

KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWING IN THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMMES AT A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY

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Jacqueline Lück

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## **Abstract**

Knowledge is often tacit and under researched in educational fields. In order for student access to knowledge and its related academic discourses to be facilitated, a deep understanding needs to be gained of the form that this knowledge takes. This study interrogates the ways in which knowledge is constituted in the first year of a Public Management Diploma and a Public Administration Degree at a comprehensive university in South Africa.

The study takes a social realist approach that understands reality as fact but sees our knowledge thereof as a social phenomenon. The study was concerned with knowledge structures and knower structures as it argues that these have not been adequately accounted for in the sociology of education research. But this study comes to this concern from a strongly ideological view of student reading and writing. This study calls on a social practices approach that sees literacy as embedded within specific academic discourses, which vary from context to context. It uses this ideological understanding of literacy as the orienting framework for the study of knowledge.

The study takes place in a Higher Education milieu that has begun to transform from its divisive past. The transformation brought about new institutional formations such as the comprehensive university, with its mix of vocational, professional and formative programmes and varied emphasis on contextual and conceptual curriculum coherence. Increasingly, the transformation agenda also shifts concern from simply providing physical access to a previously disenfranchised majority to ensuring full participation in the context of high attrition rates in first year and low retention rates.

The data was analysed using the Specialisation Codes of Legitimation Code Theory to see what was being specialised in the Diploma and Degree curricula of the Public Management and Administration fields. These fields are characterised in the literature by ongoing tensions about focus, and perceptions of there being a theoretical vacuum and an inability to deal adequately with challenges in the South African public sector.

Analysis of lecturer interviews and first-year curriculum documentation showed that both the Public Management Diploma and Public Administration Degree have stronger epistemic relations (ER), with an emphasis on claims to knowledge of the

world. The data showed relatively weak social relations (SR), in that there was not the valuing of a particular lens on the world or a specific disposition required for legitimation within this field. The combination of ER+ and SR- indicates that these curricula are Knowledge Codes, where legitimation is through the acquisition of a set of skills and procedures.

The programmes were characterised by fairly low-level procedural knowledge, which may point to a workplace-oriented direction that is dominant in the comprehensive university. In keeping with concerns raised in the literature about this field, there was little evidence of theoretical or propositional knowledge in the Public Management Diploma and while the Public Administration Degree had some evidence of this, it was arguably not to the extent expected of a degree as described in the National Qualifications Framework. This study was limited to the first-year of the Diploma and Degree and subsequent years could present different findings.

Lecturers showed awareness of student challenges with literacy practices and made concerned attempts through various interventions to address this but they were found to value the surface features of writing practices over personal engagement with the knowledge. Though the expectations of student literacy practices in tests and assignments were aligned to the ways in which knowledge was constructed in the curriculum, there was little evidence of student induction into disciplinary discourses of the field as knowledge was presented as being neutral and student writing primarily took the form of retelling objective facts. The implications of these findings could include student exclusion from higher-level academic discourse, more powerful knowledge in the workplace and, finally, constrain them from becoming producers of knowledge.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This study is an investigation into the first-year Diploma and first-year Degree Public Management and Administration (PMA) curricula and the reading and writing practices expected of students by those curricula. It examines if the reading and writing practices enhance student access to the target knowledge of the curricula.

The transition from school to university often poses challenges for first year students. This could result in exclusion, and a resultant lack of success, from full participation in Higher Education (HE). South Africa (SA) has been characterised by social inequalities in all spheres (Badat, 2010) with profound effects on schools and HE. Education at primary and secondary levels is characterised by poorly resourced schools and under-qualified teachers. Social inequalities still shape HE (Badat, 2010) and challenges experienced include high failure and dropout rates, even though the student intake in HE indicates good academic potential (Scott, Ndebele, Badsha, Figaji, Gevers and Pityana, 2013).

