to which students have learned those things” (interview, Peter), while for Katherine “the curriculum is also a response to not only internal organisational stuff, but it's also a bigger response to the socio-political times that we are in” (interview, Katherine).

Jason regarded the process as having degenerated from a process of deep political engagement to “the bureaucratic construction of documents that have SAQA speak. It speaks in outcomes; course outlines will conform to the requirements” (interview, Jason). And Gary said, “For me curriculum speaks to a need for or a desire for something to be taught. And in a sense courses are not owned by those who teach them, but they are about collective thinking around what is needed for a course in print journalism at second year” (interview, Gary). Roger (Design lecturer) saw it as scaffolding for teaching and learning activities, however this is not entirely positive. He said:

Because we now have sort of defined scaffolding and a defined direction which is given by the curriculum, it now means that people can't go off entirely on their own *pluck*<sup>36</sup>. There has been a lot of resentment about that. A lot of people, me included, are feeling that we're now quite restricted in what we can do and in some cases – I mean, you saw me go off last year – I just felt that that particular direction followed a particular line defined by a few people and not by the department as a whole, I felt.

Ingrid (who became chair of the CF at the start of 2006) had a slightly different view on that. She sees the curriculum as a contract. For her:

The idea of thinking about it as a contract is an important one. Because people work on curricula together and it's always a kind of dialogue and a negotiation between them and you need to come to compromises about what it is that you do together. So that's the other thing about curriculum ... they operate on compromises... If you start thinking of it as a contract then it's a contract with students and it's a contract with your colleagues that, in fact, you are committing yourself to some sense of going beyond the individual and establishing an organisational or institutional approach to your teaching which is more shared (interview, Ingrid).

An example of how important the idea of *curriculum as contract* was for another member of staff within the context of collaborative curriculum design was evident in the following example from Gary:

A member of staff teaching a second year course now wanted to completely change what the course was originally based on and there were quite specific theoretical understandings which informed the curriculum in that particular course. ... I had to avert a major shift because I realised I would be stepping

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<sup>36</sup> South African English slang word meaning following one's own direction or one's own mind.

on too many members of staff's toes, just indicating to me very clearly that one would have to go back to the original concepts behind that course. So for me curriculum is also about being able to trace the history of teaching in the department (interview, Gary).

Even though there was a range of different ways in which curriculum as a concept was viewed, many of these views were complementary. However, it seemed as if the notion of *curriculum as contract* and the idea of holding on to the history of the process may have been in tension with, for example, individual agency and these ideas may have constrained the development of innovative ideas.

#### **7.4.3 Changing views of the roles of theory lecturers and practical lecturers**

A further regulative principle that the curriculum development process aimed to address was that of blurring the boundaries between theory and practice. As noted in 6.3.3 above, theory and practical specialisations were taught by the same people in the early years of the department's history. But this became increasingly difficult to maintain as the department grew. With the growth came the "split" between theory and practice. MS was regarded as the theoretical, academic component of the JMS course, while the practical specialisations were seen as merely practical. This aspect of the ideational context was in part the result of the way the university viewed disciplines that combined theory and practice. The institution limited the practical components of such courses and gave priority to theoretical aspects by requiring that a greater percentage of the total course marks be allocated to theory.

In her interview Katherine commented that in the early years of the division between theory and practice, the lecturers who were hired to teach the practical specialisations were hired for their technical expertise and not for their academic qualifications. Some specialisation lecturers in the early years had honours degrees and some had qualifications from technikons<sup>37</sup>. It makes sense to conjecture that this structural arrangement grew out of the belief that the practical components of the qualification were intellectually less demanding than the theoretical parts of the course. A further ideational outcome for the kinds of people who were employed to teach practice, was that the theory underpinning the practical work remained implicit or in some cases, the practical specialisations were regarded as a-

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<sup>37</sup> Technikons were similar to British Polytechnics. They offered predominantly professional qualifications. In 2001 the minister of education promulgated the transformation of technikons into universities of technology.

theoretical by some MS staff (interview, Katherine). There was also the belief amongst some staff that as the technology became more sophisticated, it became more time-consuming to learn to use the technology to produce journalism. There was the danger that learning to use the technology optimally outweighed the importance of producing thoughtful journalism (interview, Katherine).

Increasingly, though, the department began to employ practical specialists who were interested in journalism as an intellectual project, rather than only as a technical or technicist endeavour. This shifted the ideational context for the specialisation lecturers. However, because the theory and practice lecturers did not talk to each other about their work, the understanding that the work done by practical lecturers was predominantly practical did not shift significantly.

Anna (CF chairperson until the start of 2006) believed that the shift in the ideational context occurred with the shared discussions which centred on the integration of the regulative discourse into all the work of the department. This necessitated the integration of theoretical understandings taught traditionally in MS into the MP curriculum. Thus, MP work had to be explicitly informed by reflexive theoretical understandings about media for social change. Anna argued that the curriculum development process was driven by “people’s personal commitment to the field they’re working in. And I think it’s been driven strongly by deeply felt principles around social justice... So I think that actually got people working together and they became very invested in what they were doing (interview, Anna).

John observed that the integration of theory and practice had necessitated a conscious effort by both sides to be supportive of each other’s projects, also in the classroom:

... it has really been important that the MP people don’t undermine what the MS people are doing and vice versa, so that, if you are doing a production, that students can start to see the relevance of some of the MS insights. But that can only happen if the MP people take those understandings on board (interview, John).

Anna suggested that the shifts that had taken place in terms of the way the work was conceptualised had led to MP staff involving themselves in what she termed, “*intellectual*

*projects*” as opposed to purely technical or “*technicist projects*” (interview, Anna). In terms of developing a curriculum and suitable pedagogy that integrated theory and practice, Radio lecturer, Gary, found, though, that it was difficult for some staff members to participate in this project fully. He argued that the difficulty lay in the limited capacity some may have had for the theoretical challenges of an integrated curriculum:

This might have to do with staff teaching to their strengths ... they kind of come out of a background of hard skilling of journalists. Their background is in training ... so some of that important conceptual stuff of looking at journalism as thought is not always possible. And I feel that this has resulted in a tension around the curriculum, because staff members in the department have different priorities for what needs to be taught (interview, Gary).

The above quotation points to some of the difficulties that may arise within a context of collaboration. Through their varied education, training and work experiences, different lecturers had constructed their identities in different ways. Bernstein (2000) argues that strong boundaries ensure strong identities, while blurring of boundaries threatens these identities. For some lecturers the collaborative project required shifts in established identities. However, Ingrid indicated in a personal communication (August 2008), that it was spurious to “label” all production specialists in the same way, as some people had nuanced understandings of the theory-practice relationship and their identities did not fit neatly into specific categories. In her 2006 interview she explained:

Jenna [Television lecturer] ... is a producer, but she’s working on her honours<sup>38</sup> at the moment and she’s that hybrid of two things [producer and theorist] and I think we are increasingly getting those people. The same is true for Henry. I also think that labels such as *techies* that people put on people... Those *techies*, if you asked them whether they were *techies*, would probably have disagreed violently (interview, Ingrid).

Henkel (2000) argues that there are two aspects to academic identity. On the one hand academic identity develops through becoming part of a community of practice with a shared knowledge base and values. On the other hand academic identity is an individual project

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<sup>38</sup> In South Africa the honours year is the first postgraduate year after a three-year bachelor’s degree and is regarded as the entrance requirement for a masters degree. In the case of JMS, students can either do a three-year BA (Journ) followed by a BA (hons) in JMS as a fourth year option. However, the BJourn degree is one of a few four-year degrees. The fourth year of the BJourn degree is regarded as intensive preparation for work within a journalistic or other media context.

through which the individual develops his/her niche within the community (Henkel 2000, 2005; Muller 2008).

The integration project required the complex interplay between culture, structure and agency. The shift in the ideational context brought about as a result of the injunctions in the vision statement necessitated a range of structural changes. Courses had to be re-designed in order to give effect to the principle of theory-practice integration and, pedagogically, this required team teaching and collaborative curriculum development. In addition, new kinds of agents needed to be brought into the department. These agents who were production specialists with an interest in theoretically informed practice had different PEPs to those lecturers appointed to teach production work in the past. Because the new agents had different PEPs, they had different expectations in relation to what they would teach as well as expectations in terms of career development.

The next section examines how the collaborative project worked and how it was perceived by lecturers in the department.

#### **7.4.4 Collaboration**

The development of an integrated curriculum requires collaboration between theory and practice staff, not only during the conceptualisation phase of the curriculum, but in a number of cases MS and MP staff were required to work together within the same classroom spaces; team-teaching was particularly encouraged within the first year of the JMS course. Lecturers were encouraged to seek opportunities for collaborative teaching where appropriate. Within the third year, since 2006, the second semester Journalism Development and Democracy (JDD) / Critical Media Production (CMP)<sup>39</sup> project, though successful in many respects, was an intensive collaborative project across all specialisations and with MS input during the JDD phase of the course in particular. There were multiple indications in the data sources that this project was not uncomplicated. Anna noted that:

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<sup>39</sup> The JDD and CMP courses form one project which is taught during the second semester of the third year. During the JDD phase of the course understandings of journalism are problematised and the role of journalism in the pursuit of social development and democracy is examined. The second part of the course that takes place in the final terms of the third year is the production component of the course. During this phase all the specialisations work together on one production project that normally involves a selected section of the Grahamstown community such as, for example, the youth, or the unemployed in the production of alternative forms of journalism.

There will always be tensions. I think it's been quite a productive working through of tensions. I think it's led to greater respect by people across the different halves of the department. ... I've spoken about mostly production people taking on MS understandings and I think that's been absolutely essential because it's conceptual framing that has actually led the work. I think that where MS people have worked with production studies people they have also learned a greater respect for that work; particularly, I think in the first year where you actually co-teach. I think that happens very easily and nicely. I think that MS lecturers are being called in far more to engage with production work and I think they do it quite willingly. So I think it is still full of tensions and difficulty, but I think it has increased the conversation between colleagues and I think that's been really valuable (interview, Anna).

It seems as if the kind of syncretism that was initially worked towards was the kind where  $A \rightarrow B$  was sought; thus MP lecturers had to take on MS understandings in their work. However, most MP lecturers were in favour of the following kind of syncretic move:  $A \leftrightarrow B$ .

The Praeg Report (2002) noted the lack of communication between staff as a primary fault line in the department. Everyone I interviewed agreed that the collaborative process had enabled them to enter into conversations across specialisation lines. Now there was a sense that "there's a lot more collegiality and ... it is improving" (Peter, interview). Ingrid touched on one of the major problems with engineering successful collaboration within this departmental context:

I don't think we're a cohesive group. I think we're very different from each other. The people who have driven the curriculum development process happened to be people who work more collaboratively together and who believe in those kinds of processes, and have taken responsibility for the processes. And then other people have come with them. I guess because they have faith in the direction. But actually, they don't operate in that way necessarily themselves.

Henkel (2005) argues that most academics prefer to work as "lone wolves" and that the academic enterprise was predicated on the creativity and hard work of individuals. Kogan and Hanney (In Henkel 2005: 26) state that "higher education's main activities – research, scholarship and teaching – are essentially individualistic and depend on the expertise and commitment of creative individuals". Part of the difficulty with collaborative processes is that they work against the "normal" way in which academic life has traditionally been structured.

However, through the collaboration project lecturers had to negotiate the “multiple schisms” (interview, Jason) in the department. Jason commented that “there are multiple disciplines and people don’t only speak from ideological political assumptions about the world, pedagogy, the university ... but also particular and different disciplinary backgrounds”. Even MS is not a singular discipline. According to John:

MS is not a discipline. It’s not like sociology or anthropology or psychology where you have core disciplinary knowledge; or maybe I’m simplifying it because you would have divisions in each of those disciplines and different schools of thought. But MS is spoken of as a field because it brings together understandings from linguistics, anthropology, sociology, economics, from a range of disciplines. And because of that, you have a look in this department, there are actually very few people who have been trained in MS or been in a MS department. They might come out of English, anthropology or whatever. My MA was in film and television studies and my PhD was in sociology. So it’s social science. So I bring that particular orientation. So that has been part of the difficulty as well, of creating a coherent curriculum.

Anna pointed to MP lecturers who had been required to take on MS understandings of the work. For some MP staff this had been problematic and there had been a sense that in instances where people co-taught courses, “the mould has been set by the MS person” (interview, Peter). And Frank (Writing lecturer) noted that “it was driven mostly by theory people ... and it is okay, there is no problem with that. Somebody has to take responsibility for the thing. But you see, what happens with a lot of these things is that the person who champions anything in this department, usually gets their way” (interview, Frank).

A number of MP lecturers experienced a sense of “alienation” from the process. Both Peter and Frank noted this. Frank spoke about “... alienation that a lot of specialisations have felt about the curriculum process”, while Peter said, “... there are some people who are profoundly alienated from the CF and ... they are so cross, and they’re so disempowered” (interview, Peter). Part of this disempowerment stemmed from having had to traverse theory-practice boundaries and having had limited background in the kind of theoretical framework used. In some cases it emerged from the position of the agent(s) in relation to more powerful agents in the department. Both these possibilities were articulated by Frank:

...because they (MS people) are so intimately involved in it there is a way in which it is so difficult for you to shoot down some of their arguments. It

becomes so, so, so, difficult. And some people say, “Why bother about these things. I’m a junior lecturer; I’m talking in the same forum as a professor. Do you think I’ll win this argument? (interview, Frank)

Archer (1995a) argues that issues of power are central to socio-cultural interaction. Within this context structural power (position) as well as cultural power (cultural capital) and position-taking bestow bargaining power on powerful agents, while some of those with less power are silenced. Jason suggested that the differential capital of MS and MP people potentially limited collaboration on an equal footing:

And often some people do not speak from the rigour of any particular discipline either. So there are people who have no disciplinary training, but speak from praxis or years in industry or whatever; so there are those distinctions as well. (It) makes it harder to have a conversation about a political curriculum ... (interview, Jason).

For Peter the distinctions were not purely along the theory – practice divide. He argued that divisions existed amongst the different production specialists also, “There are very different ideas about how things should be done; there are big fights too” (Peter, interview). This was an issue that Anna recognised. She suggested that within the JMS4 working group the issue would not be about the relationship between theory and practice, but it would be about which voices or ideas amongst the production specialists would gain ascendancy. This will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

A number of interviewees argued that collaboration in terms of course planning and teaching was not successful at all levels. Some MP lecturers suggested that MS lecturers were not really interested in pursuing real collaboration and integration of MS and MP. Peter stated that the process was difficult:

I have had some really unpleasant moments, you know, having to sit down with MS people to try and work out a joint curriculum for a course, for example, and having them say, “I’m not interested in that, I’m interested in this. ... And I’d say, “But surely the whole purpose of this thing was to ...” And then having complete stonewalling and blockage on that. And then I’d think to myself, “This is actually a joke. This is not what we said we wanted and we’re going through the motions and there’s a lot of pretence (interview, Peter).

Frank's experience of collaborative teaching aimed at integrating theory and practice at the first year level left him with a sense of the considerable disjuncture between the writing curriculum and the media theory curriculum at that level. He commented that,

I found it so difficult to show the link between the theory and the practice; not because I cannot do it, it is just that some of these things are impossible. ... You cannot link writing, summarising a sentence, some information – you can't link it to Modernity. It is just not possible. Gothenburg, the history of the printing press, you cannot actually link it to being accurate, it is impossible. There are moments where you can actually do that. There could be some moments in contemporary history where you can actually link it. But for the most part it was very, very difficult (interview, Frank)<sup>40</sup>.

Even though decisions were made at the collaborative curriculum planning stage involving working group members and the whole department at the CF, it seemed as if the success or failure of collaborative curriculum development and pedagogy depended on what happened between the lecturers who taught a particular course. Peter related a range of different challenges to pedagogic collaboration. For example, he talked about his collaborative work with Anna. He thought that they had some good ideas, and that they had worked together relatively well, but that they did not have enough time to exploit the potential of the work that they had started together. The next year Anna (MS) and Elaine (Writing) worked together and according to Peter, they reported in a first year board curriculum review meeting that they were able to develop a successful collaborative course. Other pairings did not work at all. For example, during one collaborative course, Peter sat in on all the lectures presented by the MS lecturer, but when he started to teach his part of the course, the MS person did not stay. This he interpreted as a lack of interest in the practical aspects of the course. In other cases, people taught the same course, but like Peter and his MS co-teacher, they taught separate parts of the course and occasionally referred to each other's lectures. It seems though, as if people either did not have the will or the capacity to execute the collaborative teaching fully; or that they were asserting their autonomy by subverting the integration project.

Full integration, or what has come to be known as convergence, that is, when a range of different media are used together to produce news or other forms of journalism, did not seem

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<sup>40</sup> It is possible that Frank did not have the theoretical knowledge to make the requisite connections.

possible with limited time or human resources. Production lecturers involved in the JDD/ CMP course, for example were required to be available to teach and mentor students most afternoons of the week for the duration of the course.

Successful collaboration was hampered by individuals and specializations continuing to look out for their own interests during the process. Henry (Photojournalism lecturer) said, explaining about his need to protect his vested interests:

Ja, I think it is often about protecting one's own interest or what one perceives to be the interest of one's particular subject stream and at times I would like to be able to get away from that and to simply try and work out what would be the best idea but I think that I've come to realise that most of the people would simply make use of the opportunity to bulldoze through what they want without one's trying to get in the way (interview, Henry).

Ingrid realised that this was an issue:

People feel personally threatened very often in terms of what one highlights and what we put centre-stage in the curriculum because it might not be the thing that they want to prioritise. I think there's a tendency to swing back to your own concerns rather than the department's concerns when there is no constant scrutiny and discussion and dialogue around those agreements.

It is recognised that different lecturers have different concerns that they might wish to foreground in the curriculum and this may be experienced as an imposition of power. For her, then, part of the key was to keep having conversations about what was agreed to. It was therefore important that the history of the process was foregrounded so that everyone remembered the reasons for decisions.

In this section I illustrated some of the challenges with collaboration highlighted by the interviewees. Initially it seemed as if the syncretic was one that favoured MS ( $A \leftarrow B$ ). Both Anna and John argued that it was important for MP staff to integrate MS understandings into MP work. It could be argued that this was necessary given that JMS was being taught in a university context and therefore it made sense to foreground theory. However, this was also interpreted as the powerful in the department asserting their power. MS staff, due to their seniority (see Maton's argument with regard to the legitimating power of age [and senior positions] as a temporal category in 3.5.4) had more power. Some MP staff experienced this

as minimising their vested interests. MP staff members were more in favour of a more equalising syncretic move ( $A \leftarrow \rightarrow B$ ). It seems from my analysis of the data as if some lecturers in the department found ways to circumvent integration plans when it did not suit their vested interests in relation to their field of specialisation.

In the next section processes of consensus building and compromise will be examined.

#### **7.4.5 Consensus and compromises**

From my analysis of a number of interviews it has become clear that many lecturers did not regard the collaborative process as producing much consensus around curriculum development issues; rather many talked about how they had to compromise their views in order for the process to move forward or to keep the peace. One of the results of compromise was that individuals found ways to subvert decisions in order to assert their own positions. For example, the CMP course was built around the concept of convergence where all the various news platforms (or media) were used in a collaborative project around one theme. However, what emerged during the 2005 course was that some specialisation lecturers required their students to do practical work over and above the CMP course requirements. The CMP course was meant to constitute the practical component of the JMS 3 course for the second semester. Gary noted that:

This was about integration, this was about collaboration. And there was this kind of, "Well, I'll do it, but I really want to do this other stuff". So there is a kind of undermining of curriculum decisions which also have resulted because of that tension between staff and there not being a full commitment to the collaborative decisions (interview, Gary).

In part, Gary was right to read this as a way of undermining the collaborative decision; however, this was also an indication of the tension that existed amongst MP lecturers about the limited time they had to prepare students sufficiently to be more or less ready to enter a media-related profession. This issue is discussed further in 7.4.6 below.

Collaboration was hampered by some of the difficult dynamics that existed in the department. A number of participants mentioned that individuals sometimes responded to suggestions in

defensive ways, “What I have seen is an immediate defensiveness and you just don’t get past that ... with any ease and you often take three steps forward in one meeting and two steps back in the one immediately after that” (Gary, interview). There were a range of possible reasons for defensive responses. Some argued that it was a result of people being taken out of their comfort zones and being asked to teach in a way that they were not comfortable with or to teach at a theoretical level that they were not used to; other reasons included tension that emanated from the limited space afforded to both theory and practice within an integrated curriculum. Concerning difficulties around consensus-building, Jason stated that:

I think there hasn’t been enough conversation and consensus building after critical analysis of all positions. There has been consensus building that pre-empted the critical analysis. So we go for the non-offensive, the non-committal. I think there’s a culture of politeness in South African universities that cover over ever discussing and contesting and debating, arguing about those things. So the arguments are at some level about those divisions and splits and political differences, but they’re never articulated as that. They become arguments that are articulated about specific wording and particular definitional elements. It’s not about how you define the media...(interview, Jason).

For Gary, “success would be some kind of consensus. We rarely come to that. Often it’s about compromise rather than consensus. Agreement happens very rarely”.

Curriculum decisions affected lecturers’ day to day work and aspects that were integral to their working identities. Gary suggested that many approached these discussions, not with a perspective to talk about the *ideas* that underpin decisions; instead their approach seemed personal. He said that during curriculum discussions,

People don’t listen to each other because they’re not talking from any kind of – it’s a bit like dealing with beliefs – it is very hard to argue against it because it’s not grounded in any empirical knowledge or any kind of considered thinking about curriculum. It’s about gut, I think, some of the time and I think that makes it difficult. People talk from their guts and it’s gut and personality and it’s ego and it’s the kind of thing you don’t want to be trampled on. So I think those kinds of barriers as well which prove to be problematic, which is why I’m saying that if perhaps there can at least be some kind of agreement (interview, Gary).

It seemed that the shared regulative discourse which was derived from the vision statement was not enough to undergird a successful curriculum design programme when the aim was to develop an integrated programme. The relationship between theory and practice was extremely complex and the successful integration of the two within one programme required agreement about much more than the value system that needed to underpin the work of the department. Henry believed that the department, “(has) created a common language to explain what it is that we’re trying to achieve, but not exactly how we are trying to achieve it”. Thus in order for a congruent idea to have effect within a social context, agents had to develop the means to integrate it into their practices successfully.

Integrated curriculum development is influenced by multiple causal mechanisms. In complex contexts one causal mechanism sometimes cancels out another. As indicated above, individual vested interests played a significant role. Furthermore academic work is intimately linked to people’s identities and biographical trajectories. The shared belief in the regulative discourse, for example, was undermined by some individuals’ responses and challenges to established identities and vested interests (see, for example, 7.4.4 above).

#### **7.4.6 Divergent perspectives on journalism**

Before I discuss the various ideas held by the research participants during this period of S-C activity with regards to the relationship between theory and practice (7.4.7), it is worth noting that there also existed contradictory viewpoints with regard to the kind of journalism that the department would teach. The first curriculum development meeting I attended was the final one of the JMS 3 working group. This meeting took place during November of 2005 and was attended by representatives of the various specialisations taught in the department. The meeting was acrimonious and concluded without consensus for a curriculum structure for the third year for 2006 in terms of the way in which writing was to be integrated into the third year curriculum.

Roger (Design lecturer) explained that the reason he was unhappy at the meeting was because journalism was conceptualised “quite narrowly” as *news* journalism. Within a news journalism framework Roger suggested, “the Photojournal people and I felt there was very little role for designers and photographers within a news journalism paradigm” (interview, Roger).

In a discussion with John, the HoD, after what was described by Roger as a “fractious” working group meeting, John noted that the issue was one of “philosophically different approaches to what journalism is, basically”. Gary also noted that there existed a diversity of views on journalism amongst his colleagues. He said, “I think also because you’re talking about a department in which there is so little consensus about coursework and curriculum, perspectives on journalism, that collaboration is made that much more difficult” (interview, Gary). Thus, even though the department had reached consensus around the political regulative discourse that would underpin their work, there still existed constraining contradictions around the nature of journalism that would be taught in the department.

Peter commented in his interview that even though the JDD/CMP course that was run for the first time in 2005 was “staggeringly successful”, there were some problems with the extent to which some specializations were integrated into the process. He noted that Photojournal and Design and also New Media students seemed less involved than Writing, Radio and TV students. He thought that this had to do with the fact that these specializations had only been indirectly involved in the gathering and production of news stories as such. They rendered the news that was developed by others and as such seemed to have had less of a commitment to the process. He also noted that it was evident from these students’ examination answers they seemed to have achieved a more limited sense of the coherence of theory and practice during the course. Roger, in his interview, indicated that even within the CMP course which focused on more radical, fringe types of journalisms, the focus was still on news. He noted that within a strictly news focused journalism paradigm there was limited scope for the full expression of Design and Photojournal students, given the nature of the market in South Africa.

This experience of not sharing the same philosophical outlook about the work to be done led Roger to set aside time during the JMS 4 working group meetings for members of the group to come to agreement regarding the kind of journalism they wished to teach at that level (see next chapter for a full discussion of this).

Members of the department also held divergent views on the kinds of journalism that should be prioritised in the curriculum. The importance of news journalism and media *vis a vis* other kinds of journalism was an area of contestation. The prioritisation of news was particularly problematic for specialisations like Design and Photojournalism.

#### 7.4.7 Theory and practice – the difficulty with finding a syncretic solution

Culturally, this period signified the attempt to achieve a syncretic solution to the theory-practice divide that was believed to have existed in the department before 2002. This move required MS and MP lecturers to attempt a syncretic solution to the relationship between theory and practice.

Although the idea of integrating theory and practice was supported by most in the department, the extent to which integration was possible and desirable had been re-thought based on people's experiences with developing and teaching integrated courses. Peter was a production (Writing) lecturer and he had studied MS. He was interested in teaching theorised production courses, but he now believed that it might be more profitable for students to have periods where they only learned production skills without the integration of MS. He believed that it was useful to integrate journalism studies into the practical courses and he had come to the conclusion that courses where journalism practice was thoroughly integrated with journalism theory worked best. Particularly in the first year, he argued, it was important to give students the opportunity to learn to write and to spend focused time on that activity without at the same time having to make sense of the MS part of the curriculum. Other writing teachers shared this view (interview, Peter). At the end of 2005 a number of writing teachers argued that they needed a semester on their own with the first year class in order to initiate them into the practices of journalistic writing.

One of the underlying reasons or mechanisms that made the curriculum development process in this department particularly complex was that the academic project of the department was about teaching different forms of knowledge. The curriculum development process attempted to integrate these various forms. Peter thought that some of the difficulty was also about who held what knowledge. He argued:

Some people would see it as the theorists or the people with the academic credentials in the department asserting their power and their academic access to certain forms of knowledge and asserting the importance of those forms of knowledge over other forms of knowledge to some extent (interview, Peter).

Gary (Radio lecturer) noted that MS and MP operated according to “different kinds of logic ... that don’t always talk to one another. The kind of reading and thought required for MS courses was vastly different from the kind of work students were encouraged to do in MP” (interview, Gary). Gamble (2006) distinguishes between practical and theoretical knowledge in vocational courses. She argues, as does Gary, that these different types of knowledge have different logics. Practical knowledge is context-dependent and particularistic, while theoretical knowledge is general and context-independent. However, she also argues convincingly, that in both types of knowledge there is the possibility of moving between the general and the particular, between principle and practice. Gamble (2006) agrees with Michael Barnett (2006) that vocational knowledge needs to “face both ways” towards the field of application as well as towards the academy if it is going to allow for educational progression later on. Gamble (2006) avers, however, that it is important for the relationship between the two kinds of knowledge to remain distinct in order to ensure that the one kind of knowledge does not become the other. This is the potential danger of integration, i.e. that each type of knowledge may lose its distinctiveness.