A challenge to participation in HE, and one that is significant for this study, is adapting to new ways of learning and being (Hyland, 2009; Gee, 1990; Lea and Street, 1998). Firstly, this learning is considered new because of the different types of knowledge that could be associated with school and universities. It is argued that there are discontinuities between school and HE (Scott et al, 2013). Knowledge can be considered to be largely a case of reproduction at school level where knowledge building is not evident whereas at university level students are expected to engage in knowledge production (Boughey, 2013; Bartholomae, 1985).

Literacy practices (reading and writing) are the central ways through which students learn a subject and develop knowledge about it (Lea and Street, 1998). To succeed in HE, students have to demonstrate these practices. The literacy practices do not sit separately outside the discipline, as common assumptions may take them to do. Disciplines manifest themselves through these literacies that emanate from them. Students have to 'crack the code' of these reading and writing practices (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; McKenna, 2004). Doing this holds huge capital for students who

would be at a disadvantage if they were unable to take on the required literacy practices.

A factor that compounds the issue of adapting to new knowledge and taking on the requisite literacy practices is that academics or the disciplinary specialists in the university may have only tacit or implicit knowledge of their disciplines' practices (Jacobs, 2007). As these practices have often been internalised and operate subconsciously, disciplinary specialists may find it difficult to make them overt and explicit so that students can acquire them (Jacobs, 2007a). The extent to which such experts are able to help their students 'crack the code' is thus limited.

It is within this understanding of knowledge and literacy practices that the main research question of this study is:

What are the knowledge-knower structures<sup>1</sup> of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree programmes and what literacy practices emanate from these?

The research sub-questions of my study are as follows:

- What are the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula?
- What kinds of literacy practices are students expected to perform in the first-year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula?
- How do these literacy practices relate to the PMA knowledge-knower structures?

To obtain data on the curriculum content and the academic literacy practices, this study analyses study guides, marked student assessments, class tasks, PowerPoint slides and lecture notes, tests, examinations, memoranda, assignments, rubrics and prescribed and recommended textbooks of the PMA programmes at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). It also analyses selected marked student assessments to explore what lecturers value in reading and writing and what opportunities are curriculated to enable students to gain access to the knowledge in the curriculum.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge-knower structures are the different forms of knowledge (Bernstein, 1999) and their underlying principles (Maton, 2008). A brief overview of knowledge-knower structures is given in Section 1.2 and a more detailed discussion is given in Chapter Three/sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3.

This first chapter outlines the rationale to this study on the knowledge and literacy practices of the PMA Diploma and Degree. It does this by, firstly, considering conceptualisations of knowledge as knowledge-knower structures. As this study links knowledge to its literacy practices, this chapter also looks at New Literacy Studies (NLS) as an orienting framework for the study. The chapter also provides a personal narrative of how I came to this study, and, finally, the contents of each chapter of this thesis are outlined. But before I go further, I need to make comment on some of the terminology used in this thesis.

Firstly, I should note that racial identities are used as descriptors in this thesis. This is a space of discomfort for me, as I take the same position of the 'Soudien Report'<sup>2</sup> (2008) that race is a social construct and does not exist as a biological reality. Alexander (2002) in his exploration of a post-apartheid<sup>3</sup> SA national identity refers to a 'four nations' thesis in past and current SA discourse based on a hegemonic paradigm of four races of White, Black, Coloured and Indian. This position was adopted by the African National Congress (the governing party in SA) in its founding manifesto of 1943-1944, while the nationalist apartheid view of SA was of a multi-national state made up of ten different nations with each assigned its independent homeland (Alexander, 2002). In contrast to the four nations' thesis, there was a two nations' thesis associated with the Black Consciousness movement. This movement constructed Africans, Coloureds and Indians as Blacks on the grounds of being oppressed by Whites, who form the second nation (Alexander, 2002). Both the four nations' and two nations' thesis have been taken up in the national discourse post-1994. National documents and the transformation of education are based on these conceptions in order to reverse past discrimination. Race was entrenched through apartheid legislation and as Dornbrack (2008) argues, any attempt that denies racial identification could be a discursive strategy that clouds inequalities and discriminatory practices. Soudien et al also note that the discussion of race is a crucial one in SA as it has "literally devoured all the contiguous social narratives" (2012: 5).

The particular history of race and racism and how racial descriptors have been used

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<sup>2</sup> Soudien, C., Michaels, W., Mthembi-Mahanyele, S., Nkomo, M., Nyanda, G., Nyoka, N., Seepe, S., Shisana, O. and Villa-Vincencio, C. 2008. Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.

<sup>3</sup> Apartheid was a legislated racially separate system in SA from 1948 to 1994.

enables South Africans to understand our present and to chart a future course (Magubane, 2007).

I am mindful though of Alexander's (2002) caveat that notions of race remain uninterrogated post-1994 in official discourse and I would hope not to use these terms to reinforce stereotypes and caricatures. National documentation makes reference to these terms, and I use the term "Black" as used in national documentation to refer to people classified as "African, Coloured and Indian", "Black African" to distinguish from "Coloured" and "Indian", and "White" to refer to people who are of European descent and typically speak English or Afrikaans.

Section 1.2 discusses knowledge which is a central concern of this thesis. A brief overview of knowledge-knower structures, which frame this thesis, is given in Section 1.2 and a more detailed discussion is given in Chapter Three.

## **1.2 Knowledge-Knower Structures**

Knowledge-knower structures are both the theoretical and analytical framings of this study (see Chapter Three/section 3.3). These notions of knowledge provide the rationale for this study's concern with curricula knowledge forms and student access to these. Knowledge-knower structures refer to the discursive practices of intellectual fields (Bernstein, 1999) and the principles underlying and building these practices (Maton, 2009, 2013). Bernstein (1971, 1973b, 1975, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2000) undertook the study of the organising principles of knowledge as he pointed to the lack of interrogation of knowledge itself in studies. Maton (2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013) builds on gaps within Bernstein's knowledge structures by arguing for a study of the structuring principles of knowledge. Maton does this in order to show why knowledge constitutes a particular kind of discourse, how it builds, is transferred as well as shifts between discourses.

Bernstein (1999) argues that knowledge assumes different forms such as schooled discourse, which he terms vertical discourse, and everyday discourse, which he terms horizontal discourse. The concern with this thesis is with vertical discourse where knowledge takes on a specialised, symbolic, principled and structured form (Bernstein, 2000) which is discussed in this section. Vertical discourse is characterised by notions of hierarchical knowledge structures and horizontal

knowledge structures. Hierarchical knowledge is where theoretical and propositional knowledge integrates from lower to more abstract levels while horizontal knowledge structures consist of a series of specialised, different and sometimes opposing languages (Bernstein, 1999).

Bernstein conceptualised the kinds of discourses of intellectual fields through knowledge structures but there were limitations in his theory concerning the analysis of knowledge production and reproduction (Maton and Moore, 2001). Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) fills this gap by providing both a theoretical and an analytical framework with differing dimensions for particular sets of organising principles (Maton, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013). LCT developed the notion of knower structures to argue for a different basis for knowledge formation in instances of less explicit knowledge (Maton, 2010). A knower structure is focused on the social relations between knowledge and its subject or author (Maton, 2010). Knowledge fields can be categorised as having a horizontal knowledge structure, horizontal knower structure, hierarchical knowledge structure and hierarchical knower structure. In the hierarchical knower structure, knowers are systematically principled and hierarchically organised while an ideal knower exists in this structure and develops when new knowers are integrated at lower levels (Maton, 2007). On the other hand, in the horizontal knower structure a series of strongly bonded knowers exist with their own specialised modes of acting and being (Maton, 2007).