Jason articulated the differences between the two aspects of the curriculum as follows:

There is a contradiction, I think, between the valuing of technical ability in one set of practices in the department and the kinds of things students have to do there – the valuing of the analytical, critical ability which doesn’t stand outside the technical ability. The technical ability does not stand outside of the analytical-critical abilities. It’s divided between different kinds of teaching. So technical ability is tested in ... the primary space for production teaching and critical analytical ability is the primary space for what is called theory teaching, analysis teaching. And certainly production has some critical and analytical elements, but that’s not its primary focus. And analysis has some technical elements, but that’s not its primary focus.

Should these primary foci not be upheld, there was the danger of what Gamble (2006) warns against, i.e. the one kind of knowledge becoming the other. Gamble (2006) argues that the relationship between the theory and practice components of vocational or occupation specific courses is complex. She claims that this relationship cannot be too directly stated, since they constitute different kinds of knowledge. There is danger in contextualising the conceptual curriculum in order to render it more accessible to students that it may lose its context-independence. Similarly, there is a danger of presenting the practical side of the curriculum in

a manner that is too theoretical, causing it to lose its context-dependence. In Gamble's words, "a shift in the opposite direction destroys the intrinsic nature of each kind of knowledge" (2006: 99). As indicated earlier in this chapter, there is a need for vocational curricula to include context-independent theory where "the ordering of meaning comes from outside a specific object or context". This is the domain of what Bernstein (2000) calls the not-yet-thought, new knowledge. This kind of knowledge holds the possibility of elaboration and "inferences can be drawn because there is a forward projection towards an order more 'ideal' than the one at hand" (Gamble 2001: 196). Theoretical knowledge is necessary for academic progression and to enable new thinking and innovation. Gamble (2006: 99) suggests that where a practical discipline does not have a vertical, theoretical basis, then a different route should be taken to give students access to theory or general education in the form of studies in language, social sciences or other disciplines that will enhance students' understanding of the world.

The nature of the different logics needs to be examined in order to understand why integrating these different kinds of knowledge may be problematic for some lecturers. Muller (2008: 1-2) provides a useful way of explaining the different logics of, as well as the relationship between, the different knowledge forms and the curricular forms that they require. He argues that the differences in knowledge forms and the concomitant rifts between disciplines come from the division between pure disciplines and applied or that between the 'liberal' and the 'mechanical' disciplines.

Muller (*ibid*: 16) furthermore differentiates between traditional professions (such as medicine and law) and newer ones (such as teaching and social work). The newer professions, he argues, are "generally speaking more diffuse, fluid, less organised and consequently send out more ambiguous, frequently contradictory signals about professional requirements to the academy". In addition, JMS is one of the newer disciplines that has not yet developed a core disciplinary base that has been adequately "shaken down into a stable, generally accepted, incremental body of knowledge" (*ibid*) (see Chapter 6). Journalism does, however, perhaps unlike some other newer regions, have parts of foundational disciplines in its core curriculum (see 7.4.4). As was evident from the arguments in Chapter 6, there is contention in some circles about whether certain aspects of MS are indeed appropriate as a knowledge base for the study of journalism.

Muller (*ibid*: 20 ff) draws attention to the factors that generate internal coherence in curricula which consist of different kinds of knowledges. He distinguishes broadly between those curricula that require conceptual coherence and those that require contextual coherence. Conceptual coherence requires “a hierarchy of abstraction and conceptual difficulty” and normally is necessary for highly codified disciplines with an ‘epistemological core’ (Parry 2007 in Muller 2008). Curricula that depend on contextual coherence “are segmentally connected, where each segment is adequate to a context and sufficient to a purpose” (*ibid*: 20). In a nutshell, it could be argued, according to Muller (*ibid*: 21) that “conceptual coherence curricula are regulated by adequacy to truth (logic); contextual curricula by contextual adequacy, to a particular form of practice”. MS draws its logic in part from a relation to conceptual coherence with reference to context, while the MP logic is contextual, albeit circumscribed by “adequacy to truth” in the ethical sense. According to departmental curriculum documentation, the MS course is indeed also underpinned by contextual logic:

The **Media Studies** programme includes a focus on context and text. It begins with a broad (international) historical media frame in year one, the South African historical context in year two and moves to a local focus in year three when (students) have chosen their media specialisation. Other aspects of Media Studies (Narrative, Genre, Semiotics, Media Sociology, etc.) include a focus on journalism throughout (JMS RU 2005: 20).

From the above description it is clear, however, that the conceptual framework was predominantly contextually bound. However, it is not the contextual application of MS which is problematic for students and MP staff alike, but rather those parts of the field that are more divorced from practice. The analysis of the data quoted in this chapter indicates that it is those parts of the course that are beyond the immediately contextual that cause the tensions in the department.

The media production curriculum also showed progression from writing and basic design in the first year to print and broadcast production in second year. In the third year there was an initial focus on “generic reporting and (a) move to media specialisations in design/new media; writing and editing; television; radio; photojournalism” (Rhodes University 2005: 20). In the second semester of the third year there is a conscious integration of theory and practice with the CMP course. Students’ initiation into journalistic research is also scaffolded, starting with interviewing in first year; content analysis and semiotic analysis in second year, while in

the third year audience research and a literature review are undertaken (Rhodes University 2005: 20).

The different MP specialisations also require different kinds of engagement. Radio and Television and Photography require technological know-how that is acquired through practice and trial and error. Through practice this know-how needs to become embodied so that the conceptual and creative work that is required to produce the television or radio programme or the photo-essay happen unhampered by the technology. Design and New Media require a different logic to this. All of these different ways of engaging and developing expertise are different to the intellectual work required of a curriculum that demands engagement on a purely intellectual level. Journalism theory and MS theory thus differ in terms of the level of context-dependence that is necessary for each. With journalism theory<sup>41</sup> there is a closer relation to the head-work and hand-work<sup>42</sup> (Zilsel 2003) of the practical specialisations. News-writing is even closer to head-work, but it is still a context-dependent practice. There thus exists within JMS what Muller (ibid: 24) refers to as “a distinction or tension between a more conceptual and a more contextual form of disciplinary practice” and herein lies, in a large measure, the root of the struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device (Moore & Maton 2001).

What was evident from my analysis of the interviews with various lecturers was that their conceptions of the relationship between theory and practice and the importance of the integration project lay on a continuum. There were those who believed that it was possible to integrate the two areas of the JMS course and that MP was theory-laden (even if this were not acknowledged) while MS was intimately linked to practice. There were others (mainly MP lecturers) who thought that the two aspects of the course were to a large degree incongruent. In addition, there were those who held positions between the two ends of the spectrum. It is possible that the inability to see the theoretical connections between practice and theory may, in some instances, be related to limited theoretical insight of the individuals involved rather than total incongruence between these different aspects of the JMS curriculum.

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<sup>41</sup> This is particularly the case where the theory is the theory of production, such as the theory of light, colour, composition, optical theory and so on (in the case of photojournalism, for example), which would be necessary to enable technical proficiency.

<sup>42</sup> It is crucial to note, though, that MP is indeed a thoughtful, theoretically informed, practice and does not constitute the same kind of context dependence of the conveyor-belt variety.

This issue was very important because JMS is taught within the context of a research-intensive university. Ingrid argued that:

We're a university-based JMS department, which is a very peculiar animal. We teach vocational subjects as well as a subject that has specifically to do with critical reflection on that vocation and those kinds of things can pull against each other very nastily. It's what people think about as the distinction between theory and practice which is not a distinction that I would use. I think there is theory in my work and practice in MS as well (interview, Ingrid).

As indicated in Chapter 6 there are a range of ideas about what should constitute journalism curricula and that these debates are taking place all over the world where journalism is taught within university departments. This was how Ingrid framed the debates and her position in relation to them:

As far as I can make out there are two central debates. The one which says that students should come and learn about the practice of journalism and then also at the same time do their other majors and somehow quite in an ad hoc fashion they will make the connection between those reflective processes that they achieve elsewhere and what they learn in the vocational part which is the journalism part. They can put into context what they learn. The other school – and this is where I would put myself – is that you need to integrate the two; you can't see them as separate. Students find it extremely difficult to make the link between the reflective knowledge and the production knowledge and, in fact, I think they are by nature inseparable. We should have reflective production ... I suppose it's about praxis (interview, Ingrid).

Another lecturer, Henry, argued that the structural position of JMS within a university where MS was an integral part of the curriculum made it particularly difficult to achieve the kind of on-the-job learning that was required to prepare prospective journalists. He noted that the curriculum delivery structures were rigid and did not allow for students to go off and experience how to cover breaking news for example. There was no flexibility to allow for that kind of learning. He said:

In fact, one of the media theory lecturers told me that should the administration building of the university burn to the ground she would expect her students to be in a seminar room if they had a seminar with her as they were not journalists, they were students and so it would be inappropriate for them to go out and cover that as a journalistic event ... there is a perception amongst theorists that students want to do the practical stuff and theory is

something that the practical teachers don't give adequate respect to. Now I think there are a number of issues here. One of them is what theory is taught. I don't think there are practical teachers who are opposed to theory being taught, but there are questions as to what theories and when it's taught and why it's taught (interview, Henry).

Roger believed that the collaborative process had allowed staff from the various areas in the curriculum to recognise that "we each had quite strong beliefs in one another's existence" and that "as practical teachers we do want our students to do more than churn out a whole lot of journalism" (interview, Roger). There was a need amongst practical specialists for students to be reflexive journalists and media practitioners.

According to Gary, in some cases the different priorities for what should be taught were in tension. He stated, for example that some staff members were prepared to make compromises while "others are adamant that, 'forget the bells and whistles, forget the buttons and the lights; it's got to be about students' understanding of the world before they can start producing meaning in that world" (interview, Gary). This kind of statement did not take cognizance of the need felt by production teachers for students to develop a reasonable measure of technical competence in their specialisation. It also made them feel that their work was regarded as having little substance.

Roger argued that his initiation into MS as part of the masters' programme in the department had been beneficial:

I came in not really being aware that media theory existed, and also thinking, 'for heavens' sake, what a waste of time'. But, I think, having done it that it's absolutely fascinating. I must admit that my excitement about it is largely in that I think it can help me teach production better and I can help (students) be better producers. But also, I'll quite happily support the media theory people wanting to do media theory for its own sake (interview, Roger).

Peter described himself as a hybrid person in the department; someone who was able to teach MP as well as MS. Pedagogically he was interested in enabling students to practice journalism critically and he was particularly interested in public journalism and other fringe forms of journalism. He had championed the idea of integrating theory and practice. However, lately he had changed his stance about the possibility of integration at all levels of

the curriculum. He now believed that integration at an appropriate level was only possible in the third year of the BJourn programme. Now he advanced the idea that there should be time in the curriculum for the study of the practice of journalism<sup>43</sup> as such and time for the integration of theory and practice early in the curriculum project. He also indicated that the most successful integration happened around journalism theory with practice. The possibilities of integrating MS were there, but this kind of integration was more difficult to achieve. Peter also noted that there were structural impediments to integration. It required two people who work together well and who had the time to think carefully about what to integrate and how. He believed that there had only been one successful attempt at integration at the first year level (see 7.4.4).

Katherine also recognised that the project of integration had its limits and that “one of the problems of integration is it can, and it sometimes did lead to that notion of theory serving practice” (interview, Katherine). The nature of successful integration required investigation and she said that “some things also can’t be integrated”. This was the same conclusion reached by Frank and discussed elsewhere in the chapter (7.4.3). For Roger the links between MS and MP were not direct:

I think to a large degree the media theory people are saying, ‘well, that is fair enough, you need to create thinking journalists. But at the same time media theory is a discipline on its own and it’s not necessarily related to media production although it is in as much as it sort of uses texts, media texts to analyse and so say various things about society and stuff like that, for example’. So, to a certain extent there are other people saying media theory is fine and it must support production stuff and I think where the divide is still a bit there is a whole lot of teachers are saying, well, media theory is media theory as well and I still hear quite a lot of staff saying, their students come back and this is what they’ve been taught and ... how is it going to help them take a photograph, how is it going to help them design a nice poster, or

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<sup>43</sup> “Journalism is one of the practices within the large field of all media, in which case journalism theory (or journalism studies) deals only with journalism. Media Studies would apply to all media (including the widest reaches -- hip hop music, film, graffiti etc). However journalism theory tends to focus on the practices of journalists’ themselves, their newsroom routines, ethics, codes, professionalism – what is probably called the “sociology of journalism”. But it would also look at texts (so do some textual analysis) and readers/audiences. Political economy is also an approach with j studies -- who owns media outlets, what power they have etc. Media Studies would draw more on other social theory than j studies would: so draw on discourse analysis, feminist theory, Marxist theory, Foucault, philosophy, etc.”(Garman 2008, e-mail communication). (See also footnote on p. 198)

There is further theoretical stratification in journalism studies, i.e. production theory which entails, in the case of photojournalism, for example, studying the theory of light, colour, composition, optical theory, and so on.

whatever. And my response is ... well it does not have to, necessarily (interview, Roger).

What was evident from the above discussion and the analysis of the interviews was that there were fundamental differences between the forms of knowledge of MS theory and MP and that these differences were recognised by some lecturers. It was also recognised that there was a relation between the two, but that the link was not direct and that MS theory should be taught in its own right. At the same time MP lecturers also wanted it to be acknowledged that their teaching was not purely instrumental and that they did teach in a theoretically informed manner. For some lecturers the issue was about *which* theory was most appropriate for their aims.

The forms of knowledge of MS and MP were regarded as constraining contradictions by a number of lecturers. Even though the aim of the curriculum project was to integrate the two parts of the JMS course, it had become evident that, as a result of the underlying structure of the knowledge of MP and MS, only partial integration was possible.

#### **7.4.7.1 *The relationship between journalism theory and MS theory***

One of the reasons for the success of the CMP course, according to Peter, was its focus on journalism theory:

The actual theory that was invoked was for me journalism studies<sup>44</sup> stuff rather than MS, pure and simple. I mean, it wasn't a media and society course looking at relationships between audiences and texts, you know. It was, quite literally, I don't want to say an instrumentalist kind of approach of how theory can inform practice, but actually, in some ways it was a bit like that. ... (T)here (was) a bridge between the sort of fundamental theoretical concern and the actual how you go about interviewing sources. So the link between theory and practice is made incredibly explicit (interview, Peter).

Frank also argued strongly for the need to include more journalism theory in the curriculum.

I remember at the beginning of the curriculum process that we're having right now I said in one of those meetings that I am anxious that we don't actually teach enough journalism theory – the theory of the media that we produce. If you look at the social history of the media, if you look at, whatever, it is not

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<sup>44</sup> Journalism Studies is the study of journalism practice and journalism theory.

strictly journalism theory. Because journalism theory would be the theory you would invoke to help a student do production better (interview, Frank).

He argued that within the current curriculum there was not enough time to include relevant journalism theory into the spaces where journalism practice was taught. He noted, for example, that an important element of the education of journalists such as ethics was only taught in third year MS. He suggested that the best place to teach that kind of theory was in MP. He believed that production teachers were able to show students the links between things like ethics and values and so on within the context of their production work.

The problem is that we do not have enough space to invoke (theory) because of time constraints. ... That is the tension between the theory and production specialists in the department. In fact, a lot of us have said, “You know what, it is actually better for us to teach the theory. You are saying they must learn theory. Well, actually, you’re right, they need to learn theory. But they don’t have to learn *that* theory” (interview, Frank).

Katherine expressed concern that MS was seen as having to serve production. She indicated that there were areas where direct links could be made, but she also posed strong arguments for time in the curriculum where MS would be taught for its own sake, for the intellectual benefits that students could gain through grappling with the theoretical concepts.

From the above it is evident that individuals’ identities are strongly linked to their fields of specialisation and also to the value they attach to their specialisation. A threat to or a negation of the value of their field can be regarded as an assault on their identities and thus result in socio-cultural discord.

#### **7.4.8 Theory and practice and student learning**

The notion of the vocational training and the critical reflection aspects of the curriculum “pulling against each other very nastily” (7.4.7) were experienced by Henry’s Photojournalism students. As a practice, photography is about the representation of subjects. An important part of MS in this department revolves around how the media represents people. Henry argued that “photography is in itself problematical and is incapable really of producing an acceptable representation in terms of media theory ... it is almost impossible to

represent somebody without it being a contested or problematical representation” (interview, Henry). MS theory, then, invoked a particular critical stance which generated a conflict of interest for students of Photojournalism. Henry had noticed that students “tend to suddenly turn against their own creative process, before rediscovering their creative process through almost a rejection of the theory or aspects of the theory” (interview, Henry). The practical specialisation and the theoretical work in MS theory aim to develop different kinds of “gazes” (Maton 2007) in specialists. MS theory seeks to develop a cultivated, critical gaze while MP strives to develop a trained and cultivated gaze, not without the ability to critique albeit from a different vantage point. This could be an essential difference between the production specialist trained at a university of technology and one educated at a research-led university.

Peter stated that students found it difficult to experience the links between theory and practice during the first two years of their JMS degree. They saw the links only as a result of the JDD/CMP courses at the end of their third year where “the link between theory and practice is made incredibly explicit”. And students noted in their evaluation of the courses that “we’ve never seen the link between theory and practice before”. He found this encouraging, but problematic that this realisation had happened at the end of three years and not before.

John (the HoD) noted in his interview that in order for the integration project to succeed and for students to appreciate the importance of MS theory to their JMS studies, it was important for all staff to support each others’ work actively; not only, for example, by MP lecturers integrating MS understandings into their teaching, but also through not saying anything to undermine what was done in MS.

According to Anna (first chairperson of the CF) a mutual growth in appreciation and respect for the work done by the two sections of the department had occurred over the last number of years. Through their involvement in masters’ work, MP lecturers had developed an appreciation for the influence of MS for their own curricula. She also believed that MS staff members, through collaborating with MP lecturers had developed a greater understanding and respect for specialization work. However, there were still instances where the way some MS lecturers sometimes referred to MP lecturers was experienced as demeaning:

MS staff are quite defensive (*sic*) about the way they would express themselves about production staff, without even knowing it. Not being aware of how defensive they are. So they would do things like say, you teach about the buttons and things and we teach about knowledge. Which is not true. Buttons and things is one small part of what I teach. I teach about meaning, so it becomes, everybody feels the other person is not acknowledging who they really are. It's more about that changing than the people themselves changing. So it is about defensiveness and the ability to be open and listening (interview, Ingrid).

It could be argued that there might also be degrees of defensiveness amongst MP staff which might surface when challenged to pursue more theoretically robust and critical approaches to production teaching and learning.

For Katherine there existed two big challenges in terms of student learning related to theory and practice. One had to do with the amount of time it took to develop proficiency in using the equipment for the various specialisations. She was concerned that students saw themselves as, for example, *radio* journalists and not journalists in the first instance using radio as their medium and that they therefore did not pay enough attention to developing the intellectual capacities to be good journalists. The second concern was a related issue. She argued that the policy injunction for South African higher education to be responsive was narrowly interpreted in terms of direct relevance for the world of work. There was thus an expectation from many students that the theory they learned in MS would be directly relevant for their practical specialisations. She noted that during the apartheid struggle the word "relevance" had a different resonance to what it had now. Then teaching and learning had to be politically relevant and enable critical thinking towards political emancipation. Now, she argued, relevance was instrumental in the economic sense only:

And I think back to the 80s. The keyword around education debates was about relevance – relevance to what? What is the relevance of whatever people are studying to the politics of the time and promoting social change and that kind of stuff. So relevance was a key kind of term around which thoughts around education and curriculum are wider than the department. ... I've always had two views on that ... I think it's worthwhile to ask the question of relevance as a guide and it locates you socially and you need to ask those political/social questions; but I also think that there is a problem of short-sightedness. And for me a university education is about opening up and it is precisely because we've had forty years of apartheid education which has been forty years of

narrowing. And that relevance has a danger of playing into legitimising narrowness. Ironically my fear now is that we've come full circle.

...And students then come in with a very narrow sense of what it is they think they want to do and we service *exactly* those needs. And if we offer anything wider than that, then it's, 'What's the relevance of it?' and if you can't show relevance, then it's not worthy of study. And especially for me, in a field like the media, where I think the poverty of South African journalism is precisely the poverty of the imagination of journalists - the intellectual world in which they live (interview, Katherine).

Moll (2004) argues against the narrow view of responsiveness as exclusively economic responsiveness. He argues that curricula and pedagogy also need to be responsive to culture, knowledge of the discipline and student learning needs.

Radio lecturer, Gary, noted that students had a negative response to MS because it did not deliver immediate benefits in terms of improved production. He said, "What is taught in MS is not so much a kind of theory which assists students to reproduce the standards and the norms of an industry, but to in fact challenge that, and to possibly undermine it" (interview, Gary). A number of lecturers had indicated that this was indeed a useful role for MS to play. It seemed necessary, though, for students to be better apprised of this particular view of MS and of the benefits of studying theory for its intrinsic value to their intellectual growth.

The issues raised by Katherine (above) are also debates that have emerged within the South African higher education context in relation to the relationship to mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge. Mode 1 knowledge is theoretical, disciplinary knowledge, while Mode 2 knowledge is inter-disciplinary knowledge developed within the context of application (see 4.9 for a discussion of these modes of knowledge). Katherine argued that MS knowledge was inter-disciplinary theoretical knowledge that had some relevance to application, but that it had theoretical components that were separate from practice. She saw MS as important as a field of study in its own right and not only in relation to the relevance it might have for MP work.

Peter (Writing lecturer) believed that the curriculum that the department endeavoured to teach was immensely complex and students criticised the department:

... partly because of the complexity of what we're trying to do at undergrad level, especially. And the contradictions and the tension which we feel ourselves and obviously that's expressed and it's felt by students. The pressure we put them under in first year with the gate and fourth year gates<sup>45</sup> and, you know, it's messy, complicated dual stream. You can almost say we run two credits within a credit pretty much all the way through. We get away with murder. Students say that. On the other hand they get away with murder by not doing any work anywhere else anyway (interview, Peter).

The "dual-stream" nature of the JMS was one of the practical reasons for the growing undercurrent of pluralism and cleavage developing in the JMS Department with some members of staff motivating for JMS to be divided into two separate credits: Journalism Studies and Media Studies.

In this section the implications of the differences between MS and MP were discussed in relation to student learning. The two parts of the JMS course aim to develop different kinds of capacities in students. Katherine argued, though, that students sometimes had an instrumentalist view of learning that accounted for some of the resistance to engagement with MS theory. Peter, however, suggested that the JMS course with the divergent demands from MP and MS resulted in the course being too demanding and that this was the reason for student difficulties. The effect on student learning and student attitudes towards JMS also resulted in strained relations between staff in the department.

## **7.5 The influence of structure on curriculum development**

### **7.5.1 Institutional enabling structures**

The institutional requirement that all new staff have to complete a course on the assessment of student learning before confirmation of tenure was seen within the department as a structural enablement. Through the assessment course new lecturers are inducted into aspects of higher education discourse into teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment. They are also introduced to the institutional policy requirements for teaching and learning in the form of the policies on curriculum development and review and the evaluation of teaching and

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<sup>45</sup> In the first year approximately 250 students register for JMS 1, however, the cohort for second year is limited to about 120 students. There is a further limitation on the number of students allowed to do JMS 4. This is because of space and equipment constraints.

courses. This means that new lecturers are able to participate in conversations about teaching and learning, sometimes in ways that established staff members who have not had the same kind of exposure are unable to do. Roger said, for example,

I think one of the other things which has enabled or forced it (the curriculum development process) in a way is the new staff going on these AD courses and the new staff coming back and saying, 'Hey, at AD we're learning this stuff and we don't see any of this happening in the department'.

While the first CF chair noted:

I think one of the things that has been valuable has been new staff coming in who are open to, for example, AD stuff. I think there has been a general openness in this department to ADC ... we have seen their contribution as valuable. So I think it might be that there are quite a lot of young staff coming in and therefore being moulded quite early with having to deal with issues like the assessors' course, I think (it) makes them think about teaching in a way... Some of them are coming in quite young and new and are looking for a scaffold and get the scaffold from ADC.

The HoD of the department also completed the assessors' course and is therefore cognisant of its content and methods and is supportive of staff doing the course. The Assessors' Course was an example of an institutional structural enablement that had also proven to be useful in terms of the curriculum development processes in the Department of JMS.

### **7.5.2 Curriculum planning structures**

As mentioned in 1.3.1, at the time the research was carried out, there were a number of curriculum planning and decision-making structures within the department. Each year of the programme had its own year board where curriculum decisions were made. All curriculum decisions had to be approved by the CF. When the curriculum for a year was over-hauled, this was done by a curriculum working group. The working group had to submit its plans to the CF for approval and to the year board whose task it was to oversee the execution of curriculum plans. The CF sometimes mandated the year boards to make final decisions about particular curricular matters.

The main affordance of this structural arrangement was that there were multiple opportunities for curriculum issues to be aired. Strictly speaking, all members of the department had the opportunity to make inputs into curriculum decisions. However, these structural affordances, did carry some constraints.

Curriculum working groups consisted of elected members, but other interested staff members could also volunteer to sit on working groups. The working groups were responsible for developing curriculum plans through a series of meetings. Their plans served before the CF meetings at regular intervals during the planning process. The difficulty was that, because not all members of the CF were privy to the processes through which decisions were made, they often did not understand the rationale for decisions and sometimes carefully conceived plans were criticised and shot down in the CF. Thus, as Gary noted, because most people were not part of the “crucial mid-stage” of decision-making, it was relatively easy to criticise decisions. Working groups found this immensely frustrating. Examples of this phenomenon will be illustrated in the next chapter when I discuss the work of the JMS 4 working group.

Interviewees all mentioned the problem with real engagement with the curriculum issues at the CF. Instead of engaging with the substantive issues, a number of participants took issue with wording and did “corrective copy-editing”. This kind of response provoked Frank to retort (as quoted more fully above): “This is language, let’s agree on the principles and give somebody the mandate to come up with a document and if you are not satisfied with it, use e-mail to edit it”. This superficial approach constrained meaningful engagement with ideas about the curriculum. Gary said that it was difficult to reach consensus with twenty people in a CF meeting. Thus, this structural attempt to develop democratic processes in curriculum decision-making constituted a constraining contradiction in a very important respect.

### **7.5.3 The role of time in the curriculum development process**

Time constitutes a structural presence within social life. Clegg (2003) argues that it is important to recognise the importance of time in higher education contexts. She follows Adam (1995) who “challenges us to take time seriously in social analysis” (Clegg 2003: 807) and who distinguishes between “different dimensions of time” that co-exist. These are “time as linear, divisible clock time; temporality as our being in time; timing as in ‘when’ time and

tempo, the intensity of time” (quoted in Clegg 2003: 807). Clegg (*ibid*) refers to recent research into higher education by Lee & Lieberman that shows that the tempo of life in the academy is becoming much more intense.

Life in the JMS department at the time of data collection happened at a fast *tempo* with multiple meetings to discuss and organise all the various teaching and other projects that formed part of the life of the department and the School of JMS. Many research participants indicated that they suffered from “meeting fatigue” since they all had to attend multiple meetings every week. The curriculum development process added to the already high meeting load and often the timing of these meetings interfered with other significant events within the academic day or week. This prevented some people from attending or from giving their full attention to the meeting processes.