The thesis uses LCT to consider underlying and generative principles of knowledge and knowledge building in the PMA programmes. This LCT framework is a powerful tool to facilitate understanding of how knowledge is produced, progresses and builds and the ways in which this includes or excludes students. This could be used to make sense of how students are included or not in the acquisition of the knowledge and associated literacy practices. This thesis applies the analytical framework to see what it reveals about the production of disciplinary knowledge and student access to knowledge.

Having given a brief overview of knowledge conceptualised as knowledge-knower structures, the discussion now moves to academic literacies (the different reading and writing of curricula contexts). Disciplinary knowledge is linked to literacy because the prime means of articulating knowledge in the academy is through literacy practices and so the central concepts for this thesis are knowledge and academic literacies and the relationships between these.

### 1.3 Academic Literacies

As noted previously in section 1.1, the concept of literacy is typically associated with the ability to read and write. However, literacy can be understood as much more than this and also includes the ability to read and write effectively “within the university context in order to pass from one level to another” (Leibowitz, 1995: 34 cited in McKenna, 2004). NLS emerged as a theoretical understanding of the ways in which literacies are social in nature. While the concern with knowledge provides the theoretical frame for this study (as discussed in Section 1.2 and in Chapters Two and Three), NLS provides the orientating framework for this study with the PMA programmes as the case study.

Contrasting conceptualisations of literacy centre on it being understood either as a skill or as a social practice. In contrast to the dominant understanding that literacy is a neutral set of skills related to coding and decoding language, NLS conceptualises literacy as a social practice (Street, 2006). This means that multiple literacies are recognized which differ according to time, space and are contested in relations of power (Street, 1994). This understanding of literacy is described as ‘ideological’ as literacy is seen to vary from situation to situation and being dependent on dominant ideologies (Barton, 1994). The notion of ‘academic literacies’ developed from the broader field of NLS refers to the multiple literacies found in academic contexts. Academic literacies refer to diverse disciplinary reading and writing practices which are the central processes through which students demonstrate learning of new subjects, and which vary within context, culture and genre (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998). In contrast to the ideological model of literacy posited by NLS, Street (1984, 1994) shows the ‘autonomous model’ has long been the dominant way of understanding what texts are and how languages work. The autonomous model assumes that language autonomously has effects on other social and cognitive practices (Street, 1994). The autonomous model explains literacy as neutral and universal as though meaning occurs separately from the language in which it is communicated (Street, 2006). Henderson and Hirst concur that the autonomous model of literacy fails to take into account “the conflicted and contested nature of academic literacies” (2006: 1). NLS challenges this autonomous model of text through its conceptualisation of literacy as a social practice and through the recognition of multiple literacies (Gee, 1990, 1996; Street, 2003).

The ideological model views literacies as culturally constructed and not as “technical and neutral skill(s)” (Street, 1994: 77). The ideological nature of literacy refers to its rootedness in a ‘particular world view’ (Besnier and Street, 1994; Gee, 1990). People, according to this understanding, are seen to address reading and writing tasks based on their “conceptions of knowledge, identity and being” and these versions are thus always ideological (Street, 2003: 77-78). NLS views reading and writing as making sense only when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which they form part (Barton, 1994; Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1994). This is because different literacies are associated with different domains of life (Barton et al, 2000). Literacy, in this view, does not have any effects and meaning apart from its particular cultural contexts and therefore different effects are experienced in different contexts (Gee, 2008).

Literacy is thus understood as pertaining to events and practices and not to skills. The concept of literacy practices is a “powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton, Ivanic, Appleby, Hodge and Tusting, 2007: 15). Literacy practices involve internal processes such as values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships, awareness of literacy, how literacy is constructed and literacy discourses and external processes connecting people such as ideologies and shared identities (Barton et al, 2007). Literacy practices are what people do with literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 2000).