The limitations of *linear time* within the university calendar placed demands upon the possible curriculum structures. Integrated curricula seemed to be time consuming in terms of planning, teaching and giving proper effect to well-made plans. Henry experienced the time demands of the third year integrated CMP course as excessive:

Basically it takes - if you actually attend everything you're supposed to - it requires that you are really there every afternoon, Monday to Friday. But that is also not just for one person, that's for about eight staff members. And that amount of hours for any third year course of teaching time is actually – because it's not really all teaching time. A lot of it is simply mentoring time and whatever, but there isn't really, I can't see a justification for that number of hours and staff time for a third year course (interview, Henry).

Katherine also found the planning for the JDD / CMP time consuming:

And so Peter has called a meeting for *all* the people that are teaching on the course and set aside three hours. And I'm thinking, you know, a lot of what we did went very well. Why don't we stick with what we've done; there are some new people, there are some new ideas. But why don't you first keep it simple, do what we did, get suggestions, see if you want to change it, make minor changes, but let's not re-invent the wheel. And that's kind of my position here. And I'm also busy with my own stuff and it is terribly time-consuming and the whole thing is like you're trying to find the holy grail of the perfect course and you're going to find that [holy grail] (interview, Katherine).

In almost all of the interviews I conducted the issue of time was noted as a constraint to curriculum development, to collaborative course planning and to collaborative pedagogy. Gary argued that time presented real constraints to what could be achieved and that it constrained the curriculum development process:

I think there is jockeying for positions in these discussions around curriculum between MS and production about what is more important, which should be foregrounded, prioritised in the curriculum in a given year; which deserves more time, which of those different strands in the curriculum is most intensive in terms of teaching.

#### *7.5.3.1 Time – a real challenge to integration*

One of the problems with a curriculum that prepares students for the practice of journalism within a serious academic context is the limitation it places on the acquisition of expertise within practical specialisations. During the first three years of the JMS curriculum JMS constitutes part of a general bachelor's degree. Practical specialisations are given 50% of the curriculum time at third year level<sup>46</sup>. It therefore cannot be expected that students will achieve "professional" competency within the available time. This state of affairs challenged the identities of specialisation lecturers. These lecturers were often highly regarded professionals, while the limited scope within the curriculum frustrated their ambitions to adequately prepare the next generation of photojournalists, for example. Participation in an integrated curriculum further limited the time they had at their disposal to develop student skills.

A further complicating factor was that students needed to learn, not photography, new media or television, as such, but their use as journalistic media. Furthermore, the theoretical implications of representation, ethics and the role of these media within the history of journalism were aspects which these professional teachers regarded as important bodies of knowledge to include in the photojournalism curriculum. Photojournalism and New Media were the specialisations that were first introduced into the curriculum at the third year and they therefore had similar challenges in terms of integrating practical and theoretical

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<sup>46</sup> In the first and second year JMS is one of four other courses and at third year level it is one of two major subjects.

knowledge of the field. Monica (New Media lecturer) explained this tension in the following way, using Design as an example:

[It is a] fact that they are going to say on their CVs, 'I specialised in Design'. So how do you give enough time to everything to say, yes, you can write well, but they leave their third year even, with enough skills to say, 'I've specialised in Design? And that's another one of the reasons that there is a lot of tension in the Third Year because it is an exit level year for some of our students.

The integration project had necessitated compromises in terms of valued curriculum content on both the MS and MP sides. Anna was cognizant that specialisation lecturers were frustrated with the limited time they had during the third year level of the BJourn degree. She said, "Of course, if you had a whole degree in this instead of one major, you'd be able to do much more". This view was shared by others in the department. Frank noted, for example that there was not enough time in the curriculum to invoke the depth in journalism theory that he regarded as necessary for teaching writing. He suggested that the lack of time caused tensions in the department, "The problem is that we do not have enough space to invoke (enough Journalism Theory) because of time constraints. That is what I am saying, that is the tension between the theory and production specialists in the department" (interview, Frank).

The curriculum development process took effect in 2003. During the previous year the vision statement was produced (one and a half years). The first year curriculum was developed in 2003 (according to Anna this happened fairly quickly) and the second and third year curricula were designed in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Thus effectively, each year of the JMS programme was designed in the course of one academic year even though each programme year did not take a full academic year to be designed. This constituted a significant investment of time of members of the JMS department in the curriculum development project. A few interviewees noted that the length of the project threatened to exhaust people.

Another important constraint was that the department's full programme had not allowed space or energy to revisit the earlier curriculum plans in order to respond to evaluation data about those courses or to respond to issues that were recognised as gaps earlier in the programme. A number of lecturers found this frustrating and noted that not "closing the loop" through revisiting aspects of the curriculum lower down seemed to limit what could be done during the later years, served to undermine or limit the curriculum project to an extent.

*Temporality*, though related to time as a structural entity was closely related to issues of agency. John, the HoD, stated in his interview that the task of curriculum chair was an immensely time-consuming one that could only be taken on by someone who had the “space” in their lives to devote the kind of physical and intellectual energy required by the task. Anna, who led the process for the first four years, had already reached a number of milestones in her academic career and her seniority enabled her to gain the recognition needed to pursue this task within the difficult socio-cultural context of the department. At the start of 2006, though, the position was handed to a new incumbent, a MP lecturer, who was at a different stage in her academic career and therefore the demands of the position could potentially become a liability since there would be competing demands to complete a PhD and publish research. However, her central role in terms of such an important departmental endeavour could also potentially enhance her status. Subsequent to her appointment as CF chair Ingrid started to pursue PhD studies on journalism education at South African universities, thus the role provided the stimulus for an important academic project which would in the long run lead to enhanced status and promotion.

## **7.6 Agency**

The role of agency is paramount in the process of social change. It is only through the activities of agents who hold ideas and who act within social contexts on and within social structures that social change may be effected. As Archer (1995a) and others (see also Bhaskar 1989) have shown, at any particular  $T^1$ , structure and culture pre-date agency. It is through socio-cultural interaction that corporate agents, actors, or even primary agents through the strength of their demographic presence are able to shift ideas or cause other agents to begin to work for social change. As implied above, not all agents are able to effect change. Agents are thrown into contexts with differential PEPs and through interaction with others the morphogenesis of agency can take place (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of agency). Within the JMS department, as in other academic contexts, generally, the most powerful agents are those in senior positions. Some of the factors that were influential in the institution bestowing seniority on agents include: PhD degrees, publications in prestigious journals, supervision of postgraduate students, and so on (see also 3.5.4).

In this study the various agents within the department were found to be part of multiple “defining communities” (Taylor 1989 quoted in Henkel 2005a: 147). These defining communities have had an impact on the identities of their members and influenced their position with regard to how the curriculum needed to be constructed. These communities also had an impact on how the “web of relationships that make up the [JMS] community” was constituted (Henkel *ibid*). The strength of the boundaries between categories of agents and between the field communities that agents belong to was important for understanding the extent to which agents were able or willing to shift towards a more collaborative approach. As already noted, Henkel (*ibid*) following Bernstein (1996) argues that “strong classification makes for strong identities”. Not all members of staff experienced the same sense of boundary in relation to either their specialisation or the field and there would therefore have been differences in terms of the degree to which individuals found it easier or more difficult to cross various boundaries.

According to John, there was a time when MS lecturers had to assert their agenda in the department: “When we started off it was really kind of Katherine and myself pushing a MS line and the importance of MS and media theory and the importance that MP takes on board some of the insights. But there was a lot of resistance and we were in the minority” (John, interview). As more MS staff members were appointed and as the MS staff gained even more seniority things shifted. Ingrid experienced the shift in the following way:

One of the key things that happened is that the MS group have come into their own. They’ve become acknowledged far more than they have been before because of things like getting PhDs, getting more status in the university and so on. They feel more relaxed. They don’t feel as threatened inside the department anymore so they’re able to be far more generous and open-minded about collaborating with the production staff. So I think that issue of status and to what extent you feel acknowledged and how much power you feel you’ve got within a system is absolutely key for whether you let go of the boundaries between what you do and what other people do.

Bernstein (1996, 2000) argues that weakening of boundaries between categories constitutes a threat to identity. Thus, if the identities of individuals are strong, fissiparous boundaries are less threatening to the primary identity than if these individuals feel as though they are giving away their power and losing their sense of who they are within the context.

One of the issues relating to the differential PEPs (personal emergent properties) of the various agents was encapsulated by the following quotation from Jason's interview:

There is so much distinction [between lecturers in the department] that some people come to the table with less capital than others ... [and] their arguments can only be articulated at the level of emotion and feeling and desire or want and not necessarily in the language of structure, ... [which is] the language of the more powerful figures in the department in the curriculum development processes...

It was significant that the number of practical specialisation lecturers had increased significantly over the years. There were also fewer who were employed only on the basis of their industry experience and practical expertise. As Katherine explained:

It is quite interesting that more of the people who are employed to teach in the specializations, they begin to take an interest in the so-called theory stuff. And increasingly they had master's degrees which were not practical degrees; they were theoretical degrees, actually. And they were applying that in whatever the specialization was that they taught. And they also had specialization experience, but that wasn't the only experience that they had, it wasn't the only source of their expertise.

Thus, theoretical expertise was growing amongst this group of agents, and the number who were able to negotiate the practical work and teaching with the requisite theoretical background was reaching a critical mass (see also 3.5.3). For Katherine MP staff developing their knowledge of MS as a field was a way for these staff members of:

confronting the bogeyman. And (seeing that) the bogeyman isn't such a bogeyman. And it becomes very useful then, I think, because they can then ... see it's useful and it gives them tools in their own work. So there isn't then that conflict – it's not people coming from the outside to talk into their space ... they've got the discourse, they've got the language in their own space.

However, not all the staff members had as yet had access to MS theoretical frameworks and were conversant with that discourse. These lecturers were therefore not in a position to do the boundary crossing (M. Barnett 2006; Muller 2008) that was required by the collaborative integration process. Differential capital and power in the department led to unequal participation in the collaborative process and thereby limited the possibility for universal

adoption of the relational ideals of the integrated curriculum. The fact that these processes elicited such strong emotional responses was an indication of the level to which they may have constituted a threat to the established identities of the agents involved. These issues were of course related to the morphogenesis or stasis of agency. There was morphogenesis of agency when lecturers who had done the MS masters considered themselves able to use their theoretical understandings in the teaching of their practice specialisations. In addition, they were more able to talk to senior MS colleagues in their (MS) language.

Anna observed that there had been a visible morphogenesis of agency in a very important respect:

I think the department has moved incredibly in the last three years. I think it's absolutely phenomenal what's happened in the department. And I think the curriculum has driven a lot of this. I also think what's happened at the same time is that it's become easier as more members of staff – and I'm talking here about production people – have invested in the intellectual projects and that's just been a phenomenal shift.

Having to engage with the theoretical and practical issues of an integrated curriculum had given a number of staff members the impetus to, for example, write about journalism education and the nature of journalistic practice within the industry. There had also been opportunities for curricula to be developed that had been intellectually and logistically challenging, for the course developers and for those who had planned and taught alongside the developers. The CMP third year course had enabled Peter to exercise his passion for alternative journalisms in this course and the complex integrated design of the course had drawn in lecturers from all the specialisations in the department.

The HoD, John, acknowledged the importance of individual agency in ensuring that the process developed and was sustained. He recognised that, "It's about agency, it's not all structure. You need agency to drive the structure. You can have the best structures in the world. I do think agents are very important". Within this curriculum development process there had been some key agents who had driven the process. I have already mentioned the key role played by Anna with her experience in curriculum design. A further key agent,

Linda<sup>47</sup>, the MP senior lecturer had also been acknowledged as key to the process. She was recognised as someone who worked well collaboratively and who believed in cooperation.

A number of lecturers had stated that exercising agency required confidence in their own abilities. For Ingrid, lecturers in the department had reached the point where they felt confident about their abilities as teachers, “We came into our own, so to speak. You work in an area and you become more and more confident that you know what the right thing is”. Peter expressed similar sentiments about his confidence in his ability to teach both theory and practice well:

Instead of it being an either-or, it's a both-and. And it's taken me an awfully long time to get there. But I feel like I'm confident enough in both areas now. Maybe that's also part of it – building one's confidence and feeling one has to offer in both areas and allowing that to happen in one's teaching. I mean, I feel far more confident this year in my teaching than I've ever done before. I think partly it's because I've been allowed space in the curriculum. This is another issue – of allowing one's agenda to actually emerge in the department.

However, not everyone had been in a position to exercise his/her agency. Reference has already been made to some who felt marginalised by the process. These people were often silent in CF meetings. However, according to Peter, “Occasionally they sort of leak, spurt out things and shake like a leaf actually, because they are so emotional, they are so cross, and they're so disempowered ... You know, it is very interesting and, ja, maybe you can say, too bad, they should just compete openly in that marketplace of ideas. It is about power” (interview, Peter).

Muller (2008:16) explains how, in established professions, there is both the contextual control from the professional boards over the training of new professionals, while at the same time the university lecturers have “over time developed an impressive autonomy over their work and they tend to present a united front to both the academy and the world”. Journalism as a field is still involved in struggles over the constitution of the field, and particularly in terms of the conceptual basis of the field (see Chapter 6). What complicates matters is that professionals in the field have various specialisations and they view the field in different

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<sup>47</sup> Although Linda was a key agent, I did not interview her for this research project since she was on extended study leave at the time to complete her PhD.

ways. The strong identity that is the hallmark of older professions and some newer ones that are strictly regulated (like accounting and architecture) has not yet evolved in terms of journalism academics. However, the strong regulative discourse of the work of the department goes some way towards conditioning a particular kind of identity that unite most staff, at least in terms of their relations to the journalistic “market”.

Jason argued that even though the structures were there for the democratic exercise of agency, it was not really possible given the PEPs of the agents and given the nature of power relations within the department and within the institution. He said,

There’s the construction of a democratic space in which people can participate, but if one watches and listens at those meetings, particular people are very quiet and particular people are very vocal. I’m one of the vocal people. Yet, I think, mostly it’s senior staff, and I’m not senior. The people with the PhDs and the publication records and the professorships are more vocal. And the newer members of staff, the members of staff who are newer to the university, to teaching, to the department, they’re more quiet (interview, Jason).

Jason also believed that even though it was positive that MP lecturers were doing the MS coursework masters, that this had repercussions for their agency and their voice within the department. He observed that a number of people had been working on their masters dissertations for many years and they remained without masters’ degrees. Thus, while on the one hand doing the master’s work is empowering, it had also kept a number of people in less powerful positions in the department since they struggled to complete their dissertations due to their high teaching loads<sup>48</sup>.

Jason argued in addition, that new people in the department were silenced by the dominant discourses of the powerful in the department:

I think a lot of people come with material that they could contribute quite valuably, but because they don’t know the language, because the committee is about particular kinds of vocal talent. You need to construct your sentences in particular kinds of ways; a certain kind of discourse rules.

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<sup>48</sup> Some argue that MP lecturers tend to “over-teach” and that they should re-think how they teach to enable them to spend less contact time with students.

Thus, to participate fully in the academic and administrative life of the department (and the university) requires a specific kind of cultural capital without which it is difficult to contribute meaningfully.

In this part of the chapter I discussed some of the complexities around the exercise of agency in the curriculum development process in the JMS Department. I argued that during the process a number of agents experienced morphogenesis of the PEPs. Through engaging in masters degrees in MS they had acquired the discourse of that field. This enabled them to argue in the language of the powerful in the department.

### **7.6.1 Leadership**

The support of the most powerful agent in the department, the HoD, in terms of voicing and actively showing his support for the process could not be under-estimated. John had been influential in promoting a spirit of cooperation in the department, “his real attempts to build camaraderie, and a sense of collegiality in the department ...those things are so necessary and have been so absent” (interview, Peter). Peter also acknowledged that Anna and Ingrid had provided leadership in the department and supported the curriculum development processes.

For many years the previous HoD spent a great deal of time away from the department and he was therefore not available to provide inputs in terms of what needed to be done and how. Thus the members of the department developed a mode of operation that enabled them to make collaborative decisions in the absence of the HoD. It was partly as a result of this situation that there was a decision to work collaboratively. At the time that this research was conducted the preferred approach was:

not about one person being a leader but about people agreeing to work together in a particular way ... It has been necessary for us to do that, because Andrew being the HoD was often not here, so you cannot expect him to decide how it is that we're going to do things. So if we were going to have any kind of direction we've got to have a collaborative approach to leadership” (interview, Ingrid).

John argued that what had enabled the curriculum development process around theory-practice integration to be accepted by members of the department was Anna's newness to the department:

She was new in the department. And so with new staff who could break the tensions because then it doesn't become a personal issue. It's not about people fighting old wars. You can have somebody who comes in from outside, doesn't know the history, doesn't have a stake in the battle, can look from outside, plus has that level of expertise and interest and knowledge and you can now formalise a curriculum process. I think that's what we did (interview, John).

For Peter, Anna was able to take on this kind of leadership role shortly after joining the department because "She was articulate, she's experienced and she espoused a desire to do something with this... it's about actually needing leadership and recognising it when one sees it and going with the flow" (interview, Peter).

Anna ensured that decisions taken at CF meetings were carried out. The current HoD, John, appreciated that she was process-oriented and that she was good at ensuring that processes were respected. He said: "Sometimes I found it difficult. I recognise the importance of having someone who ensures that processes are held to and taken seriously. ... You need someone who is going to hold that process together" (interview, John).

Ingrid argued that keeping the historical memory of the department alive was one of the tasks of curriculum leadership. This was something she had in common with Anna as well as another key agent, Linda (who was not involved in the department when the data collection for this project was underway, but who nevertheless was regarded by many as a key agent). According to Ingrid what she appreciated was:

Linda's [MP senior lecturer] process memory and the kind of voice that she adopts as well, the voice of collaboration ... [She is] somebody who really cares about partnerships. She's got a very thoughtful way of operating. She doesn't just operate from her own agenda.

The same had also been said of Ingrid:

I've sat in on all of them – first year, second year, third year, and now the fourth year. But sometimes you feel as if people are defending positions which they took the previous night or the year before. They are not willing to budge one inch. Yet, Ingrid, as a facilitator of this particular process, she brings a lot of information to the table and she is willing to jettison one or all of her own positions so that people can reach a compromise on particular issues (interview, Frank).

It was interesting to note that all the year boards and the curriculum development working groups thus far (apart from the first year process in 2003) had been led by a MP lecturer. This allowed the production lecturers to assert their influence on a process that was initially seen (and was still seen by some) as an imposition of the will of the MS lecturers.

John's approach to supporting the curriculum development process as HoD was multi-pronged. He made a point of voicing his support and appreciation for the work done by all in the department. He actively supported the curriculum development processes by attending as many of the meetings as possible given his other responsibilities in the department and within the university. He recognised that production teaching was time-consuming and that it took away time from research activities. John assured his staff that he would engage the university leadership in order to achieve greater acknowledgement for the different nature of the work requirements of production teaching for the purposes of promotion. However, he also indicated that it might be prudent for production staff to think about ways of spending less time teaching, and to spend time on research activities which were currently being valued by the institution. As noted above he worked at creating an environment of cooperation and camaraderie amongst the staff.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have captured some of the views of key agents with regard to their understanding of the notion of curriculum, the nature of journalism, the relationship between MS and MP and the relationship between theory and practice. I argued that one of the underlying structuring principles of the tension between MS and MP and between MS theory and journalism theory was the "different logics" (interview, Gary) which underpin them. I used Gamble's (2003, 2006) and Muller's (2008) distinction between context dependent and context independent fields to explain the underlying differences.

I showed how the department tried at the start of the process to address the tensions by consciously shifting the discourse used when talking about the courses taught and when talking about production staff. The department recognised the harmful effects, both to the S-C context as well as to the pedagogy of distinguishing between MP and MS as a distinction between theory and practice.

The importance of agency in curriculum development was discussed. The role of key agents in leading the process was recognised as crucial to advancing the process. I showed that the morphogenesis of agency has had real effects on the socio-cultural relations within the academic context of the Department of JMS.

In the next chapter I discuss my analysis of the JMS 4 working group meeting and CF meeting data. The central focus of the thesis is the investigation of curriculum development processes. The next chapter provides an analysis of transcripts of curriculum development meetings. The JMS 4 curriculum development process provided me with an opportunity to study these processes *in situ* within one context. The analysis will show how cultural, structural and agential influences impacted on curriculum development within this context.

## Chapter 8

### Analysis of JMS 4 curriculum meetings

#### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the curriculum development processes of the Journalism and Media Studies 4 (JMS 4) working group during 2006. The working group concerned itself with what Bernstein terms the pedagogising of knowledge (Bernstein 1996, 2000; Singh 2002), that is, the delocation of knowledge from the field of production and the refocusing and relocation of that knowledge within the field of recontextualisation. Of interest about the process of recontextualisation within the department of Journalism and Media Studies is that there is no official recontextualising field (ORF). Many of the agents who participate in the pedagogic recontextualising field are involved to varying degrees in the field of production; both in terms of developing theoretical work in the broad field of JMS, but also within the various practical journalistic specialisations such as Photojournalism, Design, Radio, New Media (NM), Radio, Television and Writing and Editing. Thus, the boundaries that exist between the fields of production and the field of recontextualisation are not mediated in the same way as they may be within a different field within the University or within other professional or vocational education and training contexts.

In her interview Anna (MS) noted that the first part of the curriculum development process was characterised by tension between production and media studies staff who held divergent views about what was deemed important curriculum content. Anna believed that differences of opinion amongst the specialisation staff would emerge and that the process would be a site of struggle which would result in the emergence of dominant voices in terms of the curriculum values that would underpin the fourth year programme. One of the major areas of struggle was the nature of professionalism within the journalism and media industries in South Africa. Another was the relationship between MP and MS in the JMS 4 curriculum. As Anna predicted, some voices emerged stronger than others on these issues, but there also had to be compromises during the socio-cultural interactions (Archer 1995a, 1996) in order to smooth over major differences between members of the department.

The profession of journalism does not have a regulating or an accreditation body and even though journalism has been taught at universities since the beginning of the previous century, an aspiring journalist does not need to have studied journalism formally to be allowed to practice as one. Schools of journalism are free to devise their own curricula and as was evident from the discussion in Chapter 6 of the state of journalism education in South Africa and internationally, the boundaries of the field are strongly contested. In Chapter 6 I argued that the field is under strong contestation within the department of JMS at Rhodes University. The struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device therefore has relatively high stakes within this context.

As noted earlier the JMS curriculum re-design process in the department of JMS got underway in 2003 when the department revised its first year curriculum. The curricula for the first three years of the Bachelor of Journalism (BJourn) degree were completed by the end of 2005. The curriculum for the fourth year of the BJourn programme was re-designed during the course of 2006.

## **8.2 Curriculum development structures**

The curriculum development structures in the Department of JMS during 2006 were the same as for the first three years of the process: a curriculum working group consisting of lecturers involved in the teaching programme for that year was established. Working group meetings commenced in mid-May of 2006<sup>49</sup> and took place once a week during the second and third terms (university terms are generally six or seven weeks long). A final working group meeting was held in mid-November of that year. I attended, recorded and transcribed all but two of the meetings and obtained the minutes of the meetings that I was unable to attend.

The emerging curriculum plans were presented to the rest of the department for their consideration and approval during CF meetings which took place once a term. The working group meetings were chaired by the fourth year course coordinator, Roger, with the assistance of the chairperson of the CF, Ingrid.

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix 3 for schedule of meetings

The primary data for this chapter are the transcripts and minutes of meetings of the fourth year working group meetings as well as the transcripts and minutes of the CF meetings held during 2006. Where appropriate, reference has been made to interview data as well as the writings of members of the department about JMS as a field of study.

### **8.3 Journalism and Media Studies 4**

JMS 4 is intended to be the “professionalising” year of the BJourn degree during which students are prepared to become entry-level professionals within a journalistic or media environment. Since there is no professional body that regulates the standards for the profession, the department and the teachers of JMS 4 have to decide on what counts as professional knowledge and skills for their field. Examining the curriculum development process of the fourth year provided insights into what one department of journalism and media studies regarded as the appropriate realisation of education and training for journalistic and media professions within a South African context at a particular conjuncture.

During the first CF meeting of 2006 (at the end of which the chairpersonship was handed over to Ingrid) the then chairperson of the Forum, Anna, noted that an important outcome of the curriculum design process was to establish parity of standard between the various specialisations. There was therefore a concern that the various specialisations did not offer training of similar standard.

In the fourth year the practical specialisations comprise ninety credits while the MS component of the course accounts for the remaining thirty credits. The Media Practice component during this “professionalising” year is significantly higher than at other years where the MS / MP split is 50-50. This 25-75 division in favour of the specialisation signals the importance developing students’ practical expertise during this year.

The working group initially comprised six specialisation lecturers and one MS lecturer, however, mid-way through the second term the New Media lecturer stopped attending meetings due to other commitments. During the course of the deliberations two other MS lecturers joined the group for two sessions each to provide insights from a MS perspective. This chapter focuses on the tensions and challenges that characterised the curriculum

development process. The tensions were indicators of ideational and structural contradictions or related to issues concerning properties and powers of agents. Members of the department held divergent views about journalism and media, and about education and training for journalism and media industries; curriculum tensions were also indicators of contradictions in relation to institutional factors or the wider higher education context within which the department operates (see Chapter 4). For the purpose of this research, finding adequate explanations for the tensions was useful in developing an understanding of what the issues and problems were with developing a curriculum for a professionally-focused year of a higher education qualification such as the BJourn degree offered by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

#### **8.4 A framework for the analysis of agents' positions and position-taking**

JMS is a field in flux and as the analysis in this chapter will show, within this department what should constitute the knowledge base for the field is still being legitimated in curriculum discussions. Bernstein's (1996, 2000) concepts of classification and framing and the pedagogic device were useful in the analysis, while Maton's (2000, 2004) extension of this notion into the epistemic-pedagogic device also had some purchase in clarifying the tensions in curriculum deliberations.

Agents' views on various aspects of the curriculum may have their origins in how agents are positioned. In a paper published after his death, Bernstein (2001) presents an external language of description for the analysis of agents and agencies which is relevant for examining positions and position-takings of the agents in the JMS Department. He distinguishes between agencies and agents in terms of three fields: symbolic control, economic and cultural.

For Bernstein (*ibid*: 23) symbolic control is "the means whereby consciousness, dispositions and desire are shaped and distributed through forms of communication which relay and legitimate a distribution of power and cultural categories". He states (*ibid*) that this control can be "normalizing or disturbing, reproductive or productive, consensual or conflicting". Agents who operate within the educational field are agents of symbolic control as they shape ways of thinking, relating, feeling; as well as "forms of innovation" (*ibid*: 24). Thus all the

lecturers within the JMS department fulfil a symbolic control function. Some, however, also have links with the economic and the cultural fields. Bernstein categorises journalists and editors, those involved in what he calls the “marketing of a text” (*ibid*) as symbolic agents who function in the cultural field. Their work is marketed and published within the economic field, but has the function of symbolic control in terms of “normalization, propagation or innovation” (*ibid*). MP lecturers therefore function in multiple arenas to a greater or lesser extent. Primarily they are involved in the arena of symbolic control, however, they teach students to produce texts which will be sold in the media marketplace. Bernstein (*ibid*: 26) says, “...there are agencies [and thus agents] which have symbolic control functions which operate in the economic field and these agencies function in what I have called the cultural field”. There is thus an interplay between the three fields of symbolic control, culture and economy which shape the identities of the agents in the department. Lecturers’ involvement in the industries gave them insights into the conditions within these industries. These insights and specialised identities influenced their perspectives on curriculum requirements. The Photojournalism lecturer, for example, had experience of working as a free-lance photographer and recognised the need for basic business skills to be included in the curriculum, while the Television lecturer was involved in producing television documentaries.