The notion of literacy events, as understood by Heath, is a tool to investigate forms and functions of spoken and written language and is “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes” (1982: 93). Literacy events are the activities within which literacy has a role, are observable and rise from and are shaped by practices but always finding realization in a social context (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Events emphasise the situatedness of literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). In the study of literacy as a social practice, the focus is not just what people do with literacy, that is practices, but also their understandings of what they do, the values they give to their actions, and the ideologies and practices that encapsulate their use and valuing of literacy (Harran, 2006).

A vital part of being successful at university is the ability to write and read academic texts (Lea and Street, 1998). Academic disciplines each have specialised ‘ways with

words' (Heath, 1986) and students participating in these disciplines have to "learn specific ways to make meaning as well as to contest meaning" (Henderson and Hirst, 2006: 2). So too Gee (2008) argues that there are different ways of making sense of the world of human experience in terms of different epistemologies. As a result, HE learning means adapting to "new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge" (Lea and Street, 1998: 157).

As a consequence, students entering university encounter challenges to acquire academic literacies as this acquisition may be more complex for some than for others (Lea and Street, 2006). While "academic language is no-one's mother tongue" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994: 8), many SA first-year students are less prepared for HE than others as a result of "ongoing structural inequalities" in our society (Ferreira and Mendelowitz, 2009: 78).

Students are often constructed as being the problem resulting in what has come to be called 'deficit discourses' (Ferreira and Mendelowitz, 2009) without consideration of how literacy practices emerge from particular ideologies. To deal with the issue of student unpreparedness, students at many SA universities are enrolled in Academic Development courses to improve their levels of academic literacy (see Chapter Two/section 2.2.2 for a more detailed discussion). However, Boughey (2007) points out that such programmes are often de-contextualised and are derived from a dominant discourse around learning based on the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1994). These understandings of the ideological nature of literacies are not widely shared and have not necessarily resulted in improved practice and differentiated programmes (Boughey, 2007).

NLS's conceptualisation of the ideological nature of academic literacy practices has been widely acknowledged and notions of ideological literacies have been extended in numerous studies. However, the approach has also been critiqued. One critique of NLS has been that literacy comes to local contexts from an autonomous global context and that this is not attended to in NLS conceptualisations. It is argued that the literacies people are engaged with have been invented elsewhere (Street, 2003). The NLS response is that literacies do not come from a global to a local context with intact meaning but with a new hybridity (Street, 2003). Another critique is that NLS fails to take into account general tendencies in its localisation and that it could respond to this by attending to text, power and identity (Street, 2003).

Street (2003) contends that these issues are attended to by working on identities in practice. For example, in their analysis of literacy programmes and practices in Brazil, Bartlett and Holland (2002) take up NLS to show how literacy identities are produced by social structures and in this way account for locally constructed meaning. Literacy practices have also been linked to intertextuality (responses to texts in relation to prior experience of other texts). NLS has also been associated with notions of Discourse as being produced by power and producing power and truth as well as discourses in literacy activities (Street, 2003).

Janks (2010) takes on a critical literacy focus that sees literacy as political and linked to power. Her synthesis model used in curriculum design situates literacy within relations of domination, access to dominant forms, diversity of social institutions and identity and the productive power of design (Janks, 2010). Janks's model also encompasses NLS conceptions of literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003) in calling for student literacies to be accounted for. Links have also been made between NLS and Bourdieu's (1991) concern with the relationship between social structures and habitus (a set of dispositions) (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three/section 3.3.1) as a means of analysing literacy events (Street, 2003). Finally, NLS has been extended to include research on multimodality by contextualising literacy practices within multi-modes of visual, gestural, kinaesthetic and three-dimensional (Street, 2003).

Despite these extensions of notions of NLS to theories of textuality, identity and power, an argument could be made that there is no engagement with how literacy practices could be located within a construction of knowledge that examines the intrinsic properties, progression and building of knowledge. As a result, it could be argued that NLS has a 'knowledge blindspot'.