All production lecturers were in one way or another involved in producing texts for the journalistic or media market place. Henkel (2000, 2005a, 2005b) argues that the primary allegiance of academics is to their discipline and they only secondarily see their identity as dependent on the institution and department within which they work. The JMS lecturers had a range of potential sources of allegiance: the discipline, specialisation, institution, department and the industry. The analysis will show that for most of the lecturers their primary allegiance remained the specialisation; and because their work was about preparing prospective journalists they also considered the industry very carefully in their thinking about their work. The institution receded into the background during the curriculum development process.

Bernstein (*ibid*: 25) further distinguishes the *functions* of a range of agents of symbolic control. The lecturers in the JMS department can be described as “shapers (or) creators and designers of symbolic forms, their development and change within the arts, crafts, sciences and humanities”. However, the specialisation teachers are also what he has termed “diffusers,

recontextualisers and propagators” (*ibid*), agents who work specifically in mass and specialized media. Bernstein notes his dissatisfaction with his characterisation of these agents whom he argues do more than “diffuse and recontextualise; they also propagate views, accounts, revelations” (*ibid*).

Bernstein (*ibid*: 27) asserts that agents in the symbolic control arena function are “normalizers of consciousness, relation, identity disposition and desire”; they can also disturb this function through critique and the development of new knowledge. This is especially the case for agents working in institutions such as universities. Although these agents may operate within the same domain they do not necessarily share the same ideological position. There is therefore likely to be conflict amongst agents within the symbolic control field and this may manifest as an indirect competitive relationship. Where agencies and agents from the various fields come together there are likely to be “border disputes ... over symbolic property rights” (*ibid*) in the process of agents protecting their respective discursive domains. An example of this from the data was the tension between the JMS 4 working group and some Writing and Editing and MS lecturers who did not agree that the focus of the curriculum should move significantly beyond journalism. At a CF meeting Ingrid explained the suggested focus of the year in the following way:

The fourth year is flagged not as a journalism year but ... it focuses on media production for social change or media for social change, both in terms of critical engagement and production. So it's not specific to journalism ... because journalism is only one of many of the media that we look at (CF 2).

In response, Jason (Media Studies) argued:

I have a concern with [media for social change] ... Because on the one hand this is a Bachelor of Journalism – if we are now saying that in the Bachelor of Journalism degree we're also teaching this thing that can be broadly defined as non-journalism, what is this degree then? Why then not just a Bachelor of Social Science with a specialisation in non-journalism? (CF 2).

While Peter (Writing and Editing) concurred:

I have similar concerns, you know ... From the vantage point of the third year and where we're doing Journalism, Development and Democracy (JDD) and where the concerns overlap, actually quite strongly... But certainly we try and approach it from the vantage point of JDD, so it's about the **Journalism**,

Democracy and Development. And that's our vantage point, that's the lens through which we see things (Peter, CF 2).

Agents within the symbolic control field are particularly vulnerable in various respects from agencies and agents in the economic field. The agents within the Department of JMS have a delicate relationship with the media industries and one of the issues that received a fair amount of attention during the curriculum development process concerned the relationship of the department with journalistic or media industries. During working group and CF meetings in 2006, the contradictions between the symbolic control and the economic fields were also evident in the relations between agents from across the MS and MP divide, despite attempts to sink the differences between the two sections of the department.

The analysis in this chapter is concerned with the selection of knowledge for the JMS 4 curriculum. The analysis does not focus on the specific knowledge that is deemed important by the various agents in the process, but the aim is rather to examine the (views about) "concepts of knowledge" that underpin the curriculum (Young 2008: 81). The question of the role of knowledge in professional courses has been a focus in educational literature recently (Young 2003, 2006, 2008; Wheelahan 2007a, 2007b; Gamble 2006). One of the reasons for this focus includes the deleterious effect that generic outcomes-based unit-standards approaches have had on the role of knowledge in curricula. These theorists argue that qualifications have been "emptied out" of knowledge within the framework of unit-standards or "training packages" as they are referred to within the Australian context (Wheelahan 2007a). This concern for the role of knowledge in curricula extends also to problem-based curricula. Muller (2008) expresses concerns about the effects of such integrated curricula in terms of weakening the sequential development of concepts of various disciplines that rely on the careful sequencing of the knowledge base for the achievement of curriculum coherence.

My analysis of the meeting data enables me to explain why it remained so difficult for journalism (studies) and media studies to exist as a unit within a department of JMS and why it continues to be difficult for the agents within this context to find mutually acceptable understandings of what curriculum content should be prioritised and how this content should be sequenced and paced. Part of the reason lies in the very different epistemological and pedagogic bases of the different kinds of knowledge that underpin journalism and media

studies as entities. Young (2008: 86) argues that “the divisions and classifications between types of knowledge in the curriculum ... not only have social and political origins; they also have an *epistemological* and *pedagogical* basis. In other words, they relate in fundamental ways to *how people learn* and *how they produce and acquire knowledge*”.

In this section I argued that the nature of agents’ relation to the discipline, the institution and the industry is an important factor in shaping the curriculum choices that lecturers are prepared to agree to. In the next section the focus moves to the struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device (see 3.5 and 3.5.1) during the deliberations of the JMS 4 working group.

## **8.5 The fourth year curriculum development process**

### **8.5.1 Introduction**

The curriculum development trajectory of the fourth year working group can be divided into the following phases: agenda setting, developing of a regulative discourse, establishing the boundaries of journalism and media to be studied, developing outcomes for the year, linking outcomes to knowledge areas and assessment strategies, devising a curriculum structure (sequencing and pacing of the selected curriculum content and processes) and finally renegotiating aspects of the curriculum as planned to satisfy colleagues who disagreed with choices made. Each of these phases (apart from the agenda-setting phase) constituted a “site of struggle” as the various agents endeavoured to argue their positions. This chapter aims to provide a sense of the principles or mechanisms that underpinned the various struggles for the pedagogic-epistemic device. This section starts off with a brief discussion of events that influenced the approach taken to curriculum development processes that ensued for the fourth year.

### **8.5.2 Influences on the process**

There were a number of events during the first three years of curriculum development that influenced the approach taken by the fourth year working group. Firstly, the department made a decision in 2002 to work towards the integration of media theory and practice or production. Secondly, the departmental vision statement (Appendix 1) committed the

department to producing “self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken (and who) are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions”. The curriculum and pedagogy should serve this end. A third influence was the acrimonious final meeting of the third year working group towards the end of 2005. Some of the proposals made by the JMS 3 working group angered a number of lecturers who had not been part of the crucial mid-stage of the curriculum development process. Roger, the fourth year coordinator and the chair of the fourth year working group came to the conclusion (in conversation with John, the HoD) that the disagreements about the third year proposals resulted from fundamentally different philosophical views about the nature of journalism. Roger (a Design teacher) and Henry (a Photojournalism teacher) felt that there would be limited roles for them within the framework of a third year course that focused exclusively on news media. Their knowledge and experience of the design and photojournalism industries resulted in their dissatisfaction with curriculum decisions that could, potentially, have marginalised their specialisations within the JMS 3 curriculum.

Within the South African media context, the role of designers and photojournalists is limited. As chairperson of the JMS 4 working group Roger wanted to ensure that the curriculum development process for the fourth year did not also result in feelings of alienation by some staff members. His aim therefore was that the process should start with the development of a shared understanding of journalism and media, of the kind of graduates they wished to produce in the fourth year, and thus what kind of curriculum they needed to design to achieve their aims.

### **8.5.3 The emergence of the fourth year regulative discourse**

The process therefore started with the establishment of a regulative discourse (see 8.5.4 below) for the deliberations of the working group as well as for the curriculum. The working group was going to operate in a manner that allowed each member to contribute freely and for the process to be transparent to the rest of the department. Members of the working group were asked to explain what they aimed to achieve with their students during the fourth year. The rest of the department was kept up to date with the progress of the working group

through regular e-mail communication. A record of the process was kept on the university's internet-based learning management system called Moodle, which was used by some members of the department.

When challenged by Adam, the TV lecturer, about the time it would take to develop the values behind the curriculum process (and the process itself) when all that was required (according to Adam) was the filling in of an institutionally used curriculum design template<sup>50</sup>, Roger explained that he did not want a situation to arise such as the acrimonious last meeting at the end of the third year process. His intension was for everyone to work from a shared understanding of what the fourth year aimed to achieve in terms of student learning outcomes:

The reasons we decided to do this and to go this route is because of a lot of conflict that was generated by the Journ 3 curriculum development which was based on the fact that we had different notions of the industry for which we were producing graduates. That caused a lot of conflict and we had different philosophies about what we were doing in the different specialisations in third year. So our philosophical approaches and our broad understanding of who we're teaching for and why, I don't think had been resolved or spoken about. It certainly hadn't been spoken about to me. So there was, I think, a lot of conflict. So our decision to approach it this way was to try and deal with those discrepancies, those differences in approach before we actually started to put together outcomes. If it turns out as Ingrid says, that we don't resolve it, we just say, okay, these are the things that are unresolved, then so be it; but at least it's been acknowledged (230506<sup>51</sup>).

An important tool for working towards a consensus approach to the curriculum was the departmental vision statement.

#### **8.5.4 The departmental vision statement**

I indicated in the previous chapter that the departmental vision statement, developed over the period of a year and a half, was a significant step in the department's history. It was often referred to in the interviews with key informants. The fourth year process took account of the vision statement and everyone agreed that it was important to take note of the imperative to

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<sup>50</sup> The fields on the template include the following: purpose of the course, prior learning requirements, intended learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment tasks and course and teaching evaluation processes.

<sup>51</sup> The numbers refer to the dates of meetings, thus 230506 means that the meeting was held on 23 May 2006.

educate and train journalists and media workers who practised according to a value system that prioritised social justice. The vision statement, for example, binds the department to “contribute to the commitment expressed in the South African Constitution to ‘heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental rights; [and] lay the foundations for a democratic and open society ...’” (Appendix 1).

For the fourth year it was decided that the notion of media for social change was to constitute the main principle of the curriculum regulative discourse. The regulative discourse (RD) is one aspect of Bernstein’s pedagogic discourse, which refers to the “rules or procedures for constructing pedagogic texts and practices” (Singh 2002: 576). The other aspect is the instructional discourse (ID) which refers to “the syntax generating the ‘trained capacities and lifestyles’ (competences)” to be taught. Within the context of curriculum choices, the ID refers to the selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of content or knowledge. The RD refers to the “moral regulation of the social relations of transmission and acquisition – the rules of appropriate conduct, character and manner in the classroom” (*ibid*). The moral order of the pedagogic communication constitutes the context for, and, can be regarded as “a necessary condition for the transmission of the instructional discourses” (*ibid*).

The one principle that underpinned all the various applications of media studied in this department was that of producing work that was “socially conscious” or that promoted social change. Ingrid, for example said:

...For me as well, on the Radio side, it’s about stepping outside the constraints of working on just journalism in the classical sense of the word. As long as you are driven by the principles that I believe define journalism, which is social change - it’s about access to information, it’s about critical commentary and interpretation and all of those kinds of things. So it can apply to other kinds of contexts as well (230506).

Adam, a television lecturer and member of the working group, did not share the belief that the department could teach students to be change agents within the industry. He referred to the following extracts from the departmental vision statement (Appendix 1), “the media constitutes one of the most powerful institutions that mediate our relation to and experience of the world” and “the nature of such mediation is conditioned by the media’s particular

political, economic, technological and historical contexts". Adam argued that he did not believe that the university or the department was powerful enough to work against the mediation of the world by the media. He noted that the role of the department was that of "interfacing" with this mediation and that the curriculum content could provide but a commentary on that mediation:

I also teach a kind of social activism, but I would be an idiot to think that not more than say 30% of my class is going to come out with a social activist consciousness. What do I do then, with the 70%? Do I sit with your situation of going in for a course where I know that 90% of your graduates aren't going to practice? I'd like to then deal with that" (230506).

Thus some members of the working group felt committed to educating their students to be change agents within the South African media environment, while others argued that it was an impossible goal to try and achieve. Pratt (2002) identified five perspectives on teaching, of which the social reformist perspective which is foregrounded in the departmental vision statement is one. Other teaching perspectives found amongst teachers of adults in five different countries, are transmission, developmental, nurturing, and apprenticeship. It is likely that in a relatively large department such as the JMS department, a range of perspectives on teaching would be found and that for some people a social reformist perspective would be dominant, but that others might be more inclined towards other perspectives and therefore different emphases in their teaching (*ibid*).

For Jason (MS) it was important to explain how the notion of social change was bounded to ensure that it was not interpreted as the creation of social awareness. At a CF meeting the working group's framing of the fourth year programme was introduced in the following way by Roger:

We understand social change in the terms that it is referred to in our mission statement. We emphasize the kind of journalism and media production that prioritize social awareness and act as catalysts for educational and cultural understanding and social action. So that's the broad channel through which the fourth year curriculum is defined (CF 2).

In a later working group meeting Jason explained why he disagreed with that way of defining social change:

To me this [usage of social change] talks to social awareness. I don't want to be cynical, but it does sound as if it is prickling the consciousness of middle-class privileged people to be aware that there is poverty in the world. [This viewpoint makes assumptions about who] our student body is, assumes where they come from. It also makes assumptions and reveals something of what we do as teachers ... I think we should define what we mean by social change or media for social change a little more explicitly. It doesn't have to be prescriptive, but I think it has to be a little more explicit (310806).

Jason argued that it needed to be clear that the basis of the fourth year RD was the vision statement and the Constitution and that it was explicitly underpinned by notions of democratisation. He warned against giving too much freedom for the interpretation of the boundaries of the RD within the specialisations lest the link to the vision statement (and by implication to the South African Constitution) be obscured.

Even though there was general agreement with the sentiments expressed in the departmental vision statement and there was an understanding that the notion of social change would underpin the curricula and pedagogy of the department, what was evident from the discussions in the working group and CF meetings, was that there was room for interpretation and that these interpretations could result in ideational contradictions amongst members of the department and that these constraining contradictions would make it difficult to reach consensus about what to teach and how to teach it. Archer (1996) argues that upholding contradictory ideas embroils their holders in S-C conflict (see 2.4.1). This is because when ideas are upheld they have conditioning effects on the context. Within the Department of JMS these contradictory ideas have influence on the curriculum and choices about pedagogy.

As was evident in Chapter 6, the knowledge basis of the field of JMS is under contention. The JMS 4 working group had to resolve the setting of the boundaries of journalism and media in order to enable decision-making about the instructional discourse, including the curriculum content and pedagogy. The next section examines the ideas that influenced the setting of boundaries.

#### 8.5.4.1 *Establishing boundaries*

Journalism and media industries are diverse and as a result of, amongst other things, the influences of rapid developments in information and communication technologies, media platforms change and along with the changes in production platforms, the nature of journalism also changes. Furthermore, the numbers and range of publications grow rapidly and there are multiple markets for the diversity of media publications available. The fluid state of the industry has an influence on the nature of the field of JMS. One of the first issues that occupied the JMS 4 working group for two meetings was the struggle over the establishment of boundaries – these included the boundaries of journalism, of the media and between the department and “the industry”<sup>52</sup>.

One of the lecturers noted that the departmental vision statement did not refer to journalism as such. The only references to journalism were in the name of the department, but the vision statement does commit the department to producing “thoughtful, creative and skilled *journalists* and media practitioners”. Throughout the vision statement reference is made to “the media”. The working group deliberated extensively about where they would set the boundaries of journalism in terms of the kind of journalism they were prepared to teach within their various courses. This dilemma was stated in the following way by Henry, the Photojournalism lecturer:

Now I don't think we can actually agree to anything without some kind of definition of the barriers of what we think is journalism and what isn't, because if the mating rituals of lions in Tanzania is journalism, then a lot of other things can be thrown in with journalism, or if a scientific article is not journalism, then where do we draw the line within National Geographic about what's journalism and what isn't? (300506).

The initial conversation centred on the need to move beyond teaching journalism to also teaching students to produce work outside of news media. Taking the departmental vision statement as the point of departure the working group established that their primary goal was to teach students to use media towards social change. Their reasons for this decision related to the fact that most of their students would not be employed as journalists since the market

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<sup>52</sup> Lecturers in the department referred to journalistic and media industries by the collective name of “the industry”.

was over-saturated and in fact, many of them did not want to be journalists, but wanted to work in other areas of the media.

The working group had a long discussion about the kinds of media they wanted to teach and why it was acceptable to teach, for example, documentary photography, poster design or radio drama, but not advertising or corporate journalism when these genres were taught in some schools of journalism and media studies. And, in terms of journalism as such, the group deliberated about the kinds of journalism that they would teach their students. So, for example, there was a debate about the forms of journalism published in South Africa at the current conjuncture. There were, *inter alia*, publications on current affairs that provide commentary on social issues in well argued ways, while there was also a glut of sensationalist tabloid-style publications. All of them were potential forms that could be taught by the department at the fourth year level. What needed to emerge from this group were the criteria by which they could delimit the kinds of journalism or media that they were willing to engage with their teaching. One member of the working group articulated the dilemma they were facing in designing a curriculum, thus:

Many people would currently call what Rupert Murdoch does journalism. Other people would say he's trying to kill off journalism. But what he's doing *is* considered journalism. Where do we put things like the South African *Sun*, *The Sun* newspaper, *Die Son*, where do we put them? ... A friend of mine is one of the editors of this thing. She says she's not a journalist, she produces pulp. Do we consider that - because it's part of the industry - to be a relevant place for our students to want to go and work or do we say there are bits of the industry which we feel are not quite right? Or do we say that that looks like the future of print journalism, so let us train them into how to design tabloids, how to write for tabloids, how to seek out tabloid stories, etc. and produce them? Or do we say, okay, let's try and hold back the floodgates of tabloidism and teach them how to do real journalism which doesn't have a place [in the industry] at the moment. I don't know (Henry, 230506).

Two members of the group who had been working in the department for longer than a decade argued that the department had not been able satisfactorily to define journalism during this period. The same was true of journalism schools internationally, according to the literature on the field (Adam & Clark 2006). Given the difficulty with establishing what should count as journalism it was decided that the boundary condition would be set by the vision statement's injunction to educate a particular type of graduate, one who was adept at

producing media for social change and interested in working towards the advancement of democracy and democratic principles. This regulatory principle therefore excluded a host of media products such as tabloids. The departmental vision statement thus steered the department towards a curriculum where both the epistemic relation and social relation to knowledge were prioritised (Maton 2000).

Kevin (MS lecturer) argued for the importance of setting boundaries in order to ensure that some types of media were *not taught* in the department. He argued this, not from a moral principle, but from a market principle. He noted that in the past the JMS Department at Rhodes University was the only one offering journalism at the undergraduate level and that under those circumstances the curriculum content did not matter as much as it did within the current market context where many other tertiary institutions had entered the undergraduate journalism market. It was therefore imperative that the department was seen to be teaching “relevant” journalism and media courses:

Henry mentioned all those courses that were taught in the past in our department but you have to remember that in those days there was nobody else teaching journalism so people could basically teach what they wanted to. There was no competition. At the moment we’re faced with a lot of competition and if we teach irrelevant courses, we’re just going to basically make ourselves irrelevant. (Kevin, 300506).

The working group concluded that there were certain types of journalism and media work (such as corporate journalism, tabloid-type work and advertising) that they would not focus on in their teaching, but that they might present these forms to their classes for critique. Since the department strove to produce graduates who made a positive impact on the quality of the industry, it would be important to focus not only on what journalism actually existed, but also on what the industry could, potentially, evolve into. Within the chosen RD the selection of content and pedagogic processes was framed by the aims of producing particular kinds of graduates and prioritising certain kinds of journalism and media and excluding others.

Corporate journalism was one kind of journalism that had been previously taught in the department, but had been excluded from the curriculum because the last incumbent who was assigned to teach the course decided to stop teaching it in lieu of something which was more

congruent with the RD of the department and his own sense of what kind of journalism was important to teach:

When I was hired I was told to teach Corporate Journalism as a course for the second years, for 120 second years, Corporate Journalism. And I thought, "Why ever do we have that in the curriculum?" ... I tried to put my own particular spin on it and I did quite a critical reading of Corporate Journalism, rather than, "This is how you do it". I did a lot of social responsibility, social marketing, and actually, ironically, it's still the best, most successful course I've ever run in my five or six years here now... The following year I said, "I don't want to teach corporate journalism, that's not very PC. I want to do another course in which I will incorporate corporate journalism as one of the elements, but I want to teach a course called Journalisms and I want to explore alternative approaches or different kinds of journalisms". So I taught this course called Journalisms, which obviously was far too ambitious and wasn't nearly as successful as the Corporate Journalism course but it did allow me to get into Development Journalism, [ ], Public Journalism, etc (interview, Peter).

Genres such as short story writing were taught to develop students' skills to write narrative journalism since the principles were the same. Corporate communications was part of the curriculum because there were lecturers in the department who had experience in the field and who could teach that aspect of media. At this juncture some of these forms would not be acceptable as part of the curriculum (300506). Kevin therefore argued that it was imperative that a principle be generated for drawing the boundary. The working group decided that the principle of producing media for social change would be appropriate for the drawing of curriculum boundaries. Henry argued that public awareness advertising constituted a form of media for social change and would therefore be acceptable within that regulative principle. Ingrid noted that public awareness campaigns were included in what she taught in Radio in JMS 4, while Frank said that he had taught narrative writing in his writing course at fourth year level. Given the wide variety of curriculum choices that a department of JMS could make, Henry argued:

...what this department has considered to be the ambit of what it teaches has varied as time has gone by and if we feel those are the kinds of courses we shouldn't be teaching, then we need to define what we do teach in order to prevent those kinds of courses from re-occurring (300506).

The working group decided that it was appropriate for lecturers and fourth year students to debate the nature and potential of journalism. They would therefore not present a definitive view on what they thought the boundaries of the field were, but they aimed to consider, with their students, what the limits of a socially responsible industry were. Within this context of weaker framing, an emphasis at fourth year level on experimentation was important (230506). Ingrid thought that the content of what was taught needed to be framed in terms of media for social change, but that it was important, given the name of the department, that the emphasis at fourth year needed to be on journalism (Ingrid, 300506). Roger (300506) observed that prioritising journalism would constrain what he could do with Design in the fourth year and that he would be happier being constrained by “journalistic values” rather than journalism as such. Thus, for Roger this was an ideational point of tension that had structural implications for the curriculum.

In this section I discussed the working group’s setting of boundaries for what they regarded as appropriate journalism and media to teach in JMS 4. The establishment of these boundaries was circumscribed by the RD of the vision statement, the quality of certain kinds of journalism and media on the market as well as the interests of the members of the working group and the department. The degree of interpretive freedom (Archer 2002) afforded the department to set boundaries is conditioned by the structural and cultural contexts. It is now part of a growing market of providers of education and training for journalists and media workers; the field of journalism is constantly evolving and there is contention about the nature of journalism education.

Through heeding the RD spelled out in the departmental vision statement the JMS 4 working group was able to establish to a large extent the boundaries of the genres they would teach. However, the process of setting boundaries also needed to take account of the national higher education context. The Department of JMS was now in competition for with other institutions and needed to be seen to have a “relevant” curriculum. Where the boundaries were drawn also had implications for the instructional discourses of the specialisations. In the next section the implications of the RD for the specialisations will be considered.

#### 8.5.4.2 *Implications of the RD for specialisations*

The RD had different implications for the different specialisations because different kinds of knowledges were taught in the different specialisations. Design, Photojournalism and New Media, for example, did not fall neatly into the *journalism* for social change RD, but required the broader *media* for social change frame in making curriculum content choices. This was because these specialisations were not directly involved in the *production* of journalism; they rendered other people's stories within a journalistic context. An exception would be the production of a photographic essay.

Writing, Television and Radio are fundamentally about journalistic processes; they're about research and packaging and presentation of texts to audiences, but it's about a journalistic process whereas with Design and Photojournalism and New Media it is different, to some extent, although New Media should be closer to the other ones (interview, Peter).

For these specialisations to fit into the fourth year frame the working group established that within the fourth year, they would *emphasise* journalism rather than *prioritise* journalism (300506):

I do not think that journalism needs to be taught in Design in J4, or journalistic design. But, and I think if that's the only thing or the *raison d'être*, then I think that there really isn't any point – and I think Henry may be in the same kind of position. I don't think then, that Design needs to be taught at fourth year. Because in fact, we do move quite beyond simple newspaper design and magazine design, you know. So we look at a whole lot of other different things. You see, what I like about the notion of social change is that the reason that I do that, is to look at techniques for effective communication of ideas; effective communication of AIDS messages, of anti-corporate, sort of whatever (Roger 300506).

Ingrid, who taught Radio, had been working within a media for social change framework for a while. What had been focusing her choices of curriculum content had been the regulative discourse of media for social change. She explained that she devoted approximately 10% of the curriculum time to the teaching of the production of what she termed “socially conscious radio drama” in the fourth year:

I'm teaching a full three week module in radio drama next term. And the reason why I'm doing that is because ICASA has last year brought out regulations which have put on the agenda of public service stations that they need to carry radio drama. So if they then suddenly have an enormous amount of space for the production of radio drama and the same is true for other stations – most of the public broadcasting stations and increasingly community radio that carry that same kind of thing – there are simply not people out there who are producing socially conscious drama. It's a gap that can be filled. And it's one that as far as I'm concerned carries very similar principles to the kind of journalism that I want my students to be doing. So at that kind of level I'm interested in involving my senior students in doing that kind of work. They're also going to end up presumably in leadership positions in stations where they make decisions about programming and programming in broadcasting is a whole spectrum which includes journalism and a whole lot of other kind of things and they need to be able to understand the relationship between the kind of things that sit on the journalism end of the spectrum and the stuff that sits on the other side (300506).

Ingrid therefore had very specific intentions for developing knowledge of the field as well as a clear focus that the social relation to knowledge (Maton 2000) needed to be prioritised also. Her choice was interesting but not necessarily approved of by all members of the department. Katherine, for example, expressed her concerns thus:

And increasingly my fear is and especially in our department which is very highly-endowed technically, that we get rich kids who come to play with fantastic bits of equipment. That's not journalism. How does one negotiate that field? Saying it is important to know how the equipment works and it does take a while to learn all of that stuff. This is where the tension in the curriculum comes in, a fight over time. How much time does it take to learn to make images competently? How much time do you need to make radio programmes competently, to master the technology of it to make it technologically competent? And it does require a lot of time. But that is then where the emphasis goes. Because in a way when people say, "I'm a radio journalist", then it is the radio part that's emphasized, not the journalism, because the journalism is actually intellectual understanding (interview, Katherine).

In one of the meetings, Danny, the New Media lecturer, also alerted the working group to the fact that, for example, photography could be taught as a sub-set of journalism or it was possible to teach journalism as a sub-set of photography. Where the emphasis lay was important for the selection of curriculum content and for the specialisation of students' consciousnesses.

In the above discussion I have provided a glimpse of how these academics had to take account of multiple pressures in the curriculum development process. They had to be cognizant of, amongst other factors, epistemology, the political, economic and social context as well as the needs of the profession or industry (Toohey 1999) as well as the subjectivities they wished to develop. The decision about which of these needed to be prioritised led to tensions as the needs of the industry, for example, may have been in contradiction with the academic needs of the programme. I have illustrated above the extent to which the industry and political and economic conditions influenced curriculum decisions taken by the JMS 4 working group. In the next section the working group's consideration of the relationship between the department of JMS and the journalistic and media industries will be considered.