Even though NLS engages with the notion of students adapting to new knowledge and sees itself as "rooted in conceptions of knowledge" (Barton 1994; Street 2003: 2), little explicit attention is given to the intrinsic features of knowledge in NLS academic literacies. NLS does not expand on how knowledge is constituted and how academic literacies are rooted in knowledge, and so any relationships between the fields of knowledge forms and academic literacies remain uninterrogated. NLS tends to foreground the contextual and views reading and writing as making sense only when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which they form part

(Barton, 1994; Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street 2003) but this context rarely includes a concern for the target knowledge itself. Differing forms of knowledge give rise to multiple literacies, literacy practices are localised, ideological and therefore differing knowledge forms should also underpin different literacy practices. This study attempts to link the insights brought by NLS to an understanding of knowledge. NLS conceptions of literacy also assist with the analysis of knowledge in this study by showing how knowledge emanates in socially constructed reading and writing practices, which students have to demonstrate to succeed. As a result, the aim of this study is to use NLS as a foundational orientating framework and then to bring to this framework a strong theory of knowledge, which is outlined in Chapter Three.

The focus within NLS on the social nature of literacy practices leads me to conclude this chapter with a brief personal narrative in which I outline my work and the concerns that have driven me to undertake this study.

### 1.4 Personal Narrative

As a lecturer in an Applied Language Studies Department at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) from 2005, I have been interested in attaining a deeper understanding of the literacy practices of disciplines and a design for developing these. The Department of Applied Language Studies (DALs) is many things to many faculties. Table 1.1 shows the various courses offered by DALs and the number of students taking these courses:

| Course                        | Course focus                                                                         | Number of students                                            |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Professional Communication    | Workplace related 'skills' of reading, writing, speaking and listening               | 2000±<br>(mainly first-year diploma but some degree students) |
| English for Academic Purposes | Academic reading, writing, speaking, listening 'skills', note-taking and life-skills | 500± students<br>(mainly first-year diploma students)         |

|                          |                                             |                                                         |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| English Language Studies | A combination of Linguistics and Literature | 500± students<br>(first-year degree up to third year)   |
| Extended courses         | Academic Literacies                         | (360± students)<br>(mainly first-year diploma students) |

Table 1.1 Courses offered by DALs

For DALs, I have lectured English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for a number of years. EAP courses tend to be skills-based, generic courses taught in isolation from mainstream subjects (McKenna, 2004). The course has as its focus speaking, reading, writing, listening, speaking, note-taking and life skills. Since 2000, students who apply for most diploma courses have to take an English Proficiency Assessment. If they score below 50%, they have to register for the EAP course. During my years of teaching EAP, I have worked with many coordinators of the course, all of whom have put their particular stamp on the course. Some brought in ideas from other EAP courses at other institutions, others foregrounded writing while another brought in more grammar. So the course has constantly evolved. When I inherited the course as coordinator, I made some superficial changes to the written assessments but was left with a nagging feeling that the course as a whole was not working. The assignments were still of a generic nature which seemed the only way to deal with the fact that we had various diploma students in one class. We have a “one size fits all” approach to literacy, which is strongly underpinned by what Street (1984) referred to as the ‘autonomous model of literacy’.

In addition, student feedback on the course has mostly been negative. For example, at the end of semester two, 2010, 558 EAP students were given course evaluations to complete. The feedback largely followed the same trend: “never saw the logic of this course”, “Did not understand what was wanted in the course.” And even, “this is a money-making scheme”. They were unsure of whether course expectations were met and found the course too similar to those of high school. Finally, they found no value in the course and recommended that it be scrapped.

Furthermore, students often complain about the amount of writing they had to do in this course. A particular eye opener was when one student said that they were not writing any assignments in their other first-year classes, only tests. This supported the concern that we were working in isolation from mainstream lecturers. To address this, DALs lecturers set up a meeting with mainstream diploma lecturers in 2009. Lecturers ranked reading with understanding and writing processes as the most important literacy concerns they had with their students and noted the lack of transfer of skills learnt in the EAP course. However, mainstream lecturers are often not aware of the complexity of literacies acquisition and subscribe to the “myth of transferability” related to generic courses (McKenna, 2004: 67). In addition, students were constructed as being the problem and their language proficiency in particular was seen as being the problem, rather than the acquisition of programme specific discourses. In addition, Black students constitute the majority of students in this EAP course and the issue of stigma is one that has raised its head in many class discussions without a coherent solution.