## **8.6 The emergence of the instructional discourse (ID): selecting curriculum content and pedagogy**

### **8.6.1 The changing face of the industry**

Journalism and media industries are in what seem like a constant state of innovation and this has an impact on the nature of the field of study. As such JMS is likely to experience struggles in the fields of production, recontextualisation and reproduction. This is, in part, an explanation for why the field has always been in tension and perhaps why the field of JMS is a particularly acute site of struggle, given the added complexities of using MS as the main theoretical lens instead of mostly theories of journalistic practice (see 6.3.1).

It was decided that the curriculum had to be responsive to the needs of industry, but it also needed to challenge industry practices. This is an example of the normalising and disrupting influence that Bernstein (2001) asserts symbolic control agents who work within university contexts are able to exert (see 8.2 above).

It was also the task of the department to innovate and to suggest new ways of doing things to the industry that it served. Given the changing nature of the industry a number of the lecturers noted that they encouraged students to experiment with various media platforms and to try new ways of designing or to experiment with genres that were not commonly used in this country (as is the case with radio). The writing lecturer, Frank, on the other hand, indicated

that his aim was to equip students to write better stories that would enable them “to get a foot in the door” of industry (230506).

All the lecturers understood that most of their students were not going to enter journalistic industries, and they therefore all endeavoured to teach their students knowledge and skills that they would be able to use in a range of media. There was a strong emphasis in the curriculum meetings on the idea of teaching skills that were generalisable or transferable to other media. This issue will be discussed later in this section.

Members of the working group recognised that there was a move towards the convergence of media platforms. New Media, for example, utilised video, voice, design and writing. In the case of television it was possible to merge video technology with PowerPoint, for example. It would therefore be possible for graduates to enter a diversity of industries and to do a range of jobs; and/or work as members of multi-media teams in whatever journalistic or media industry they chose to work.

Since the working group committed itself to a critical relation to the industry (300506) the classification between the department and the media industries needed to remain relatively strong. This was possible for some specialisations, but not others. It was more difficult to achieve this with NM and also with writing practice at the *Grocott's Mail*<sup>53</sup>:

Everything that we have been using as, let me say, teaching materials, our own philosophies of teaching and that kind of thing – we jettisoned them *completely*, completely when we took our students to *Grocott's Mail*. Because *Grocott's Mail* is a going concern, it is a community newspaper; it has got its own vision statement, it's got a board of directors; it is a real commercial newspaper which has advertising, it can be sued, it can sue. Basically it is a whole new animal out there. In fact, it is not just a unit of the university, but for all intents and purposes, a completely different thing (interview, Frank).

It was evident that there were contradictions between the pedagogic aims of the writing teachers and the economic aims of the newspaper where students practised to develop their craft.

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<sup>53</sup> The *Grocott's Mail* is South Africa's oldest independent newspaper. It was bought by the Department of JMS in 2005. Students from the department work at the *Grocott's Mail* as part of their writing training.

The changing face of journalism has had an impact on what could or should be taught and how. Shifts in the industry potentially create challenges for the intellectual field in terms of knowledge selection and thus the curriculum, and therefore potentially increase the possibilities for struggle in the fields of production, recontextualisation and reproduction. It could also offer opportunities for advancement of the field. Kevin (8.3.4.1) remarked that the university was part of the marketplace and that the selection of curriculum content was not just a pedagogic choice, but also a market choice. As noted above, the Rhodes University Department of JMS used to be the only undergraduate journalism teaching institution, however, since this was no longer the case courses offered by the department needed to be perceived as relevant, otherwise students would choose a different school. The implication of this point was that the boundaries of journalism could thus not be too loosely drawn (Kevin: 300505).

The focus on innovation, for example, was driven by the changes in the media platforms through which journalism can be delivered. Also, the state of the local media (in some instances) caused the working group to consider ways of preparing students to help to renew the industry and to create new ways of delivering not only journalism, but also to open up other avenues for the advancement of social change through the media. The changing industry also required the teaching of more generic, transferable kinds of skills (230506). Structural changes such as changes in kinds of media, or changes in the nature of journalistic products, shifts in readership and ownership have enabled or forced certain changes in curriculum and pedagogy (230506). According to Henry (Photojournalism):

In the journalism industry ... in the past, obviously, photographers were employed by publications ... and photography took quite an important role within those publications, whereas nowadays, the vast majority of pictures used in those publications are bought in from outside the publication itself (Henry, 250606).

Henry therefore did not focus much on news photography in his courses. He taught storytelling through the medium of photography. The above was an example of a shift as a result of economic changes, while the changing nature of New Media and Television have come about as a result of technological developments in media and the possibilities of convergence of various platforms.

Another structural constraint that influenced curriculum content was that there were too many journalism graduates entering the job market each year for the limited number of jobs available within the industry. Graduates from schools of journalism were employed in a number of related industries, including advertising, public relations, New Media companies or magazines. Thus, in order to ensure that students were employable within the broader industry lecturers felt that they had to broaden the curriculum to enable students to develop their capabilities to work in a range of journalisms and media industries.

A further constraint was the underdeveloped nature of, for example, radio as a medium in this country. Radio lecturer, Ingrid, argued that it would be important for her curriculum to include opportunities for students to experiment with forms, content and genres that were not commonly produced in this country. Another structural condition that motivated the selection of content and pedagogy was the lacuna in terms of media leadership in the country. Several members of the JMS 4 working group noted that their graduates entered leadership positions in media companies not long after graduation and therefore they needed to be able to provide leadership in terms of technical expertise, but also in terms of media values. As stated above, Ingrid therefore included in her JMS 4 curriculum a course on the production of socially conscious radio drama. This kind of radio drama did inform the audience and in the process enhanced the possibility of social change and potentially promoted democratic values. It therefore met a number of the conditions Ingrid set for media that she would be willing to include in the curriculum.

Ingrid required her fourth year students to act as tutors to second and third year students. Tutoring was part of the curriculum and students had to produce tutors' portfolios in which they reflected on the theory and practice of tutoring and mentoring within the context of the development of media practitioners. Ingrid argued that she used tutoring as a teaching strategy in the first instance as it allowed her fourth year students to engage with their knowledge of the medium in an entirely different way<sup>54</sup>. Adam, the television lecturer, expected his students to be able to teach each other various skills. Given the tremendous skills shortage in the television and film industries in South Africa they believed it was imperative that those who had knowledge and skills were able to participate in the process of

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<sup>54</sup> There exists a plethora of publications on the benefits of tutoring for tutors' learning. See for example, Topping 1996; Bargh & Schul 1980.

skills development of new entrants into these industries. Adam further required all his students to engage in both the conceptualisation and the production of television work, since one of his aims was to break down the unequal division of labour between “conceivers and executors” (Adam, 230506). The politics of the industry thus had an impact on pedagogic and content choices.

The rapidly changing face of journalistic and media industries made it essential for students to be able to transfer aspects of their specialisation skills to other areas of production. It was therefore agreed that the inclusion of non-journalistic curriculum content or production processes could be justified if they could be applied to the production of journalism.

According to Roger:

Often the stuff that is taught [in relation to media other than journalism] ... would be applicable to journalistic productions as well ... if people leave here and go into a journalistic career, then they would be able to use those, transfer those skills, which is what Adam was talking about last week, about producing skills which are transferable. And I think that may also be a kind of guiding principle. So I mean, if I decided to teach advertising I must be able to justify to the fourth year board, how those skills are transferable if somebody ends up in a journalistic context (300506).

Transferring skills learned in one context to another is not unproblematic (Knight 2001, Boughey 2006, Muller 2008). Frank, the writing lecturer, warned that it was vital that students understood journalistic principles so that they were able to use the specialisation skills appropriately within journalistic contexts. He gave the example of a film-making principle of doing multiple takes which was not a journalistic principle and therefore inappropriate in the production of journalism. He recalled an instance when TV students did a news shoot at the *Grocott's Mail* where he was working with his writing students. A TV student asked him to repeat an action that he had done moments before while interacting with a writing student. This angered him at the time because he thought that:

Journalism occurs in a particular space, I mean, you do it as it is. You are supposed to be witnesses, you're not supposed to be producers, so when TV students think they can do a piece of journalistic work, but require their subjects to do another take of something, that is problematic (300506).

Within a context that may require the transfer of skills to other specialisations or media contexts, it is important that students understand different forms of journalism as different kinds of social practices, each with their own rules (Gee 2001). It is equally imperative that they can appropriately apply journalism principles and ethics within a variety of contexts.

In this section I discussed a range of structural conditions that influenced curriculum and pedagogic choices. Conditions such as the changing nature of journalistic and media industries and limited job opportunities for journalism graduates constrained what lecturers thought should be taught; however, these factors had also enabled a focus on experimentation in the curriculum at fourth year level. I have focused on how the industry influenced curriculum choices. In 4.1 I discussed Barnett's views that there were multiple influences on HE curricula. Barnett suggests that the influences can be local, national or global. The state of journalism nationally and internationally provides the conditioning context for thinking about appropriate curricula for educating prospective journalists.

## **8.6.2 The role of research within the JMS 4 curriculum**

### **8.6.2.1 *The need to ensure career and academic progression***

JMS 4 is the last year of a four-year professional degree and therefore, technically, constitutes the first post-graduate year in terms of the conceptual complexity of the curriculum and the degree of autonomy required of students at this level. As such, JMS 4 should provide "vertical academic mobility" (Muller 2008: 30) and it should be possible for students to proceed to masters' level research after their JMS 4 year. Julia, a MS lecturer, enquired about the place of research within the JMS 4 curriculum. Since JMS 4 has academic status as well as status as a professionalising year, Julia argued that if students were able to do masters on the achievement of an adequate BJourn degree, then the BJourn should prepare them for the rigours of research at the masters' level (130606).

Julia also argued that research done for media productions should count as valid research. Adam, the television lecturer commented that production research, such as that done for television documentaries, did not count as research output in terms of the University's research council and the national Department of Education's regulations even though it often

produced new knowledge. The working group agreed that this was an issue that required urgent exploration and that it needed to be brought to the attention of the research council at the University, since production lecturers did not get recognition for the research they produced in this way.

Julia recognised that there was a great deal of valid research that could potentially emerge as a result of the production work in other specialisations as well; not just those that produced knowledge in the form of documentaries. She thought that Design and New Media also had potential for rich research about knowledge relating to the relationships between form and content. Research was an important category in the JMS curriculum because of the role it played in the production and understanding of journalism and media. Ingrid talked about the various kinds of research that was done over the years of the JMS degree in order to give students the capacity to conduct a range of research for their journalism. She argued that research in the fourth year needed to be about developing students' capacity to do research strategically for journalism, "The way I've understood it is that we're interested in developing students with hard research skills and that we pick particular kinds of research instruments per year" (130606). Julia thought that a focus on research would help to make theory less abstract, both in terms of production and intellectually, if it could be applied more consciously to students' production work.

For Ingrid the role of research was important in terms of the kinds of student identities that the fourth year aimed to develop:

How do we understand our fourth years at a university? They're not just media producers in the ordinary sense of the word; they're far more than that. They're intellectuals as well, and the kind of research they do for their journalism, the kind of research they do about journalism and as journalists is something we've got to take seriously (130606).

The areas of research that the working group decided needed to form part of the JMS 4 curriculum included: research *for* production, research *about* production, the strategic use of research as a journalist and the ability to design a research project (130606). The importance of research was recognised in the description of the ideal JMS4 graduate who should be

competent to do research for and about media (see Appendix 2 for the list of JMS 4 curriculum outcomes).

Two issues in terms of research emerged from the curriculum conversations, *viz.* the status of production work as a form of research, which Henry characterised as being “of a more sociological/anthropological/political nature” (130606), both with regard to the recognition of staff research output towards promotion, and also in terms of pedagogy if the role of research as part of journalistic practice was given due recognition in the curriculum. As a pedagogical strategy Ingrid thought that it would be a good idea to expect students to present their research in staff seminars and also to do research with staff. The working group’s plan to promote research with students and the expectation that students should present their research in staff seminars, as well as their earlier decision to discuss the principles of the classification of appropriate journalism and media with their students constitute areas of weakening the classification and framing of the fourth year curriculum. These plans had the potential to contribute towards the development of research capacity within the field of JMS, contribute to the academic integrity of the JMS 4 course as well as, in the long run, enhance the status of the field.

All members of the working group concurred that it was imperative to promote research at JMS 4. However, there exists a constraining contradiction between MP lecturers’ view that research was an outcome of much production work and the view of the institution with regard to the status of research emerging from productions. This kind of research is not rewarded by the institution for the purposes of promotion, for example. In addition, because production teaching is so time-consuming, MP teachers do not get the time to produce the more theoretical kind of research prized by the institution. One way of ameliorating the situation would be to agitate for the recognition of production research work and another would be for MP lecturers to publish in the field of production pedagogy.

Research constitutes an important aspect of a curriculum at this level. Other important aspects in the process of curriculum development include curriculum coherence and ensuring adequate curriculum differentiation between levels (Knight 2001; Young 2008; Muller 2008).

## 8.7 Curriculum coherence and differentiation

### 8.7.1 Principles for the selection of knowledge areas

The practical specialisations in JMS have a technical and creative knowledge base that needs to be acquired sequentially; there is thus a relatively high degree of verticality to specialisation teaching and learning; there is a necessary knowledge base that requires a particular sequence to be followed as well as time to practise the newly acquired skills (3.3). The MS component of the course seems to be different in this regard. Muller (2008: 16) writes that some regions have “a certain arbitrariness to them, which derives in part from the fact that the core knowledge base has not yet shaken down into a stable, generally accepted, incremental body of knowledge.” The following quotation in which Katherine describes one way in which the department thought about curriculum development before the formal curriculum development processes started in 2003, is illustrative of this:

One of the ways in which we had conceptualised the curriculum though we didn't call it that at the time was to say, “How do we organise what we teach?”. So the understanding was for many years, for first years, and again this was to do with the first year numbers and being able to teach practical specializations at first year and so on, so how do you organise the field. So you say, “Okay, at first year we'll organise it, they come in knowing about the media as audiences, we'll try and organise our knowledge in the field around them as readers of texts”. And so I think the first year was around texts and audiences. It is at that level. They watch soap operas, they read the news, they listen to this; they're familiar with the texts and we'll work with the texts. So we construct courses in the various areas that deal with texts.

In the second year we're going to have a gate – we only take a hundred, about half. The second year we can organise what we teach around production and in the third year we can combine areas of production and text. And any kind of related theory. Another thing with the third year at that point [was that] it was an exit year so think what other kinds of things students need to know. So that's for example the media and law; then you have to think, “Where do you put it?” Well, it's most useful to go into the third year because that's an exit year. So those other kinds of related areas of knowledge you try to locate them and that was our system. Trying to locate all these things we have to teach, how can we organise that and that was our schema. That was one schema that we had for organising. So you see, there is a notion of curriculum, but we didn't call it that. So it was organised on those kinds of principles (interview, Katherine).

From this extract it seems as if there was not a concern with teaching particular areas of knowledge before others, although the organisation of content was a concern. Here the focus was on what would interest students as they were being inducted into the field. Curriculum content in some fields can be chosen based on the interests of students and lecturers rather than with the view of building a sequential knowledge base. This is possible because the field has a horizontal knowledge structure (Bernstein 1999, see also 3.3). In a meeting about the knowledge base of the fourth year, Ingrid noted, for example, “[If] the interests of staff are on identity issues and the politics around identity issues, then they find opportunities to do that kind of teaching. But I think [knowledge about identity] is relevant right through”.

Conceptual inquiry into issues of representation, identity and ethics; and also textual analysis stemmed from interests of particular staff members, however, these knowledge areas also seemed to be important to build an intellectual understanding of journalism and media. Roger argued in the following way for the importance of a focus on identity in MS for the field of Design in relation to the RD of social change:

I think identity is understanding notions of your own identity, understanding notions of *othering* and of the identity of the other; how you constitute that, or represent those identities in your own work, I think is kind of crucial to using work for social change. There are some wonderful articles where the UNHCR ran a whole lot of adverts on trying to see refugees as people and the effect of it was to “other” refugees. So you increase their *othering* and I think it is kind of misunderstanding of identity and how you create identity and how you embed identity which led to that. They were quite clever adverts, quite a clever idea, but they hadn’t thought clearly through what kind of identity they were creating. And I think this notion of identity at fourth year is crucial for that (150806).

While the field is “shaking down” its knowledge base in the formation of a more universally accepted canon, it is relatively vulnerable as an intellectual field in the same way as Cultural Studies had been deemed to be Maton (2005). And as such there are contestations in terms of appropriate curriculum choices as well as greater degrees of freedom of choice. Indeed, Ingrid argued that there was a fair amount of choice in terms of the specific content that could be chosen for the curriculum at fourth year:

If one teaches people how to read and how to engage with knowledge one can have a fair amount of flexibility about what one builds into that fourth year. It doesn’t necessarily have to be that knowledge that is the same as for people then going on into masters (Ingrid 130606).

From the above discussion it seems evident that aspects of the curriculum required vertical coherence, while the horizontal nature of the knowledge structure of MS did not necessitate the same kind of coherent organisation of content.

### 8.7.2 Principles for coherence

Achieving curriculum coherence is an important aspect aim of curriculum development. In the higher education literature there are different approaches to the notion of curriculum coherence. Knight (2001) argues strongly against rational curriculum planning processes followed within outcomes-based approaches. He asserts that the complex learning that is the hallmark of higher learning requires what he calls “a process approach” to curriculum development which starts with a consideration of how to organise content into an appropriate series of learning experiences for students. He argues for a non-linear approach to achieving curriculum coherence which leads to the dovetailing of “content, organisation, learning and teaching strategies, and assessment arrangements” and that these have to be considered in the curriculum as planned, created and understood (*ibid*: 370). Biggs (1999) argues that curriculum alignment requires a process of working from desired student learning outcomes and assuring congruence between outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessment and this could be construed as an example of what Knight (*ibid*: 372) calls rational curriculum planning, however, the curriculum development process that I examine in this dissertation shows that even if the process started with a consideration of learning outcomes, it did not preclude engagement with the complexities of the discipline and the teaching and learning context.

The working group had to decide upon the principles that would underpin the coherence of the MS component of the course across the four years of the JMS curriculum. One possible principle of coherence related to curriculum areas covered in the first three years: “So maybe that would be the way of looking at the fourth year: where are we looking at media as history? Where are we looking at media as text? And so on. And at what level do they need to be represented at the fourth year?” (Ingrid, 220806: 165). This way of approaching curriculum design could be regarded as akin to Bruner’s (1996) spiral curriculum since students focused on particular areas in different ways over the three years of the undergraduate JMS curriculum. This was a way of achieving conceptual coherence to some

extent. Ingrid argued that another way of developing coherence could be to find ways of linking the MS theory to the practice of journalism and media in the fourth year. In other words, she argued for coherence in terms of relating the contextual parts of the curriculum to the conceptual parts. The MS content in the fourth year then needed to be tailored around its application to the specialisation. Ingrid noted that the Representation, Identity and Ethics (RIE) course operated on the principle of applying theories of RIE to students' production work. This analysis points to the possibilities of both conceptual and contextual coherence in terms of MS and its relation to journalism and media. If conceptual coherence was to be the sole goal, then there would be little direct application to the production work of the students. If, however, contextual coherence was striven for, then there would be direct application to the production work, but it would limit the gains that accrued from the presence of a discursive gap between theory and practice.

While Ingrid was concerned about curriculum coherence, she also wanted to ensure that the fourth year was distinctive from the other years; she wanted the working group to consider how a focus on identity in the fourth year would be different from how identity issues were addressed in earlier years. Henry suggested that the focus needed to be on examining how students represented people *in their own* production work, in other words, he favoured a contextual approach. In previous years students had examined other photographers' and journalists' representations; in the fourth year, he argued, their work needed to deal with their own representation of their subjects (220806).

One of the greatest areas of contestation around the JMS 4 curriculum processes related to the relationship between MS theory and MP. These contestations are underpinned by the difference between the contextual and the conceptual. For the lecturers in the JMS Department these differences constitute a constraining contradiction to which it was very difficult to find a syncretic solution.

In the next section the working group's stance on the differentiation between third and fourth year is examined.

### 8.7.3 Differentiation of knowledge between JMS 3 and JMS 4

In all the specialisations there seemed to be a focus on experimentation in the fourth year. In Radio, students were expected to engage with different genres and to experiment with types of programmes not normally heard on South African radio. There was also the expectation that students would exhibit more autonomy in their exploration of the possibilities of the medium, both technically and creatively.

In the fourth year Ingrid assumed and required a level of independence and maturity from students; the classroom space was regarded more as an editorial space with students doing projects and then having them critiqued in terms of professional quality within the classroom-professional space. A large part of the year was spent on experimenting with a wide range of design genres within the Design course as well. For Roger this meant that: “we’re assuming that they’re able to operate as junior journalists with appropriate levels of initiative, independence” (130606).

It was decided that the nature and degrees of differentiation between JMS 3 and JMS 4 needed to be clear in the outcomes developed for JMS 4 (310806).

Various forms of differentiation between third and fourth year were established. While the third year focused on news journalism, the fourth year would focus more broadly on media for social change, with journalism as an area of priority in the curriculum. Kevin (300506: 53) expressed concern that this differentiation was nowhere stipulated in the third year curriculum document and that it therefore left the way open for teachers to choose what to focus on and thus potentially leave gaps in students’ knowledge and skills levels. It was therefore important that the level of choice that individual lecturers had over aspects of the curriculum be explicitly limited.

It was clarified in the discussions that the level of differentiation that already existed between third and fourth year would be maintained and that the shift from journalism to media for social change would be formalised.

Given the tensions around the relationship between theory and practice that have existed in the department for so long, reaching agreement on this aspect of the curriculum would be a challenge.

### 8.8 The theory – practice relation

In Muller's (2008) consideration of the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and curriculum structures he argues that the relationship between the nature of disciplines and the possible curriculum structures, although not direct, is nevertheless close. Since the relationship is not direct, a process of recontextualisation from the field of production to the field of recontextualisation and reproduction is necessary (see 3.2.3). He uses Biglan's (1973a, 1973b) distinction between hard and soft and pure and applied disciplines to make his point (Muller 2008: 9 -12). JMS can be characterised as a soft discipline; however, MS would lean towards the *soft pure* end of the continuum (being derived from foundational disciplines such as sociology, politics and linguistics, amongst others) while Media Production (MP) would be regarded as *soft applied*. As a soft pure field, MS requires concrete and reflective knowledge acquisition processes, while MP requires concrete active processes (Muller, 2008 following Kolb, 1981). This distinction does not take account of the reflective nature of production work in the JMS Department at Rhodes University.

Becher (1989, 1994) uses Biglan's disciplinary distinctions in his description of academic tribes. Becher asserts that the cognitive style of soft pure tribes is

reiterative; holistic; in pursuit of particulars, qualities and complications, and also understanding and interpretation. Soft applied tribes on the other hand strive towards the "functional; utilitarian; know-how via soft knowledge; enhancement of practice; protocols and/or procedures (in Muller 2008: 11).

Given the distinctive cognitive styles of the two parts of JMS it makes sense that a MS curriculum would lean towards conceptual coherence, while journalism practice curricula would aim at contextual coherence. However, as Muller points out, these terms denote *qualities* of curricula and while "all curricula have elements of both qualities" (2008: 21), they differ in terms of the mix. My analysis shows that the tensions in the JMS curriculum process also revolve around the difficulties with melding these two different kinds of logics

of the two fields of MS and journalism practice. It is vital that media education and training encompass both. In the following quotation Berger (2006: 42) writes about the difference between training and education for journalism and media work:

... the former [training] refers to skills transfer – to passing along of know-how. The latter [education] encompasses the realm of know-why (and, not forgetting, the why-not). The distinction goes to the heart of pedagogy as well. On the one hand there is the challenge of teaching the “how” of journalism as it is known, in the most efficient way possible. On the other, is the challenge of stimulating and capacitating the ability to do something different: to go beyond the formulae and skills, so that an informed creativity can emerge – generating new knowledge and know-how about the vistas and possibilities of journalism.

In Chapter 7 it was shown that some of the production lecturers indicated that there were problems with the project of integrating MS with MP. It was also evident that there was tension around the kind of theory that was taught. Peter, for example, argued in his interview that the third year integrated JDD/CMP course worked so well because the theoretical component of the course was journalism theory and not MS theory. Journalism theory seemed to be more contextually relevant to the practice of journalism than MS theory seemed to be.

Frank, a writing lecturer, said in one of the meetings that the kind of theory that he taught was journalism theory and that it made sense to students because it related so closely to the practical work they did as part of the Writing and Editing course. He argued that students “don’t get switched on [to theory]” because the theory they were taught in MS was to a large degree divorced from the practice they were studying (130606).

During the working group meetings when the issue of which type of theory needed to be taught was the topic of discussion, the tensions were evident. Frank stated that he taught theory in his writing courses and he suggested that specialisation teachers who were willing and able should agree to teach the theoretical component of their courses themselves. He said, “So I would very, very willingly say I would teach everything in my course, including the theory. Because that theory is tested, it is evaluated; it is not like I just get it out of the blue. I know that stuff and I can teach it. And I take it seriously because I am an academic” (050906). Frank therefore argued that the theory he teaches had been through the mill of

being validated and that it therefore had the status of objective knowledge in the way argued for by Moore and Muller (2007) (see also 4.11).

Other production teachers, it seemed, at fourth year level also expected their students to do specialisation-specific theoretical readings. Henry, for example said,

My fourth year course includes a whole series of readings and lectures on identity and representation and everything that they have to do has to include an essay about how what they have done ties into that. So, most of the media theory is in there already. The only problem that I have is that they say, “We can’t do all those readings in the first two terms because we’ve got all the readings for media theory (050906).

And, Frank, similarly stated:

In fact ... this year my Writing class had two readers, actually. Two readers and they just hated Katherine, Julia and myself, because I had a set of readings and they had a set of readings for their media theory classes. I actually was teaching media theory also as I understand it because I thought it was important for my course to have that component (050906).

In a later meeting Ingrid said, “I would certainly within my Radio work give the students all the stuff that I’ve always given them on my theorisation of radio when I’m working with them in those specialisation times” (171106).

What was evident from these quotations is that production teachers believed that production teaching required a theoretical spine and that they considered journalism theory that related specifically to their area of specialisation the most appropriate theory to teach.

Henry was pleased with the formulation of an outcome that stated as an aim that students would be required to critically engage *with* and communicate *about* media (150806) since he thought that the outcome “leaves the way open for journalism theory to be taught instead of media theory. The outcome does not specify media theory” (150806). He further noted that the formulation of the outcome did not dichotomise media theory and journalism theory. However, later on in the process a proposal was made that Henry believed would necessitate the teaching of MS understandings of concepts such as representation, identity and ethics and

he argued that he would teach the theoretical component of the production work differently to the MS staff (171106).

Ingrid observed earlier that production courses were already theoretically robust, “That is why if you’re going to take [students] out of the production courses it is not for theory, it’s got to be for something else because the theory is in the production courses.” (050906: 248)

Specialisation teachers wanted their students to produce work that was technically proficient and they required them to be able to critically reflect on practical work in relation to theory. In section 8.7.2 I argued that MS knowledge and MP knowledge differed because one is more focused on the contextual while the other is more focused on the conceptual. From my analysis of the data it was also evident that tensions arose from curriculum choices that foregrounded MS theory and relegated journalism theory to the background. However, given that some MP lecturers had technical as well as theoretical expertise, and given that they identified themselves as academics as well as media practitioners, prioritising MS theory constituted a constraining contradiction for them and as such represented an assault on their academic identities. This resulted in S-C tension and also potentially structural constraints in relation to the allocation of curriculum time for the various aspects of the JMS 4 programme (see also 4.1.6).

### **8.8.1 One or two hats?**

Gamble (2006), M. Barnett (2006), Wheelahan (2006, 2007a, 2007b) and Young (2008) argue persuasively that vocational qualifications should “face both ways”, towards the profession through practice-related training as well as towards the academy through the teaching of appropriate kinds of theory. The reason for this as I have indicated in Chapter 6 relates to the discursive gap between theoretical knowledge and the world which enables the imagining of different possibilities, both in terms of theory and in terms of practice. Gamble (*ibid*) also argues that it is imperative that the distinction between theory and practice is maintained in order for the discursive gap to remain intact. If it is not, she argues, there is a danger of the one kind of knowledge becoming the other and in the process diminishing the possibilities for the creation of new knowledge.

Members of the working group aimed to ensure that both the production capabilities and the academic capabilities were captured by the course outcomes. There was an understanding that even though the fourth year was a professionalisation year, it was still part of a higher education qualification and the knowledge taught during the year needed to “face both ways” (150806: 146). Ingrid maintained that it was important for students to be able to wear “two hats”, and be adept at communicating within an academic context and within a practical, specialisation context. This constituted a point of tension in this working group since this understanding was not shared by all. Adam disagreed when Ingrid argued for the importance of ensuring that students had both professional and academic capabilities:

You’re suggesting we’re separating, in principle wearing different hats. So we’ve got an academic hat and we’ve got an industry-related hat. Previously the binary opposite applying used to be – and I suspect it still is to an extent— theory and practice. And I think on a level of principle it goes against the kinds of smart teaching that we want to actually pull off. I don’t think it’s a good idea to have a separate hat. I think we should integrate these kinds of things in a flowing set of skills where you might have a different kind of style. And there aren’t two styles: there’s colloquial style, there’s female style, a formal style, a professional style, a commercial style, academic style, intellectual style, critiquing style ... (Adam, 150806).

Adam did not seem to appreciate fully the significance of forging in students both kinds of identities, the academic and the professional, as separate and in hybrid form. The argumentation above is akin to radical constructivist thinking that is criticised, from a critical realist point of view, for impoverishing knowledge from a critical realist point of view (see 4.10 and 4.11). Ingrid, however, understood that it was not a matter of style, but a matter of fundamentally different ways of thinking and being: “[I think it is important] that people understand when they’re wearing what hat, that they’re able to code-switch, I suppose, naturally between these different hats and understand the purpose of each and when to do the one and when to do the other” (150806). Wheelahan (2007a) asserts the importance of keeping the boundaries between the different kinds of knowledge separate. She argues that it is only when one is fully aware of the boundaries that exist that one can consciously traverse the boundaries and understand what one is doing in the process of boundary crossing.

Ingrid spoke of the problems that could emerge when the ability to move between “languages” did not exist:

I observe very often with staff here, people coming into a production environment and speaking the academic language in a way that makes people switch off. I would think that if you're able to code-switch and say what you want to say, but say it in the other language, you're able to communicate better in that *particular* environment; [it is important] for students to learn those different kinds of abilities (150808).

What she explained here related to an understanding of the difference between particularities and principles, practicalities and abstractions and the recognition of when and how it might be appropriate to invoke each.

Adam was not convinced that the need for boundaries was indeed a cognitive necessity:

Well, you've just had an example around staff, fully fledged professional, mature adults in that sense. I think it is a schizophrenic thing for undergrads to deal with and I think there's resentment to, for instance, news for this reason. There is too much of a questioning around the morality and less of a practical skill-base for students to actually intervene (*sic*). They're getting turned off journalism because of high levels of expectations, morally, ethically and in terms of the kinds of languages and this is cool and that's not cool. So, in a student's experience these kinds of things build antipathy. There's a bedrock of antipathy amongst students in this department (150806).

It seems important from a pedagogical point of view that boundaries between MS and MP are clearly set and that there are times when MS theory is applied to practice, and other times when the theory is engaged with on its own terms.

Adam's concern about the foregrounding of theory was rooted in his knowledge of students' antipathy towards theory within the context of studying JMS:

I presented to the J3s to get them to come to J4 because they're kind of wondering whether ... it is worth doing J4 these days ... And the first question they ask is, 'Will we have a lot of theory in J4?'. They're worried about the theory. They see it as other, they see it as another hat..." So that's my problem with proceeding in this way. It doesn't make clear the principles on which we work in a communal specialised sense (Adam, 150806).

However, Ingrid had a robust understanding of the need for both kinds of knowledge in terms of the student and professional identities that she believed needed to be forged through students' engagement with the department:

These are principles that I believe should be the foundation of our teaching, which is that at fourth year level we are producing critical media producers and as such they should not only feel comfortable within one set of conventions, but be able to shift between those as appropriate and in some ways find ways and spaces where they merge. It is not about the distinction between theory and practice, but the fact that they're hybrids; that they're literate in both of those ways of talking and thinking means they can find new ways in which those can be merged with each other (150806).

This quotation articulates the principle that theory and practice, theory and the professions, need each other, they feed into each other, but it is important that each language is spoken separately and that they're able to be spoken together also (see also Young, 2008). Ingrid had some concern for MS to have time on its own. Her understanding of why that should be was informed in part by a theory of knowledge as is evident from the quotations above, and in part by a concern for minimising socio-cultural discord:

The way I understand the kinds of debates people have had in the Department around media studies vs. media production, one of the concerns is this thing that [John] always talks about – the notion of media studies as a handmaiden to production. And maybe that's why I thought if one can have a bit of both; if you have a term at the beginning of the year where Media Studies can have the space for themselves to teach things at a foundational level and then talk about the dialogue between production and MS during the course of the year then you have the best of both worlds (310806).

I have shown that most members of the working group shared a concern for the development of students who were both theoretically astute and practically adept at their specialisation. There was a degree of tension around this with Adam, the Television lecturer who argued for the seamless integration of theory and practice. Adam almost seemed to suggest that the theoretical component of the course needed to be well hidden since he believed theorising about practice alienated students. However, Ingrid believed strongly that the boundary between MS theory and MP was necessary and that it was important for students to be able to consciously cross the boundary at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.

### **8.8.2 A critical specialisation practice**

A significant part of the curriculum development process was taken up with discussing the relationship between theory and practice, and particularly the role of MS theory in the fourth

year course. The struggle to agree on a workable structure for the course related to this issue (see 8.8.3 below). There was agreement in the working group that they wanted the MS theory component of the course to enable students to reflect critically on their production work. In other words, their aim was for MS theory to be fully integrated into the production work. Jason, a MS lecturer, expressed concern that the nature of the integration that the working group was suggesting would result in a course which did not reflect the nature of the field of MS. He felt that weakening the boundaries between MS and production to the extent that the working group suggested threatened the integrity of the field. Jason thought that the integrated course needed a name that reflected its nature as separate from MS. In a discussion about the nature of the integration it was decided that the term Critical Media Literacy (CML) might better capture the nature of what the working group expected the course to accomplish. The following conversation occurred around this issue:

**Jason**

... So it is about thinking creatively, because I think there's more flexibility for production teachers to reorganise their time within the fourth year than there is for the MS teachers to reorganise their time with the undergraduate teaching... So my sense would be – one, integrated outcomes would result in integrated assessments of some kind. So they can still be separate assessments, but there must be some way in which the kind of things that happen in the critical analysis of the course is reflected in the production of the course. And the production material must be reflected in the critical analysis.

**Ingrid**

This would be part of the indicators that you develop.

**Jason**

So the academic paper is about [students 'work'], but [their] work must still reflect/

**Ingrid**

/ to what extent [they]'ve incorporated notions of social change.

**Jason**

Yes, [their] understanding of social change. In that sense I'd like to propose that we actually stop calling that MS. It actually isn't MS.

**Ingrid**

What would you call it?

**Jason**

I don't know. Critical Literacy, Critical Reflection.

**Ingrid**  
Critical Media Literacy?

**Jason**  
Possibly. But I think the moment you call it media studies, it belongs to a group of people who don't technically own it, it signals itself as part of a field that it isn't in (310806).

For Jason the nature of the integration that was suggested constituted a threat to the integrity of MS. Its conceptual nature was being transformed by the contextual application of ideas.

Ingrid argued later that it would, in fact, not be appropriate to call the MS component of the course CML since the application of theory to practice that occurred in the production courses was informed by a critical media literacy approach. Production courses were theoretically strong and constituted 90 credits out of the 120 credits for the year and the courses included a critical media literacy component. It was decided to use the portmanteau, Critical Media Production for the theoretically informed fourth year media production courses (050906).

Ingrid suggested that it might be more useful for the MS component in the third term of the course to develop students' research skills in preparation for a fourth term internship that they were planning for students at newspapers or other media companies. She was concerned with not setting up a theory-practice dichotomy by delineating the first semester as production and the third term as 'theory'. However, Kevin thought that it made more sense for the MS course to focus on Representation, Identity and Ethics, and to integrate the research methods into the specialisations since research skills were more likely to be specialisation-specific (050908).

Henry noted that the major reason for the struggle they had with finding a structure that everyone could agree upon for JMS 4 was that they were attempting to merge an academic component into what is essentially a "practical course" (see 8.8.3 below). He argued that the academic component needed to be thoroughly integrated into the specialisation courses:

I'm just thinking that the fourth year is a wrong-footed year. I keep hearing that there is always this difficulty in trying to get the academic component into this course and that it is like, here we have this course [in which] students ... don't want ... an academic component; here we have this course with an

academic component which is difficult to fit into the course. We **have** to have an academic component otherwise it can't be a fourth year of a degree. And I just think that maybe it is almost like we're starting off in that sense with a wrong-footed notion of what we're trying to do. Like, either the academic part has to end up built into what happens in the practical part, or else we've got to admit that this is actually a practical course with a tacked-on academic aspect to it. And I really am in favour of the first thing – that basically this academic part gets built into the actual thing (150906).

The kind of integration that they had tried to do at first year level with a MS teacher working with or alongside a MP teacher had not worked well for the first year writing teachers. A number of them tried to find ways out of that integration (see 7.4.4). This was evident from a discussion in a working group meeting and also from interviews with Peter and Frank. The idea of two teachers working together was argued for in a document entitled, *Theory-practice convergence* (n.d.) where it was suggested that not all specialisation teachers had the confidence or knowledge to do the theoretical (MS) integration and that it might be a way to develop the expertise and the confidence of the production staff to be able to do the theoretical integration themselves. The following was suggested to promote the process of theory-practice integration in terms of curriculum and pedagogy:

In the same way that AD<sup>55</sup> no longer focuses on individual students but have taken to empowering lecturing staff instead, theorists could, instead of running a number of courses rather collaborate with prac teachers on their courses. This would serve three aims:

1. the obvious one of moving closer towards integration of theory and practice;
2. secondly, prac teachers would become more familiar with the theory that they often feel they lack sufficient background in – something which,
3. would make a substantial contribution towards staff development;

In this scheme of things, theorists could offer “Curriculum development interventions” by dropping theoretical seminars through-out the teaching of practical courses (Rhodes University n.d.: 3).

What seemed to be required was one of two things: either the theory that related directly to the production work would be taught by the production teachers and the MS teachers would teach other aspects of MS, alternatively there needed to be much closer consultation between

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<sup>55</sup> AD is the abbreviation of Academic Development and refers here to the Academic Development Centre, whose remit is academic staff development.

the two sets of teachers to ensure that there was no overlap of content between the MS and MP courses with the resultant over-burdening of the students. It seemed, though, as if the production teachers had a need to integrate theoretical work into their practice teaching. My analysis is that this was a case of production teachers needing to assert their identities as academics on the one hand, while on the other hand, as in the case of Photojournalism, it was also about ensuring that congruent theory was taught. Henry had stated in one of the working group meetings that the theory taught by MS lecturers contradicted the theory developed by photojournalists or photographers on their practice. He had the experience, for example, where his students had asked MS lecturers to give feedback on their production project proposals and “when they’ve taken [their proposals] to the MS people, they’ve normally come away from them with ideas diametrically opposed to what I’m trying to teach them” (171106: 262). There were indications that some MS lecturers found some of the production work done by students “inappropriate” in terms of their (MS) theoretical concerns. Roger said that he was alarmed when, in a CF meeting one of the MS lecturers responded in the following way when it was suggested that students work exclusively with MP staff for the first term of the year before working in a more integrated way with both production and MS staff, “Well, that doesn’t help because they do a lot of stuff in the wrong way” (171106).

There therefore seemed to be divergent views, based on divergent theoretical approaches, of what constituted appropriate practice. Some production lecturers felt that it was problematic that students were exposed to opposing views on practice. For example, Ingrid and Roger disagreed about the need to have a totally integrated theoretical stance as a department. She thought it was imperative that the theoretical work done in MS and MP was congruent. Roger, on the other hand, argued that the theoretical contradictions between MS and MP theory were just a mirror of what students would confront within the media industries. They would be asked to do assignments that they did not find congruent with the ethical frameworks that they had learned in JMS. Ingrid argued that if contradictions were inevitable, then it was important that the teaching scaffolded that process of negotiating conflicting frameworks and that staff needed to help students find ways to deal with those moments of contradiction (171106). Roger argued that MS set itself up as oppositional to production work and that was its role; he further stated that the critical stance enabled students to develop a critical gaze towards their own and others’ media productions and representations (171106).

This section illustrated some of the tensions that emerged during curriculum discussions in relation to the nature and roles of theory in relation to practice. The divergent approaches to these issues played themselves out in the struggle to find appropriate curriculum structures.

## **8.9 Towards a workable curriculum structure**

### **8.9.1 Factors that impact on the finding of a workable structure**

The working group struggled over a number of meetings to reach a curriculum structure that accomplished a measure of integration of MS and Critical Media Production (production theory and practice). It seemed a very difficult task to accomplish with multiple possibilities being rejected by those involved; sometimes the plans were unacceptable to production staff and at other times MS staff found the proposals unworkable. In all the cases it was felt that the integrity of the field was threatened or that the proposed structure would compromise good pedagogy or that MP lecturers would not be able to teach specialisation-specific theories. The following issues impacted on finding an appropriate structure that made pedagogical sense:

- Some specialisations required blocks of time for coherent acquisition and practise of production skills.
- Theoretical coherence was important. Students needed to be busy with production work to find the theoretical reflection on the work sensible and worthwhile. Jason argued that reflection could not be done after the fact, since students would not have the requisite investment in the process. Ideally they needed to use the reflection to shape their productions.
- A structure that required production courses and MS reflective courses to run concurrently (alongside each other) fractured students' attention according to Ingrid. If they did CMP then they did one thing at a time and this made more pedagogical sense to her.
- Keeping the integrity of MS theory courses was an important curriculum principle. Katherine argued that students required dedicated time to focus on theoretical concepts otherwise they only learned them superficially and denuded them of their deeper meanings.

In addition to the above pedagogical concerns for a workable curriculum structure, there were also a number of structural constraints that worked against the development of viable curriculum structures since the JMS 4 course had to dovetail in several respects with both the BA Honours (JMS) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism courses. Furthermore, the curriculum also had to be structured to fit in with other departmental projects that involved students at specific times during the year such as Cue and the bi-weekly independent, commercial newspaper, the *Grocott's Mail*, which is owned and published by the School of JMS.

Another structural constraint constituted lecturers who were unwilling to restructure entire courses in accordance with new curriculum requirements. When one of the lecturers stated that he would not be willing to design an entirely new course for the next year for the new curriculum, Ingrid argued that: "I think the kind of knock-on effect of what we're doing here in terms of curriculum design is that it does mean that we have to, in some cases, build up from scratch. I don't think that should stop us from making curriculum decisions that work" (050906).

An integrated curriculum required a great deal of curriculum development, course design and teaching time. Within the context of a very busy department, lecturers were reluctant to agree to plans that would increase their already high workload. One of the aims of the working group was to find a curriculum structure that would enable each specialisation teacher to have a block of time during the year (or at least once every two years) to do their own creative and research work. Production staff had excessive teaching loads which left some of them with very little time to do work that would give them credit towards promotion. The kind of research that emerges out of production work is not currently recognised by the institution as counting towards promotion.

Other institutional structural constraints that influenced curriculum development processes included: lecture venues needed to be allocated by a certain time of the year for the following year. Lecturers went on sabbatical leave, course structures had to be published in the university calendar by a particular time and students had to be apprised to course structures so that they could decide if they want to do JMS 4 or BA Honours (JMS) by a particular time.

## 8.9.2 Re-negotiating a structure

During the final working group meeting for the year, held on 17 November 2006 Ingrid reported on a meeting she had had with Katherine (a senior MS lecturer) to discuss the implications of the curriculum plans developed by the working group. Together they developed a new proposal for a curriculum structure. According to the new proposal, all staff would work with students during the first week of term, followed by a short course on Representation, Identity and Ethics (RIE) presented by MS staff; students would then work for a week and a half with production staff while they developed some specialisation skills and developed proposals for a production project to be done later during the term. This would be followed by a period of critique by MS staff of those proposals in relation to RIE theory taught earlier. Students would then spend three weeks doing more production work, followed by a final two day period at the end of the term where students and staff would reflect on the work done during the term. This pattern would be repeated during term two. Term three would be taken up by production work and the final term by a specialisation elective.

Katherine expressed the view that it was important for MS theory to be applied to the production work, but that it was also an independent field and that students needed to spend time with the theoretical concepts of MS theory and study them in their own right. Also, what needed to be avoided was students integrating MS concepts into their vocabularies in a simplistic manner without fully understanding the theoretical depth of the concepts. This simplistic understanding would then be applied to their production work:

So, an example here might be, the way in which the work that Jason has been doing with students around *whiteness* gets incorporated into students' lexicons, but at such a simplistic level that is very often contrary to the original intent of the theory. And that has to do with the extent to which they have actually grounded themselves in the roots from which that theory comes rather than just skimming off the top and then in a fairly narrow way applying it to practice. And that implies spending time on getting to grips with the concepts in an intensive way (Ingrid, 171106).

Katherine also expressed the view that students were being prepared as both producers and as MS scholars:

And [Kathrine's] sense – and I don't know if I completely agree with her about this – is to some extent we are ... producing people who can operate as specialists in things like semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, as much as in production. And I think that's probably something that to some extent we need to have different positions on within the course and that we won't resolve that (Ingrid, 171106).

Katherine's viewpoint was perhaps a stronger version of Ingrid's "two hats" argument (see 8.8.1 above). According to this view, there would be moments in the course where students would be engaged purely with theoretical principles and other moments where the theory would be applied to production work (171106). This was congruent with a stance articulated in the document, *Theory-practice convergence*, in which it was stated that "integration or collaboration does not mean that there should not be purely technical and purely theoretical courses. Some theory does not have a direct link with vocational training and should remain so" (Rhodes University n.d: 3).

Henry objected to the proposal developed by Katherine and Ingrid on the grounds that it moved away dramatically from the earlier working group proposal where students would learn predominantly specialisation-specific theory. He also had problems with the MS staff critiquing production proposals with students. His understanding was that the proposal critique process would exclude the production staff who had the expertise and the responsibility to work with students in the execution of the proposed productions. His past experience was that MS staff had presented students with ideas on their proposals which were "diametrically opposed to what I'm trying to teach them" (171106). The pedagogic processes suggested by Katherine and Ingrid threatened Henry's conception of his identity as a photojournalism teacher. It is also likely that Henry responded to the proposal in this way since it also related to the power dynamics in the department and it would have meant ceding power to the MS lecturer in an area within which he had the expert knowledge. Henry also had a vested interest in advocating ways of "seeing" that were likely to be incongruent with MS theoretical orientations.

Ingrid argued that the plan was not to "empty" the production work of production theory; the production work would still be Critical Media Production. Also, where MS staff engaged in theoretical work with students, there would have to be consultation between MS and MP staff about readings that were specific to the various specialisations that would complement the

generic MS readings. She also proposed that MP staff would work with the MS staff on the critique of the production proposals. Ingrid thought that it would be very useful for the MP staff to be there during the time that MS staff presented the RIE course. She indicated, however, that she had been trying also to find some “free” time when MP staff could do research or their own production work if they so wished. But they would also be free to attend and participate in the MS course if they so chose (171106).

An alternative suggestion made by Adam would enable MP and MS to present separate courses in the first term, each on its own terms. In the second term they could do an integrated course as suggested by Ingrid and Katherine. The third term would be dedicated to production work, while term four would be set aside for the elective Specialisation Intensives (171106).

Ingrid emphasised the relationship she thought MS needed to have to MP by stating that the MS contribution to JMS 4 needed to be called a course in social identity rather than a *theory* course per se. For her this signalled that the specialisation courses were informed by theory and that MS did not indicate theory as opposed to the “practical” specialisations. Thus the specialisation courses focused on both industry preparation and a critical, theoretical orientation to practice. She said:

I don't think it should be theory vs. specialisations. I think it should be a course on social identity vs. the specialisation and that theory is understood to operate throughout ...I don't think that we would necessarily end up with having to get rid of this (MS component) when all of us know enough theory; it's to do with the content of the courses rather than the theoretical aspect of it (171106).

Henry (171106) formulated his stance towards integrating theory and practice in the following way:

I'm keen on integration, but I'm keen also on basically a development of what we actually teach as theory; so that I don't want to limit what we teach. I don't want that to be seen as an integration of the current type of media theory that we teach with the current specialisation stuff that we teach. Both of them are going to have to give a bit in order to make it work, and that's where part of the discussion has to take place.

From the above it was clear that for Henry there still was a contradiction in the idea of integration in the way it was understood by a number of lecturers in the department. His aim was for a syncretic move (see 2.4.1) that required lecturers on both ends of the theory-practice divide to make allowances in order to make the integration process work ( $A \leftarrow \rightarrow B$ ). The process of finding a workable structure on which most could agree proved so difficult that the working group could not conclude its work within the 2006 academic year. They agreed, in principle, to a process of integration, but thought that they needed the next year to work out how the process was to work logistically. Priestly and Sime (2005) argue that for change to occur successfully plans have to be *congruent* with “teachers’ prior practice, skills and values” and the new structures have to be workable (they call this *instrumentality*) and finally consideration needs to be given to the *cost or benefits* of the new plans. Should the new plans result in an increased workload for example, plans will not be easily accepted. The structure proposed by Katherine and Ingrid seemed to members of the working group to be incongruent with their view of integration, it was going to be difficult to work structurally and it seemed as if it might lead to an increase in workload.

Muller (2008: 12) claims that academics from “soft” disciplines spend considerably more time on the preparation of lectures and on teaching, particularly undergraduate teaching. My analysis of the data indicates that those involved in soft applied fields seem to require even more time than those in the soft pure fields. As a result of production teachers’ high teaching loads there was little time to do research or creative work (Muller 2008). Integrated curricula are complex and require time-consuming planning and teaching and learning processes. This was the case within the JMS context as well as was evident from the following statement by Henry:

I have twenty hours of contact time with my fourth years a week and that doesn’t include preparation time, marking time, or anything. 20 hours a week. They [MS lecturers] complain because they have to teach for more than three hours a week on a course. That to me is a problem (150906).

While Frank described his workload thus:

It is really a lot of work. I work harder, not harder, let me say, I work longer than anybody else in this department. You know why? Because I go to

*Grocott's Mail* at 8:30 in the morning and I knock off when the last student leaves the newsroom sometimes at 9:00 pm. Now there is no other academic here who does that – not one (interview, Frank).

Developing an integrated curriculum was a very complex process that required the curriculum developers to consider a range of important issues, including, learning outcomes, the relationship between theory and practice, what specific theory needed to be included; the relationship between media theory and journalism theory; who would teach the theory and how the course could be structured to enable students to meet the outcomes of the course. Difficulties with reaching conclusions on these issues resulted in a directive from the CF for everyone involved in the fourth year curriculum to spend time thinking about how the various problematic issues could be resolved. Ingrid explained her understanding of the directive given to the working group by the CF.

My understanding of what we did at the last CF was that we said that given the complexity of pulling this course together and I understand that complexity as exactly what you said just now - that people actually have to go to their home bases and do a fair amount of reading on how they can transform what they do in order to come together in some way. That's a difficult thing. What we decided strategically there is that we need to separate out the process of making a few decisions in principle and then working towards that (171106).

Generally most lecturers found that they did not have enough curriculum time to fit in everything they considered important. This was true in integrated courses such as the third year JDD/CMP course and the fourth year course they were trying to construct. Ingrid said that she had been cutting back constantly on what was possible in the third year because of the increased complexity of the JDD/CMP course. She thought that the gaps needed to be filled by MS (220806). The production courses were taught in a critically reflective way, they needed to be supported by MS so that students were not constantly over-extended. Referring to a letter of complaint sent to the HoD of JMS by the HoD of English regarding the amount of time students seemed to have to spend on their JMS work, she said, “[MS] has to bolster what we (production specialisations) do in a way that we don't push the students all the time into different directions” (220806). The issue of the role of MS theory in relation to MP had been a constant source of tension in the department with MS staff feeling that their field was considered to be a “handmaiden” to media production instead of being a field in its own right.

At several points Ingrid said that this process of curriculum development required courageous thinking: “you have this buffer of a year [in 2007] in which to figure out how you do it, that allows you to think in an ambitious and courageous way about what you want to set out to do” (Ingrid, 171106).

In the third term CF meeting when one of the lecturers indicated that the new curriculum plans “could profoundly change courses that are taught in fourth year” (Peter, CF 3), Ingrid responded in the following way:

I think that all along the way we are talking about what I’m starting to think of as a notion of courageous planning. We do actually need to make decisions that mean quite dramatic changes to how we teach our courses. And that’s what we’re signalling here (Ingrid, CF 3).

The process of finding a workable curriculum structure was indicative of the ideational tensions in the department. These tensions resulted in structural difficulties such as the struggle to come to an agreement on a curriculum structure that was congruent with most lecturers’ stance on curriculum priorities.

Another issue on which there were divergent viewpoints was that of the nature of professionalism and what that meant for the curriculum and pedagogy in the fourth year.

### **8.10 Professionalism**

There were ideational differences amongst members of the working group about the idea of professionalism and how it needed to be approached in the JMS 4 curriculum. For Ingrid it was important to establish the criteria for professional standards (or realization rules, see 3.2.1.1) for productions so that students would constantly aspire to improve the standard of their productions and be able to look at their own work critically (Ingrid, 130806). Members of the working group differed about what they regarded as constituting professional standards, thus there was contestation around what evaluative rules to apply in relation to the notion of professionalism. Some JMS lecturers did not regard the work produced by the industry as of professional standard. Much of the media was regarded as not good enough to aspire to and a much higher standard than what was acceptable in the local media was

expected by the specialisation lecturers. Henry was therefore averse to using the terms *professional* and *professional standard* to describe the quality of the work that he did or that he expected of his students. This constituted another constraining contradiction in terms of the boundary between the department and the industry.

In contrast to Henry's viewpoint, Adam argued that he used the term as a descriptor for pedagogic and strategic reasons, rather than for what he called "definitive evaluative reasons" (080806). Through his course processes Adam believed that he built a shared understanding with his students about what was meant by "professional" and he could then use the notion of something *not being of professional standard* to indicate to students that their work needed improvement. Adam claimed that there existed a shared understanding about what was meant by "professional" between himself and his students, his examiners, and when he related to his ex-students who were working in the industry. He did not want "to forfeit that [shared understanding] for the purposes of standardisation" across the specialisations (080806).

Because of these divergent ideas, Ingrid suggested that the outcomes that they had set in terms of competences, skills, values and attitudes (see Appendix 4; see also Appendix 5 for the final curriculum outcomes) would give the members of the working group a good idea as to what they understood as a group to be their remit in terms of preparing people for a profession in the field of journalism or other media. The point of departure for the group was the vision statement that bound the department to "produc[ing] self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken. Such graduates are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions" (Appendix 1). This is in keeping with, for example, Muller (2008) who suggests as a starting point for the development of a professional curriculum, the establishment of criteria for the kind of professional to be produced through the curriculum.