Although there are isolated incidences of good collaborative practices within the DALs department, we continue offering EAP despite knowing the shortcomings of this model. This leaves me with a deep uneasiness. However, with increasing students numbers (5 724 in 2013) required to take service language courses, logistical and staffing constraints limit the possibility of offering more courses that are better aligned to an ideological model of literacy.

In addition, it is interesting to note that DALs inherited extended courses in 2010. These courses can be considered to have been conceived within an ideological model but in terms of student numbers and credit values, they are on the periphery in the department. In addition, there is a concern that funding for extended studies will be sustained by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The extended lecturers are mostly on contract and few are involved in research. DALs is confronted with so many logistical issues as courses are offered on five campuses, student-staff ratios are high (450 students per lecturer) and timetabling constraints, that pedagogical issues are often marginal. As a result, there is no space for interrogating the models used by the extended lecturers for mainstream course and the dominant model of literacy remains skills based in the department.

In addition, in the wider NMMU, the reason for poor student throughput is usually

located, firstly, within English proficiency. At an institutional level, these understandings remain uncontested. This can be seen in the following quote:

A recurring issue across all programmes at the NMMU is the level of English proficiency among a vast majority of students. Interviews with lecturers from a diverse range of programmes indicated that students entering the higher education system are increasingly experiencing problems regarding English language and communication skills to the extent that most students need linguistic development and support (Roodt and Nel, 2013: 4).

But there is slippage between understandings of literacy practices and some reference is made to academic discourses within institutional documentation. The NMMU lists one of its strategic goals for the “support and development of learning” as being the “development of academic literacies and discourses embedded in all curricula and English for Academic Purposes modules integrated with programme outcomes and content” (Vision 2020, 2010: 34). This should proceed through joint development of academic literacies and discourse by academics and professional support staff. But it is not clear how such intensive co-development would occur. It is also not clear what is meant by “linguistic support” and if this is the academic literacies development spoken of. The various accounts of poor student throughput and strategies for addressing this as captured in institutional documentation points towards the lack of a coherent and theorised approach.

Boughey (2002) maintains that students have challenges with academic literacy and not just with language per se. Boughey (2007) also points out that there has been little development of differentiated literacies (multiple reading and writing practices associated with different fields) in a differentiated higher education system, and that we should be asking what kinds of literacy are required at programme level. Students come to university underprepared for university discourse (Lea and Street, 2006), which is exacerbated by structural inequalities in South Africa (Ferreira and Mendelowitz, 2009) and this results in an articulation gap (Scott et al, 2013) but there also needs to be an acknowledgement that academic literacies are by their very nature peculiar to HE and it is, therefore, the role of HE to facilitate their acquisition and critique.

Furthermore, I was unsure of how to develop the differentiated literacies identified in my classes. I was an “outsider” (Jacobs, 2007a: 22) to the disciplines I was teaching and did not know where to start. Though encouraged by Jacobs that collaborative exploration could lead to both disciplinary and literacy lecturers “gaining new insights” (2010: 229) into the disciplinary discourses, I felt I needed a sophisticated theorised model of curriculum to help me analyse the disciplinary knowledge to which I was an outsider, and from the knowledge analyse the literacy practices that students needed to demonstrate in order to succeed. I could do this through an engagement in collaborative work with mainstream lecturers to see how knowledge is produced in the curriculum and reproduced in the classroom by the university.

Jacobs (2007b) calls for discursive spaces to be made available for mainstream and academic literacy lecturers to collaborate in a sustained manner and thereby to make disciplinary knowledge explicit. Even if I had to enter such a space to collaborate in a sustained way, I needed a tool to assist with unpacking of the knowledge bases of disciplines.