The working group was mindful of the changing nature of their field(s) and Henry and Adam argued strongly that the skills they taught students were transferable to other contexts. They observed that students needed to be adaptable to new technologies, and to move between specialisations (TV and Photojournalism/photography) that had some skills in common.

We know that media are not going to be the same as it is now in twenty years' time. But if we're producing students who have transferable skills, skills which allow you to build into something else, then we produce people who are employable in the long term, not simply in the short term (Henry, 300506).

Research into learning has shown that transferability of knowledge, particularly conceptual knowledge is not straightforward. In fact, Muller (2008: 32) states that "the more specialised a discipline becomes, generally speaking the less transferable it becomes. This is because it now pertains to a very specialised niche in the division of labour". It seems possible, though, that there are several skills that can be transferred from cognate media specialisations and particularly because of the convergence of media fields that I referred to earlier in the chapter.

In some specialisations students were required to experiment in the fourth year. The results of their experimentation would, arguably, in some cases not be regarded as of professional standard, but it would be good work nevertheless. The purpose of experimentation was about setting new standards for the various specialisation fields. Adam thought that it was easy to evaluate experimental work in television against the norms of technical quality and therefore there would be no danger that his students would work outside of acceptable industry standards.

The working group attempted to establish how "professional" standard was judged. They concluded that it required a level of "connoisseurship" because it was about know-how and "a feel" that developed from being immersed in the field. According to Adam:

I would say to [a student], 'That work is not good enough' because we're talking about a standard and in this way and that way and that way the techniques are not professional; the cutting standards there, or the aesthetics here; the use of that, the pace there; it's not a professional approach; it's not good enough in that kind of way, there are better ways to do it (080806).

Ecclestone (2001) asserts that experienced academics begin to develop a "feel" for what constitutes work of various qualities in their field. This she terms connoisseurship. The working group distinguished the following features as inherent in professional standard: aesthetics, technical ability (e.g. recording quality in radio), ethics and an appropriate attitude

that could be regarded as professional (130806). Adam did not agree that he could reduce professional standards to a few categories such as those established by the rest of the group. Coming to an agreement on how professional standard should be judged is not a simple matter. Shay (2005) argues, for example, that assessment is an interpretive act that is influenced by both objective and subjective factors. She calls the act of assessment “a ‘double reading’ – an iterative movement between different modes of knowledge which comprise both the objective and the subjective”. Because the group could not agree that the term “professional” was appropriate to denote the standard of work they required of their students, Kevin suggested that a way out of the dilemma would be to use “postgraduate” as the defining standard of quality for production work. This made sense to Roger who noted:

Well, I think the combination of a postgraduate and professional environment. If you take postgrad standards and apply them to the notion of professionalism then I think the combination of the two – you can't have postgraduate requirement rigorousness and *Blush* professionalism happening at the same time, I don't think (080806).

Ingrid suggested, though, that it was important to give the space to specialisation teachers to articulate to their students what they [lecturers] regarded as professional within their specialisation field as each was different (130806: 119). She stated that one of the criteria for professional standard in this department had to be the extent to which the RD of social change was exemplified by the production.

The discussion on professional standards demonstrated that there were contradictory views amongst lecturers about how they would classify the standards that they wanted their students to aspire to and that they would apply in their assessment of students' work. Some lecturers felt that their standards were not congruent with the standards achieved within the various South African journalistic and media industries. It seemed possible to reach a compromise on the matter. The discussion also pointed to the complex nature of assessment in complex contexts.

### 8.10.1 University and industry – two different worlds

Berger (2006) asserts that there is a big gap between what students learn about journalism and media in higher education institutions and what occurs in industry. He argues that the conditions within the industry are such that many graduates would not be able to implement what they learn at university. Berger (2006: 38) suggests that it is imperative that journalism teaching should “involve critique, rather than narrow service, of the industry”. He quotes Lee Bollinger (2002), Dean of Columbia University who argues that journalism education’s intellectual standards needed to be raised. Bollinger said, “A great journalism school within a great university should always stand at a certain distance from the profession itself” (quoted in Berger 2006: 41). This is because those in industry do not necessarily spend time thinking about the greater purpose of journalism and media while university educators have the space “to think about the role of media teaching in regard to the changing world in ways that individual media houses are not always in a position to do” (*ibid*). Berger (*ibid*) says that,

People with their noses to the grindstone need to be doing the kind of innovation and creative work with media personnel that will look at the shape of media tomorrow, not only today. Training institutions which are too closely tied to serving industry’s needs cannot do this.

In working group meetings it was noted that graduates of the department sometimes struggled to act professionally within media environments because they found the latter incongruent with the critical orientations they learned in their journalism courses, particularly in MS. Henry (080806) pointed out that the department’s pedagogical strategies were in part to blame for graduates’ unprofessional behaviour. He argued that students were taught to be critical about the media, but they were not allowed to voice the same level of critique in the real world of the media. For Ingrid a solution to this dilemma lay in students also learning about:

Negotiating those kinds of environments in which there is a disjunction between your own understanding of the professional thing and that of the people who are in charge. Because we’ve seen that happen repeatedly with our students now. They become quite arrogant and then they don’t know how to deal with that (Ingrid, 080806).

Henry spoke about the disjuncture between the department's view of professionalism and what students see every day in the media:

What brought this home to me more than anything else was during a class with students who were looking at photographs and looking at what was being put into newspapers around the country and saying, 'If we produced photos of that quality you would fail us. And these are people who are working as photographers for newspapers on a daily basis, but you would fail us for that work'. And students also looking at work where basically every ethical boundary that we set in terms of editing pictures is being broken on a daily basis and being put into publications (080806).

A JMS student who had been doing an internship at a local newspaper wrote the following in a regular blog on the internet:

It is now a generally agreed fact (well, between [name of fellow student] and I that is, which makes it general fact) that the [name of newspaper] experience is in fact entirely farcical and perhaps an elaborate joke, albeit in very bad taste. Everything that has been taught to us in the past three years of media studies is audaciously ignored by these media whores. We're pretty much suffering from "ideological heartburn" now, that entirely apt term as coined by the inimitable Person's Name (journalism lecturer).

There have been a myriad of so-called golden rules that have been traversed during our time here (<http://verashni.supersized.org/archives/P11.html>, accessed 19 January 2009).

In Chapter 6 I showed that it was not uncommon for journalism educators, including Garman (2005) from the School of JMS at Rhodes University, to consider ways in which journalists could be educated to understand the professional nature of their role. Garman (2005) argues that aspirant journalists need to be made aware of how the profession operated as a community of practice with common principles and standards. She suggests that it is not a matter of teaching skills, but of teaching journalists about the power they wield in helping to shape public knowledge and opinion.

Given the disjuncture between professional standards and those required by the department it was crucial that students understood that the industry required development and that they could potentially play a role in advancing the standards within the industry. In developing

outcomes for the JMS 4 course the working group was cognizant that students needed to develop a critical response to industry and that they were prepared to challenge and develop those aspects of industry that were incongruent with what they believed to be appropriate journalistic or media standards.

In the next section the process of developing outcomes is examined.

### **8.11 Developing learning outcomes**

The working group developed categories of competences around which the curriculum outcomes needed to be formulated. These categories included: communication through media, communication about media, research, management, critical engagement and technical proficiency. Each permanent member of the working group was required to develop some preliminary outcomes under each category and where possible, to suggest the standard to which the outcome needed to be met at the JMS 4 level. Through negotiation the outcomes categories were reduced to the following four: communication through media, critical engagement with and communication about media, research skills and knowledge, and management skills and knowledge. The expectation was that each lecturer would use curriculum outcomes as a framework from which to develop their fourth year courses. It was envisaged that not all of the outcomes would be met in all of the JMS courses, but all of those outcomes would be met at some point during the course of the JMS programme across the four years of the degree.

These broad outcomes constituted the over-arching realization rules for the fourth year and thus the broad knowledge and skills that JMS 4 students should achieve. The working group decided that the outcomes needed to be linked to the over-arching regulative idea of *media for social change*. The nature of the relationship of the outcomes to MP and MS respectively needed to be clarified in the working group meetings. For Ingrid it was important that the working group considered whether or not MS and MP were separate entities at the fourth year.

Throughout the outcomes discussion there was a concern with curriculum coherence; the first three years' work had to make it possible to achieve the outcomes set at fourth year and

where similar outcomes were formulated to the ones at the third year, the group needed to articulate how their realization would be distinctive in the fourth year. This was especially a concern of Kevin's (080806) who argued that developing outcomes was about setting the criteria for evaluation at this level:

We need to be able to define what we mean by that – something like professional standard or whatever the case may be. But we need to have something in there, we need to be able to define that and you define it through the assessment criteria. You would have criteria there to measure whether it is acceptable according to that standard.

In her revision of outcomes Ingrid took account of the differentiation between JMS 3 and JMS 4. At third year the development of technical proficiency was an important outcome while at fourth year students would be required to push the boundaries of the technology and the aesthetics of the medium, for example. They were also required to be more autonomous in terms of learning about the technologies. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on the dual role that students occupied at this level: they were aspirant producers, but they were still students within an academic setting. Thus they needed to be able to apply their knowledge and skills of media “to the critical discussion of media in academic settings” (150806). Students were expected to assume more autonomy and to articulate their individual approach to production work. They were also expected to be able to assume editorial responsibility and move between various roles within a production team (150806). It was clear that even though the over-arching outcomes were about journalism or other media; they had to be much more specific in the specialisation outcomes developed by each specialisation teacher. It seemed difficult to separate the creative use of skills and techniques in the formulation of outcomes. Media production descriptors like “creative” seemed not to denote characteristics of people; they described the way knowledge was used and an attitude to the object of knowledge or production as a way of using or applying technical skills. For Henry:

Technical and creative are mixed up ... which is an issue, because the technical informs the creative and often the creative informs the technical method anyway. If I ... take a photograph and make use of the way the light falls, it is a creative thing. But it also becomes a technical thing in that you must then technically make effective use of the light... The same would apply in radio or in design or whatever. So I'm not sure how to separate those two in those ways (080806).

The discussion about research outcomes brought to light issues of personal emergent properties and powers (PEPs – see 2.3 and 2.3.2) in terms of the ability to teach research. Adam, who was busy with his masters in MS at the time of the curriculum development process, felt that he was still developing research skills himself and he did not feel equipped to teach research yet (080806).

Adam was concerned with how outcomes were to be assessed (080806) and he wanted to guard against the development of too many outcomes that might turn out to be too difficult to assess. His understanding of outcomes was thus quite narrow and did not take account of those outcomes that were desirable to strive towards but that would not necessarily be formally assessed. One of the critiques of outcomes (see 4.13) is that in a bid to capture the complexity of learning envisaged, they tend to “grow like mould and become unwieldy” (Knight 2001: 373).

The working group recognised that the meanings of the general, over-arching outcomes had to be negotiated between the parties and each specialisation had to interpret the outcomes which were specific to it. It was expected that each specialisation teacher would develop specific outcomes in line with the broad J4 outcomes. Hussey and Smith (2008: 111) recognise that there are different categories of outcomes and that over-arching outcomes such as the ones devised by the working group “will be fairly broad, they will specify much larger areas of knowledge or assemblages of skills than those for a teaching event” or specific courses as was the case with the JMS curriculum outcomes.

The outcomes devised by the working group were complex and there seemed to be a concern among members of the working group that they needed to be simplified. Knight (2001) in his critique of outcomes avers that higher education is about complex learning and that it is nigh on impossible to reduce the kind of learning required to statements of outcomes. Given that the working group was developing a curriculum for the first postgraduate year, it made sense that the learning they were aiming for would be complex.

It was also important for the working group to separate outcomes from the standards to which they needed to be achieved. There were outcomes to do with knowledge and skills and those

to do with attitudes and values and sometimes these overlapped. This was an indication that higher learning was not merely about the acquisition of knowledge, but that it was about identity formation. As one's knowledge shifts, so too does one's identity (Boughey 2003, 2006, 2008; Northedge 2002, 2003).

When students' identities shift they develop particular ways of looking at the world.

### **8.11.1 What kind of gaze?**

The aim of the JMS curriculum was to develop students with a particular gaze – trained, *and* socially critical. The socially critical aspect of the gaze would be developed through engagement with media studies theory and journalism theory, while the trained gaze would be generated through engagement with production work. It was around the consideration of the most appropriate theory to develop the requisite socially critical gaze that the differences between the MS and MP lecturers became most acute. The contestation amongst them sometimes emerged as arguments about the most appropriate theory to teach in JMS. The one type of theory was more context dependent, while the other to a larger degree was able to transcend context; both seemed to be necessary - so it was about how the different theories could coalesce within the same curriculum. It was an issue of selection of content.

Ingrid said that one of the aims of the curriculum was to develop professionals who were more than adept media producers: "I think we should, in fact, be probing and confronting those distinctions between producers on the one hand and commentators on the other. And I think that should be built into this [the curriculum planning]" (130606).

Although the outcomes discussions centred predominantly on issues of learning and pedagogy, lecturers sometimes found themselves hampered by the bureaucratic requirement of producing outcomes.

### **8.11.2 Technical and bureaucratic requirement of outcomes**

National curriculum policy requirements (4.5 and 4.6) had only a tangential influence on the curriculum development processes in the department. So, for example, the working group acknowledged the existence of certain National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and South

African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) regulations in terms of level descriptors for various levels of qualifications. But, these were regarded as guidelines and did not constrain the plans made by the working group. Ingrid noted that the matching up of the JMS 4 curriculum document with the NQF/SAQA level descriptors needed to be “impressionistic” “because it’s really just a way of generally testing whether we’re working at the right kind of levels. I don’t think it has to be as precise as all that because you are matching different worlds with each other to an extent” (310806). This was congruent with Knight’s (2001) assertion that teachers use learning outcomes to justify curriculum choices, rather than using outcomes as the starting point for curriculum planning.

There were a number of instances when challenges in relation to working with outcomes became apparent. For example, the language of outcomes was counter-intuitive to the way many academics thought about teaching and learning in their disciplines. Ingrid said, for example, “My sense is that we do need to engage with ... that kind of language even though it is so difficult” (Ingrid, CF 3). Katherine expressed her difficulties with working with outcomes when she noted how the language of outcomes could lead to quite limiting interpretations of what particular outcomes might mean. An example was the use of a descriptor such as “appropriate use of technology”. At least two lecturers in the CF wondered what the term “appropriate” meant exactly. The working group’s idea was that each specialisation lecturer had to define the meaning of descriptors as they pertained to the specialisation. Hussey and Smith (2008: 111) state that only the teacher of the discipline would be able to recognise what particular descriptors mean within a particular teaching and learning context:

[Learning outcomes] do not lend themselves to precise definition. The level ... and the depth of knowledge or understanding, is implicit. That is to say, the written learning outcomes may specify things such as ‘first year level’ and use terms as ‘precisely’, ‘thorough understanding’ or ‘describe accurately’, but this is only pseudo exactness. It is a vain attempt to describe in words what can be recognised by an experienced teacher – someone who knows how to how to judge material at the required level.

So, for example, one of the outcomes was formulated in a way that could lead to a technicist interpretation of the pedagogic aim when the intention was to separate out technical and

creative and cognitive aspects of the outcome for analytical purposes. Katherine stated her discomfort about this in the following way:

I think it's the problem of a bureaucratic document coming from a national foundation, you know. And it's for bureaucratic purposes and we're being squashed and squeezed into other people's frameworks. And actually their thinking is not that great all the time. So part of our critiques are actually critiques of what we're being landed with. And maybe the University ought to engage with the problems of this kind of formulation. It is a problem, and I think it's being manifested in this way, but it needs to be taken up at a higher level (Katherine, CF 3).

In this regard Young (2008: 124) argues that the *intrinsic logic* of reforms, that is, the political arguments used to justify reforms, do not necessarily take account of *institutional logics* which refer to the “social political, and institutional contexts, the divisions, power relations and interests that constitute them and the role that contexts play in how (and whether) any reform is implemented”. Similarly, Knight and Trowler (2001) have argued that policy provides the roadmaps for reforms, but does not take account of the road conditions on the ground.

In working group discussions on the development of learning outcomes it was evident that it was not an easy task to devise outcomes that captured the complexity of learning required. Outcomes created some clarity with regards to the discursive relation that students needed to develop in relation to curriculum content and production processes. Lecturers found the language of outcomes foreign and their responses demonstrated that outcomes could not function as autonomous statements, but they require disciplinary experts to imbue them with meaning in the context of teaching.

## **8.12 Pedagogy**

The working group considered the kinds of teaching strategies that would be appropriate to achieve the outcomes. The following strategies were suggested by members of the group (150906): internships, cross-pollination (letting students learn skills relevant to one specialisation from another), fieldwork (getting students out of Grahamstown), mentoring and coaching, specialist visiting lecturers, students in staff spaces – seminars, for example,

*Grocott's Mail* experience, public service work (hospice public awareness campaigns, for example), freelancing, exhibitions and Cue. The following assessment strategies were suggested: projects, formal academic written work (including essays), shorter oral presentations, project proposals for planning production work, self-reflective essays, and internship proposals and reports on internships.

At least three members of the working group believed that it was necessary for their students to be able to share their specialisation knowledge and skills with others through processes such as tutoring and mentoring. Tutoring had become a formal pedagogical strategy in Radio and all third and fourth year radio students are expected to tutor second year radio students. For Adam and Frank tutoring and mentoring skills were particularly important within the context of South Africa where significant skills shortages existed and where it was imperative to increase the pool of skilled media workers. They did not, however, employ these strategies formally within their teaching, but expected students to share their knowledge with their peers. Henry thought that the development of “teaching” skills was not that relevant to photography as it was an individualist enterprise.

### **8.13 Conclusion**

The idea of integration had been part of the cultural conspectus for a number of years prior to the 2006 curriculum development process. However, some members of the department felt that the integration wasn't working well structurally because “we're two separate streams” (Kevin, 171106). As I have shown, it was not only a question of the department consisting of two distinct fields of study, but that these two “streams” constituted two different kinds of knowledge requiring different approaches to teaching and learning and so difficult decisions had to be made about what to teach, when, how and by whom (171106). It may be necessary for the department to reconsider its integration plans and come to terms with the fact that some theory can be integrated, while other theory needs to be studied purely on its own terms, without the need to link it to practice in any way.

Having an appropriate theoretical base is important for professional disciplines, particularly those that constitute “newer regions” as opposed to “the traditional professions (that) have evolved a robust *professional habitus* and *identity* in their practitioners, deep induction into

the ‘values of the profession, its standards of professional integrity, judgement and loyalty’ (Muller 2008: 16, following Beck & Young 2005: 188 ). In keeping with the findings of others such as Young (2008) and Wheelahan (2007), Muller underscores the importance of strong disciplinary foundations for the development of a professional identity steeped in the values of the profession. It is worth quoting Muller (2008: 17) at length about the value of a strong disciplinary foundation:

...newer regions without disciplinary foundations might be weak, and might inculcate weak academic identities. Such a region may even be strong on practice-oriented ‘know-how’ necessary for professional tasks, but without a disciplinary core, the knowledge base will be weak on ‘know-why’, the knowledge condition for exploring alternatives systematically and for generating innovation (Becher & Parry, 2005). This explains why regions with strong disciplinary foundations – like engineering and medicine – are also research-rich regions; they produce people with strong academic identities able and inclined towards producing novelty through research, while regions with weak or non-existent disciplinary foundations, like tourism, don’t. The curriculum planning message here is that disciplinary foundations are one key to strengthening both the identities of adepts and the research activity in the region.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

#### 9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I consider the extent to which the research question introduced in Chapter 1 of this dissertation has been answered by this investigation. I examine the extent to which my strategic, intellectual and practical aims outlined in Chapter 1 have been achieved. Finally I outline the contribution of this thesis to knowledge of departmental collaborative curriculum development practices within the context of a journalism and media studies department at a South African university.

As an academic staff developer my strategic goal was to develop an understanding of how academics pursue collaborative curriculum development. This goal emerged because it was clear that curriculum development in the context of, for example, new interdisciplinary programme development, could not be undertaken by individual academics. Since collaborative curriculum development runs contrary to common academic practice I considered it imperative to begin to build knowledge about how these practices might be experienced and managed by groups of academics with divergent epistemic and pedagogic backgrounds and aims. It is important for academic development practitioners to understand what the enablements and constraints are when a group of academics come together to deliberate about a curriculum. In a traditional institution such as Rhodes University collaborative curriculum development is not common. However, since 2001 there have been two (relatively) large departments at Rhodes University that embarked on collaborative curriculum development, one of which was the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. There have also been some smaller-scale inter-disciplinary curriculum development projects. I am aware of an undergraduate course on fresh water ecology developed and taught by geography, environmental science lecturers and researchers from the Institute for Water Research. At present there are plans underway to develop a masters course in integrated development involving fifteen lecturers from a range of disciplines in the faculty of humanities.

Activities at the level of the academic department are relatively under-researched (Trowler 2005; Clegg 2003). This is so because it is not easy to gain access to academic departments. The curriculum development process in the JMS Department had been underway for three years before I was able to gain access. Part of the reason was that the department had a history of fractured relationships and it was therefore imperative that lecturers felt 'safe' about their processes before they allowed an outsider to study their work practices. As discussed in Chapter 5, I studied the curriculum deliberations of the JMS 4 working group and I gained insights into the views of others in the department through sitting in on the meetings of the CF. This involvement enabled me to respond to the research question that guided this research, *viz, What are the cultural, structural and agential enablements and constraints for collaborative curriculum development processes within a department that offers professional training within an élite academic institution, characterised by strong traditional identities?* I summarise what these constraints and enablements are in sections 9.2 – 9.6 below).

My intellectual goal was to 'test' theoretical frameworks and a methodological approach that would enable the study of processes at the departmental level. I chose Margaret Archer's social realist approach (1995a, 1996, 2000, 2003) and Bernstein's (1975, 1996, 2000, 2001) and Maton's (2000, 2004) theories of curriculum and knowledge. Archer's explanatory methodology enables the researcher to focus on multiple levels: the empirical, the actual and the real as well as on the interplay between culture, structure and agency (see Chapter 2). Thus the approach potentially allows the researcher to identify the mechanisms that enable or constrain growth or stasis within a particular context. Through investigating the ideational, material and agential contexts, I believe that I was able to develop valuable insights into the processes and mechanisms operating on curriculum deliberations in the Department of JMS at Rhodes University at a particularly interesting juncture. Bernstein's theory and Maton's elaboration of it enabled the examination of the struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device in curriculum deliberations (see Chapters 7 and 8).

My practical goals have been reached in the following ways: I now have a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms that underpin curriculum development processes in an academic department. Even though it is not possible to generalise beyond this specific case, I have gained an understanding of influences on processes at the meso-level of a department

that may apply to other collaborative curriculum development contexts. I have gained insights into the complexities of professional education and the relationship between theory and practice within the context of professional training where the curriculum content is not regulated by a professional body. How academics negotiate the relationship between professional knowledge and theoretical knowledge is complex and depends, *inter alia*, on the nature of the profession as well as on the identities of academics involved in the curriculum development process and their understandings of the profession, pedagogy and the underpinning theoretical concerns of their field or specialisation.

In the next section I summarise some of the structural, cultural and agential enablements and constraints raised in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

## **9.2 Structural enablements**

Before the curriculum development process got underway in the department in 2003 curriculum decisions took place along specialisation lines and there was limited interaction amongst the various clusters in the department. This contributed to strained relationships between academics in the department (Praeg 2002). The collaborative curriculum process was, in part, a mechanism for improving departmental communication and it was also aimed at creating integration between the theory and practice taught in the department.

The department established several committees for the review and management of curricula of the JMS programme. These include year boards, curriculum development working groups and the CF (see 1.3.1). The role of the chairperson of the CF was an important one. The chairperson had to keep a helicopter view of the process and had to maintain the organisational memory of the processes followed and decisions made to ensure that new decisions did not contradict or undermine earlier decisions taken.

Furthermore, the role of the HoD was crucial in ensuring that the process was taken seriously by the whole department. The support of the HoD ensured that curriculum deliberations maintained a high profile in the department.

The institutional requirement that newly appointed academics complete a course on the assessment of student learning (which was completed by the current HoD of the department and attended by some staff members) and the availability of a voluntary postgraduate diploma course in higher education (which has now been completed by three staff members and is currently being undertaken by two more) contributed to building an understanding of and foregrounded pedagogical issues by a critical mass of lecturers in the department.

### **9.3 Structural constraints**

The department instituted curriculum development structures that enabled curriculum discussions to take place at regular intervals. However, some lecturers thought that there were too many structures and that the same curriculum ideas were sometimes discussed at three different meetings: working group meetings, the CF and the year boards. Within a complex department where the work of the department required frequent meetings this had the potential to lead to fatigue. So, too did the length of the process.

The JMS programme prepares students for careers in journalism or media. As such the programme is both practical and theoretical. I have shown that the context-dependence of MP and the relative context-independence of MS constituted significant structural challenges for developing an integrated curriculum (Chapters 7 and 8). The aim of the department is to teach students to be critically reflexive journalists and media practitioners. As such it is important that the curriculum has a sound theoretical basis. Within a relatively traditional university theoretical knowledge is highly prized. For lecturers of journalism and media studies, the relationship between the more context independent theories of media studies and the context-dependent theoretical approaches to the practical journalistic specialisations constituted points of tension during curriculum deliberations.

MP lecturers argued that it was important to include more journalism theory (which is more context dependent than some MS theory) in the curriculum. However, MS lecturers believed that it was imperative that the MS part of the curriculum not be diminished so as to become insignificant. MP lecturers in JMS 4 working group favoured a curriculum that required a significant degree of integration of theory and practice. The result was that a MS lecturer indicated that the theoretical work the JMS working group was suggesting was no longer a

MS course. Thus, what Gamble (2006) warns against seemed to be happening in this case: the distinctiveness of the theory was being subsumed by the practical nature of the suggested application of theory to practice. Theory was in danger of becoming practice.

The limited curriculum time afforded JMS in the undergraduate curriculum was a major constraint (7.5.3.1). Students therefore had limited time to acquire expertise in the practical aspects of journalism and media during the first three years of a four year BJourn degree. It was only in the fourth year that they were able to spend most of their time on the development of their practical specialisation. There was therefore much contestation over time between MS and MP staff. This was one of the reasons why MP lecturers argued that too little curriculum time was devoted to journalism-specific theory.

The majority of the senior members of staff are MS lecturers. There was therefore an imbalance in the power distribution between MS and MP staff. This was a major constraint since their limited power constrained the bargaining power of MP lecturers. A number of MP lecturers were in the process of studying towards masters and PhD degrees and as such they were enhancing their PEPs in terms of their capacity to engage with theory, whether MS or journalism theory. These MP lecturers expressed a need to teach at more theoretically advanced levels, however, because of the limited curriculum time, they struggled to fit in both practice and theory teaching. Furthermore, since lecturers believed in the relevance of journalism theory for reflexive journalistic or media practice, students had been required to read theory in both MS and MP, and had thus been overloaded.

Since MP teaching was extremely time consuming, MP lecturers had limited time to engage in research. As a result, they had been taking long to complete higher degrees and had limited publication records and therefore struggled to get promoted. It was therefore taking a long time to shift the power balance in the department.

#### **9.4 Cultural enablements**

Tight (2007: 9) suggests that “there are debates that occur and recur within many departments about priorities (particularly in what have been termed ‘low consensus’ disciplines”). These debates have to do with curriculum content and pedagogy as well as the limits of disciplinary

domains. He argues (*ibid*) that the outcomes of these debates can be “division and dissensions” and that these are often difficult to confront because there is such high regard for academic freedom and autonomy.

The account that I have given in this dissertation (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) is illustrative of the debates in one ‘low consensus’ department. This account indicates, however, that a high degree of consensus about the boundaries of the discipline and pedagogical strategies was required if the structure of the curriculum was to be agreed upon. Within the context of the JMS Department there was a high degree of consensus about the nature of the relationship between the department and the media industries. Most members of the department agreed that the boundaries between the academy and the industry needed to be fairly strong within the South African context if graduates of the department were to contribute to the development and improvement of journalistic standards and ethics.

R.S. Moore & Lewis (2004: 45) suggest that it is difficult for academics to reach consensus about curriculum content and pedagogy and that “even in the professional faculties the achievement of such explicit consensus and alignment is relatively rare, with a tolerated dissensus sometimes surfacing in disputes over assessment decisions”. In a context where it was potentially very difficult to reach consensus about curriculum priorities it was found that the regulative discourse of the departmental vision statement formed an important compass for the establishment of the various boundaries. The idea of critically reflexive journalists and media practitioners who worked towards social change and democratic ideals was often the idea that held sway and it was useful in restoring a measure of consensus when curriculum discussions became heated.

## **9.5 Cultural constraints**

There was however, less agreement about the nature of the theoretical enterprise the department was involved in. The department operates within an international journalism teaching context where consensus about appropriate curriculum content for journalism education and training does not exist (see Chapter 6). There is lively debate Journalism and Media Studies journals about what might be an appropriate journalism curriculum to which some members of the department contribute (see Chapter 6). However, there is some measure

of consensus about the idea that teaching journalism and media studies at a university has implications for the relationship between theory and practice.

The aim of the curriculum project was to develop an integrated curriculum. However, some lecturers did not believe in the nature of the integration that was advocated since it limited the breadth and depth of what they could achieve with their students, and they found ways to circumvent the process. As indicated above (9.3) there existed a constraining contradiction concerning whether journalism theory or MS theory was the most appropriate theory to teach. The MP lecturers who were part of the JMS 4 working group thought that it was important to teach journalism theory since there were at times considerable differences in perspectives relating to journalism practice between the journalism theory and MS theory (see 7.4.7, 7.4.7.1, 7.4.8; 8.8, 8.8.1 and 8.8.2).

The struggle for the epistemic-pedagogic device within the context of curriculum deliberations in the Department of JMS were centred, *inter alia*, around disagreements about the boundaries between the department and the industry, the boundaries between media studies theory and journalism practice and those between media studies theory and journalism theory. These struggles also made it difficult for the JMS 4 working group to develop a structure for the JMS 4 curriculum that MS and MP lecturers could agree upon. What everyone could agree on was that the aim of the curriculum was to develop critically reflexive journalists and media practitioners, however, it was difficult to reach consensus about the appropriate means of reaching this pedagogic goal.

These contestations were intimately linked to the identities of the various staff members and thus the degree of their investment in their particular field of academic or practical specialisation.

## **9.6 Agency**

The role of the CF chairperson was one that required sensitive handling. It needed an actor who understood the nature of the discipline as well as the debates about journalism teaching. The role also needed someone who was able to bridge the divides between the various groupings. The first CF chairperson, a MS senior lecturer, was able to embody the role with

characteristics that could unite the department in deliberations about a regulative discourse to which all could agree. She also had a theoretically informed approach to how the integration project would work (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). The next CF chairperson was a MP lecturer who had a great deal of interest in and experience of the curriculum development project. She had a keen interest in debates about journalism and media pedagogy and she had been integrally involved in curriculum deliberations since 2004.

The leadership of the Department of JMS made the decision at the start of the curriculum revision process to appoint practical specialisation lecturers with an academic background and an interest in teaching theoretically informed specialisation courses. If a specialisation lecturer did not have a masters degree upon appointment there was an expectation that s/he would study towards one. Those with masters degrees were encouraged to pursue doctoral studies. Thus, these lecturers are expected to develop strong academic identities alongside their journalistic practitioner identities. One of the outcomes of this identity shift was that specialisation lecturers wanted to engage in high level pedagogical practice. However, the limited curriculum space that the specialisations were afforded (particularly in the first to third years of the BJourn degree) frustrated lecturers' ambitions. (7.5.3.1). Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 8, a number of them wished to engage in more theoretically robust pedagogy and they also wished to be more involved in teaching theory. This shift in the PEPs of agents (2.3, 2.3.2) caused socio-cultural unrest and propelled the department towards structural adjustments. The idea of splitting the department of JMS into two separate departments (7.4.8) had support. Those lecturers who supported the idea have been asked to table a proposal to the dean of the faculty of humanities and the proposal will be discussed at a departmental *bosberaad*<sup>56</sup> in June 2009. What this pointed to was that an integrated curriculum was not meeting the needs of everyone and that some lecturers would like to have more curriculum time to devote to their area of speciality. Thus, if this bid is successful, the constraining contradiction would have developed into a competitive contradiction.

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<sup>56</sup> A *bosberaad* is an Afrikaans word meaning strategic planning meeting which has been appropriated into South African English. It literally means "bush meeting" and has been thus termed because this kind of meeting is often held "away" at places such as game reserves.

## 9.7 Contributions of the study

### 9.7.1 Curriculum management and the role of knowledge

R.S. Moore & Lewis (2004: 40) argue that there are challenges for curriculum management in a higher education context where “academics have (with some variation) enjoyed high levels of individual autonomy over the content and pedagogy of their courses”. They refer (*ibid*: 43) to earlier work by R.S. Moore (2002, 2003a, 2003b) that points to the “complexity of the social and organisational challenges involved in attempting to restructure academic practices in significant ways”. Collaborative curriculum development is one instance of a shift in academic practice from working alone to working with colleagues in course teams. Differences in pedagogic and epistemic orientation can constrain collaborative work. The differences in views between media studies and media production lecturers are examples of this.

R.S. Moore (*ibid*) asserts that curriculum change generally does not result from policy imperatives, but it is more likely to result from changes in the knowledge field. The case discussed in this dissertation is an example of curriculum change prompted, *inter alia*, by the nature of the field and its influence on pedagogy in the department. There was a perceived need to establish clearer links between media studies theory and the practical specialisations in the curriculum and pedagogy of the department in order to enable students to see the links between the two parts of the journalism and media studies course. Another imperative was to bridge the rift that had been growing between the media studies and practical specialisation clusters in the department.

This case study shows that the project of theory-practice integration is complex; it is not a simple matter of deciding to soften the boundaries between different knowledge fields. Whether different fields are indeed compatible depends on the nature of the bodies of knowledge to be integrated. Muller’s (2008) distinction between context-dependent and context-independent knowledge areas usefully explains, in part, why the specialisation lecturers and the media studies lecturers struggled to reach consensus about the specific theory that needed to be taught and differences in terms of the pedagogical arrangements that each group found most appropriate for teaching and learning in their field (see Chapters 7 and

8 for discussions of the impact of knowledge structures on curriculum recontextualisation decisions).

R.S. Moore & Lewis (2004) discuss some reasons for the difficulties encountered by inter-disciplinary teams in developing viable curricula that are regarded as epistemically sustainable<sup>57</sup>. They use Moore & Young's (2001) analysis of two dominant forms of curriculum to make the point (see 4.10, 4.11, 4.13). Moore & Young (*ibid*) compare neo-conservative traditional curricula with technical instrumental forms of curricula. On the one hand, the neo-conservative traditionalists view the curriculum and knowledge as given and necessary as a way of developing discipline and respect for traditional canons. On the other hand, the technical instrumentalists do not take account of the knowledge communities within which the norms, values and practices of knowledge production have developed and which sustain them. Moore & Young (in R.S Moore & Lewis: 2004: 44) argue that these "epistemic communities" are "motivated by cognitive intellectual interests rather than (or in addition to) external instrumental interests". It is through these epistemic communities that the objectivity of knowledge is established and through which practices are validated. Thus R.S. Moore & Lewis (*ibid*) contend that the primary allegiances of academics lie not with the discipline as such but with their specialisms within the disciplines. They (*ibid*: 45) state that, "It is often the case that academics owe stronger cognitive allegiance to the network of peers who share their specialism than to colleagues within their home department ... This is simply explained by the varying epistemic priorities of differing specialisms".

This explains why, despite the agreements reached in terms of servicing the regulative discourse of preparing journalists and media workers who practice in the service of social change and agreements with the curriculum organised around the principle of integration of theory and practice, it was difficult for lecturers from the different theory and practice specialisations to offer what may be considered a 'diluted' form of their specialisation. It was important for them to produce students who met the epistemic and social requirements of the specialisation at the appropriate level. R.S. Moore & Lewis (*ibid*) warn that the "cognitive structuring of practice and identity constitutes the most fundamental architecture of the

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<sup>57</sup> In the South African context where inter-disciplinary programmes have been developed in response to policy injunctions, there has been a realisation for some time that this policy may have been a mistake and that there needs to be a move back to collection code disciplinary curricula.

academy, and any attempt to bring about changes in academic practices has to take this into account”.

Working with academics for the purpose of developing the curriculum requires collegial leadership (*ibid*: 46 – 47). The JMS Department had been working within this model for a number of years prior to the inception of the curriculum development processes due to the regular absence of the former HoD (7.6.1). Collegial practices were therefore extended to the re-visioning and management of curriculum change in 2003. R.S Moore & Lewis (*ibid*: 47) argue that collegial curriculum leadership requires academics who take on this role to be “theoretically informed, practically experienced and motivationally inclined, and who have the credibility and authority to take their colleagues along with them”. Anna, the first CF chair came from an education faculty and had knowledge about curriculum development and an interest in designing coherent curricula. Ingrid, the new chairperson, provided curriculum leadership in a way that enabled her colleagues to be equal partners in the process. She had ideas about the kind of student that the curriculum needed to develop in JMS 4 and of the kind of theoretical and practical engagement that would enable the kind of hybrid academic and professional identity envisaged (see 8.8.1). Both these curriculum leaders recognised the importance of creating and maintaining an organisational history of processes and decisions in order to keep the process moving forward. This was important given academics’ propensity for sustained argument and reflexivity.

R.S. Moore & Lewis (*ibid*: 48) suggest that a post-bureaucratic organisational arrangement where the success of a project is the responsibility of all concerned and where the nature of relationships within the organisation is determined by the problem at hand rather than by the traditional roles that people occupy in a setting would be appropriate for collaborative curriculum development work. Thus in the JMS department curriculum leadership was not necessarily performed by the most senior person in the department, but by the people who had an interest in the project and who had the ability to manage the dynamics in the department and garner the support of their colleagues in executing collegial decisions. R.S Moore & Lewis (2004) suggest that Peter Senge’s ideas of organisational learning in universities might be useful for developing appropriate models for curriculum leadership. They propose (*ibid*: 5) the usefulness of Senge’s notion of reflective conversation in collaborative curriculum work which is a way in which:

People talk to one another about complex and conflictual issues that set the tone for collective learning by surfacing assumptions and mental models, producing shared understanding, deeper meaning and effective co-ordination of action, as opposed to engaging in contending monologues, win-lose struggles, disengagement and relegation of real issues to the gossip mill.

This was the form of conversation that characterised the JMS 4 working group meetings (see Chapter 8), however, sometimes the nature of the conversation in the CF meetings was less than ideal (see Chapter 8 for examples).

### **9.7.2 Using Archer's social realist theory in the analysis of curriculum development processes**

I used Archer's (1995a, 1996, 2000) social realist explanatory methodology to examine the curriculum development processes in the JMS Department at Rhodes University. This approach has enabled me to develop an understanding of the interplay of culture, structure and agency in curriculum development. My analysis of the data shows (Chapters 7 and 8) that in this context the presence of a powerful structural agent who had no history within the context of a low-consensus department was an important contributing factor to the initiation of the long-term curriculum development processes in the department. Furthermore, this agent's knowledge and experience of curriculum processes allowed her to introduce new ideas into the cultural arena that contributed to the development of an integrated media studies and practical specialisation curriculum. It was important to establish structures for sustained interaction about curriculum matters. To this end a range of structures emerged: curriculum working groups which were involved in re-viewing the curriculum for each year of the BJourn degree from 2003 – 2006. The working groups were dissolved at the end of the curriculum development process. Year boards for each year of the BJourn degree as well as for postgraduate degrees offered by the department were established to manage the curriculum at each year. These were 'permanent' bodies. In addition, the CF was established to debate and ratify the work done by the working groups and year boards. All lecturers in the department were members of the CF and attendance at these meetings was compulsory. In this way the department ensured that all relevant parties were involved, to some degree, in curriculum decision-making.

The methodology of analytical dualism enabled me to establish that in the case of curriculum development in this department, the curriculum development processes required structural enablements. JMS can be described as a low-consensus discipline and therefore the cultural context made curriculum deliberations very complex. There were a number of ideas that constituted constraining contradictions for which it was difficult to find syncretic solutions.

Even though it is not the aim of qualitative case study research to make generalizations, it is possible to draw out some theoretical principles about curriculum development at the departmental level. In this case the theoretical principles can be established about academic programmes that provide professional preparation in a context that is not regulated by a professional body. There are disjunctures between the needs of the academy and the needs of the profession; between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge and some of these contradictions are very difficult to overcome. In the case of the JMS Department the endeavour was to develop a curriculum that integrated media studies theory and practice and to develop critically reflexive journalistic and media practitioners. It was difficult within the context of curriculum deliberations to reach consensus about what to integrate and the degree to which integration was possible. As such, it was possible to agree that integration of theory and practice was essential, but it was not possible to agree on what lecturers regarded as the most appropriate body of theory to teach. It was argued that students needed to be able to relate theory to practice when they communicated about journalism within an academic context and they needed to be able to do so within the context of practice. It was suggested that they needed to develop “hybrid” identities – as academics and as journalists or media workers (8.8.1).

### **9.7.3 Linking Archer and Bernstein**

A theoretical contribution of this thesis is the bringing together of Archer’s social realist explanatory methodology with Bernstein’s theories of knowledge and curriculum. Since Archer’s framework is essentially a meta-theoretical explanatory methodology it is necessary to use it with substantive theory appropriate to the empirical context. I used Bernstein’s work to establish an understanding of culture within the context of curriculum development in the JMS Department at Rhodes University and in explaining the contestations around curriculum

choices. I have shown how Bernstein's theoretical framework and Maton's extension of this framework can be linked to Archer's since both emerge from a social realist orientation.

Using Archer's theory made it possible to examine *the nature* of collective and individual agency that either enabled or constrained the adoption of particular recontextualisation principles. In addition it enabled a focus on the morphogenesis of agency and how shifts in agency impacted on curriculum development processes. Bernstein's theory of identity and Archer's stratified view of agency have been complementary in this research. Whether agents' work was predominantly within the field of symbolic control, or within the economic or cultural field or combinations of these was important in understanding how they conceptualised curriculum content and pedagogy; however, the level of influence of an agent in terms of whether they were part of a group of primary or corporate agents or whether they had evolved into a particular kind of actor as a result of the power afforded them within the university context, were important corollaries to Bernstein's conceptualisation of agency in the context of curriculum development within the university context.

Archer's work allowed me to examine the enabling and constraining mechanisms for curriculum change or stasis taking into account broader contextual factors. It was possible to link the broader socio-cultural macro, meso and micro contexts with agency to explain the possibilities for curriculum change.

#### **9.7.4 The development of an understanding of meso-level practices – lessons about curriculum leadership**

A number of HE theorists such as Trowler (2005) and Clegg (2005) have suggested that the meso level is a relatively unexplored terrain in the higher education context. This research makes a contribution towards building some knowledge of the collegial management of curriculum development within one academic department.

In the JMS Department it was important to provide curriculum leadership that enabled collegial discussions about what mattered in terms of the various fields of specialisation in the department. The department was a very complex department with a history of acrimonious relationships that had their basis, at least to some extent, in divergent views of

what needed to be prioritised in the curriculum. The curriculum leaders needed to be seen to be relatively impartial and open to hearing conflicting viewpoints and finding ways to move the process towards a degree of consensus. It was important to allow enough opportunities for debate, but also to have the authority to move the process forward. In general, academics do not like to be managed and they do not respond well to bureaucratic requirements.

Curriculum development cannot be managed as if it were a bureaucratic exercise. Within an academic context, curriculum development constitutes intellectual work and therefore opportunities are needed to interrogate the curriculum in terms of what constitutes appropriate knowledge and pedagogic processes.

### **9.7.5 The importance of culture in curriculum structure**

I indicated above that the establishment of structures to enable curriculum conversations was important. However, a corollary to that point is that the ideational context of the curriculum development context is very important for reaching pedagogical decisions. It seems to be crucial that in the case of a professional degree (and I suspect this would be the case in other kinds of inter-disciplinary courses) that consensus is reached concerning the nature of the substantive content to be taught. This is only possible if ideas about the nature of the pedagogical enterprise are shared.

In the case of the Department of JMS the decisions made by the working group were found to be incongruent with those of media studies lecturers who argued for more time to teach media studies theory and who had very particular ideas about when students needed to engage with media studies theory in relation to their practical projects; however, their ideas were incongruent with those of specialisation lecturers who argued that the sequential nature of learning specialisation skills required a specific sequencing of lessons. Specialisation lecturers also wanted their students to learn more specialisation specific theoretical understandings instead of or in addition to the media studies theory. This was because some specialisation lecturers found media studies theory to be inconsistent with understandings of the kind of practice that they promoted. Thus, until there was a high degree of ideational consensus, it remained difficult for the working group to develop a curriculum (teaching) structure that appealed to most lecturers of the JMS 4 programme.

## 9.8 Further research

The research project was complex and there were a number of issues that I did not examine as a result of space and time constraints. One such issue is the nature of collegial leadership, particularly the agential, cultural and structural affordances for such leadership as it pertains to curriculum development processes. I think that there exists enough data from this case study to be able to research that aspect of meso-level practices in much more detail.

This case study was of a discipline that educates and trains professionals, however, there is no professional board regulating the curriculum. It would be useful to engage in a study of collaborative curriculum development in a field that is regulated by a professional body to examine the nature of the recontextualisation challenges in such a context.

Furthermore, research into non-professional inter-disciplinary collaborative curriculum development would yield interesting data for a comparative study about the recontextualisation concerns in such a context. This would enable higher education researchers to develop an understanding of how knowledge fields influence curriculum decisions. Of course, different contexts would also present different cultural, structural and agential enablements and constraints and would thus provide possibilities for examining how different kinds of cultural, structural and agential affordances and challenges influence collaborative curriculum development practices.

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## Appendix 1

### Vision Statement

The School of Journalism and Media Studies strives to contribute to the commitment expressed in the South African Constitution to *“heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental rights; [and] lay the foundations for a democratic and open society...”*

#### **The vision is informed by the following understanding of the media:**

- The media constitute one of the powerful institutions that mediate our relation to and experience of the world.
- The nature of such mediation is conditioned by the media’s particular political, economic, technological and historical contexts.
- Consequently, these mediations contribute to the production and reproduction of the dominant relations of inequality that structure social life, and are implicated in questions of gender, class, culture, race, geography and sexuality.

Journalism and Media Studies aims to produce self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken. Such graduates are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions.

Moreover, Journalism and Media Studies seeks to make valuable intellectual contributions to the broad African media environment, and to the integrated and ongoing education of media practitioners.

## Appendix 2

### Interview questions

1. What was the impetus for the collaborative curriculum development process in the department?
2. What does the notion of curriculum mean for you? What purpose is the curriculum supposed to fulfil?
3. What are the curriculum issues for this department?
4. Have national and institutional curriculum policies played any role in curriculum decisions made?
5. How do you see the relationship between theory and practice in the curriculum? Has it shifted over the years?
6. What factors do you think enable collaborative curriculum development in a department such as yours and what sorts of things block such a process?
7. How have the divergent backgrounds of people involved in the process impacted on it?
8. How would you describe your role in the process?
9. Is there anything that I have not asked you about that you consider to be important in the collaborative curriculum development process?

**Appendix 3**  
**Schedule of Meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Main agenda item/ topic of discussion</b>
2 March 2006	Curriculum Forum	Overview of curriculum process to date; election of new CF chairperson
16 May 2006	JMS 4 working group	Agenda setting
23 May 2006	JMS 4 working group	Discussion of philosophical approach to be taken to fourth year course
30 May 2006	JMS 4 working group	What kind of journalism and media will be taught
130606	JMS 4 working group	Knowledge areas for the J4 course
220606	Curriculum Forum	Seeking agreement for philosophical approach to JMS 4
080806	JMS 4 working group	Curriculum outcomes for the J4 year
150806	JMS 4 working group	Curriculum outcomes for the J4 year
310806	JMS 4 working group	Clarification of relation of outcomes to regulative discourse of media for social change
050906	JMS 4 working group	Finding an appropriate curriculum structure which integrates MS theory and practice
070906	Curriculum Form	Seeking agreement on curriculum outcomes
051006	Curriculum Forum	Seeking agreement on curriculum outcomes and curriculum structure
171106	JMS 4 working group	Finding an appropriate curriculum structure which integrates MS theory and practice

## Appendix 4

### Summary of initial outcomes developed by working group

OUTCOMES STATEMENTS	ACHIEVED LEVEL OF LEARNING
<b>COMMUNICATION THROUGH MEDIA</b>	
Ability to produce media that makes appropriate use of the language and aesthetics of their medium of specialisation for the purpose of storytelling ( <i>writing, editing, design</i> ).	By now, students should be familiar with the languages and formats relevant to the production of mainstream news and current affairs. Now they 1) learn about other genres 2) experiment with the development of new aesthetics.
Ability to select and apply appropriate technology required to produce the best possible media in their area of specialisation.	Students should already have a grasp of foundational technical skills. They now 1) become more sensitive to the subtleties of applying such skills within variety of production contexts 2) develop more complex knowledge of the scope and range of application 3) gain higher levels of autonomy in learning to use unfamiliar technology.
<b>CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH / COMMUNICATION ABOUT MEDIA</b>	
Reflect on the traditions and conventions of media production and the debates and theories of media and society, both in local and global context.	Develop and articulate their own approach to media production in relation to that knowledge.
Describe and discuss the social context of media production, and critically reflect on the relationship between that media context and media production.	
Describe and critically reflect on the genres, techniques, trends and patterns of media production within their specialisation.	
The ability to apply the above in the planning and review of their own media productions.	As part of this, to participate in the editorial settings and generate the texts required within their area of specialisation, such as pitching story ideas, presenting project plans, commenting constructively on each others' work, and critiquing their own production choices.  Up to now, should have been able to do this as reporters. At fourth year, should expand this ability to that of editorial staff.
The ability to apply the above abilities to the critical discussion of media in academic settings. As part of this, the ability to contribute constructively to seminar discussions, the ability to produce academic writing.	Not just participating in seminars, but presenting them. Not just writing essays but producing papers.
<b>RESEARCH SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
The ability to read and understand research.	Understanding and critiquing academic writing, administrative research, journalism as research practice. Selecting appropriately from internet based research. Making sense of quantitative research. Identifying paradigms, assessing validity and reliability.
The ability to conduct research about media.	Interpreting a research question, applying a limited range of methods of gathering research data, applying a limited range of methods of analysis and writing up.
The ability to conduct research for media production.	Background research / community mapping, story development, gathering material, crafting.  Developing of story ideas, gathering, interviewing.
<b>MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
<b>Self management:</b> Time management, negotiating a work environment, identify different contexts in which they are required to operate in an appropriate manner (dress, tone, language). Lifelong learning skills.	All of these exist at JMS3 but now deepened – taking charge of one's own development as a professional.
<b>Project management:</b> Project management skills, conflict management. Coaching and mentoring. Networking.	
<b>COMMUNICATION THROUGH MEDIA</b>	
Ability to produce media that makes appropriate use of the language, and aesthetics of their medium of specialisation for the purpose of storytelling.	
Ability to appropriately select and use technology required for media production.	
<b>CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH / COMMUNICATION ABOUT MEDIA</b>	
Reflect on the traditions and conventions of media production and the debates and theories of media and society, both in a local and global context.	
Describe and discuss the social context of media production, and critically reflect on the relationship between that media context and media production.	
Describe and critically reflect on genres, techniques, trends and	

patterns of media production within their specialisation.	
The ability to apply the above to the planning and critical review of media productions in a way that is appropriate to the practices of their specialisation.	
The ability to apply the above abilities to the critical discussion of media in academic settings.	
<b>RESEARCH SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
The ability to understand and critique research documents.	
The ability to plan and execute research projects that focus on media.	
The ability to conduct research for media production, in a way that is appropriate to their specialisation.	
<b>MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
Manage their own opportunities for the pursuit of critical media production	

## Appendix 5

### Final JMS 4 curriculum outcomes

OUTCOMES STATEMENTS	ACHIEVED LEVEL OF LEARNING
<b>COMMUNICATION THROUGH MEDIA</b>	
Ability to produce media that makes appropriate use of the language and aesthetics of their medium of specialisation for the purpose of storytelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed knowledge of practices, rules, principles and conventions of specialisation and how this relates to other disciplines.</li> <li>• Understanding that these rules etc are 'typical', socially constructed and therefore contestable, and ability to introduce alternatives.</li> <li>• Ability to produce and present relevant media products in a professionally acceptable manner.</li> <li>• Understand appropriate technology at a level which enables independent advancement and trouble-shooting.</li> <li>• Accurately identify, evaluate and address own learning needs in a self-directed manner, and facilitate collaborative learning processes.</li> <li>• Ability to manage processes in unfamiliar and variable contexts, recognising that problem solving is context- and system-bound, and does not occur in isolation.</li> </ul>
Ability to appropriately select and use technology required for media production in their area of specialisation.	
Ability to use – at an introductory level – a variety of skills that are outside of, but relevant to, their medium of specialisation.	
<b>CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH AND COMMUNICATION ABOUT MEDIA</b>	
Describe, discuss and critically reflect on histories of genres, traditions, conventions, techniques, trends and patterns of media production and their impact on social change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of knowledge as contested and an ability to evaluate types of knowledge and explanations typical within the area of study or practice.</li> <li>• Can develop and communicate one's own ideas and opinions in well-formed arguments, using appropriate academic, professional, or occupational discourse.</li> </ul>
Describe and discuss the social, political and economic context of media production, and critically reflect on the relationship between that media context and media production.	
Describe and discuss the debates and theories around media and media production, and explore their significance for social change.	
The ability to apply the above to the planning and production and critical review of media productions in a way that is appropriate to the practices of their specialisation.	
The ability to apply all of the above to the critical discussion of media in academic settings.	
<b>RESEARCH SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
The ability to understand and critique research documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of a range of methods of enquiry in a field, discipline or practice, and their suitability to specific investigations.</li> <li>• Ability to apply a range of methods to resolve problems or introduce change within a practice.</li> <li>• Ability to identify, analyse, critically reflect on and address complex problems, applying evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments, while showing an understanding that research methods are not unrelated to values.</li> </ul>
The ability to plan and execute research projects with media as the central object of study.	
The ability to plan and execute research projects that are informed by critical understandings of social change.	
The ability to conduct research for media production, in a way that is appropriate to their specialisation.	
<b>MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>	
Ability to manage their own opportunities for the pursuit of critical journalism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking full responsibility for own work, decision making and use of resources and limited accountability for the decisions and actions of others in varied or ill-defined contexts.</li> <li>• Taking decisions and acting ethically and professionally. Being able to justify these decisions and actions drawing on appropriate ethical values and approaches, within a supportive environment.</li> </ul>