These concerns were central to my undertaking this thesis. My introduction to the ideological model of literacy was significant in my thinking about my work and in making sense of the unease I was feeling. But I felt that NLS alone had little to say about the kinds of knowledge demanded by the diplomas and degrees for which I was preparing the students. This thesis has emerged as my own theoretical and empirical exploration of these issues.

## **1.5 Overview of Study**

This chapter has not only outlined the personal concerns from which this study emanated, but has also presented the central thesis focus of knowledge through a brief discussion of knowledge-knower structures. Knowledge-knower structures are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. The chapter has also presented an orientating framework in the form of NLS which argues that the literacy practices expected of students for HE success are not neutral and generic but rather are socially and historically contextualised.

Chapter Two presents the study context of this thesis. It positions the study within a

national context of poor throughput and low retention rates in HE. The concern in this study on both physical and epistemological access has been framed as an issue of social inclusion. This chapter also presents the policies that transformed the HE landscape and, in particular, the changes that shaped NMMU, the institution in which this study is located, are outlined. A background to the courses that are examined as case studies in this thesis is also provided in this chapter. This chapter discusses the different ways in which disciplines and curricula knowledge have been classified and are contextualised to consider the positioning of PMA programmes.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framing of this study. While this first chapter has presented the orientating framework of NLS, Chapter Three discusses theories of knowledge. It looks at the Critical Realist and Social Realist traditions underpinning this study and explains why these are useful for this study. It also examines the approach of LCT that provides productive understandings of the differences between the discursive practices and the generating principles of knowledge fields.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology used in this study. It outlines the case study research approach, participant selection and the tools used for data collection of curriculum materials, assessments, and lecturer interviews. It also discusses the lenses used to analyse the data. Lastly, it focuses on the validity, reliability and ethical considerations of this study.

Chapters Five and Six discuss the findings of this study. Lecturer understandings of the knowledge production and its constitution in the two curricula are unpacked in detail. Marked student assessments are analysed to see what lecturers valued in reading and writing. Chapter Five provides the findings and discussion of the first-year Diploma programme and Chapter Six provides the findings and discussion of the first-year Degree programme.

The university is in a continuous process of defining itself in a transformed and transforming HE sector. Chapter Seven concludes the study by discussing the implications of the findings for the inclusion and exclusion of students to the powerful knowledge offered by the university; for academic literacy practices and for the identity of the university.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Study Context**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the study context of this thesis, which are the first-year courses at NMMU. It first situates this study within notions of social inclusion and social exclusion in a transforming SA HE as these are crucial issues for this thesis on knowledge and literacy practices. Factors that may exclude students from full participation in HE include access to university, participation (success in HE) and throughput rates (graduation rates within the minimum time). This chapter argues that successful participation in HE, specifically in the curriculum's outcomes, has become the primary challenge for the majority of students in SA universities. One way of countering this challenge is through interrogation of curriculum knowledge, what it values, how it is produced and how it includes or excludes students. The chapter, secondly, gives an account of a transforming HE sector in SA through policy changes in the system since 1994 which include transformed qualification frameworks and changes in institutional forms and knowledge. It also gives an outline of NMMU's background and the course in which this study is located. Here the formation of the university as per the transformation agenda in SA is discussed. A historical overview and conceptualisations of the nature of the PMA field, course curricula framework at the NMMU and the rationale for this thesis's concern with it are discussed. Lastly, the chapter presents the ways in which disciplines and curricula knowledge have been classified.

#### **2.2 Social Inclusion**

The notion of social inclusion has great relevance for this study because it is concerned with how students are or not given genuine access to HE and the goods it provides, both public and private. In this section, social inclusion is firstly clarified and contestations around its descriptors are given. Then, an overview of the HE landscape in SA, as shaped by apartheid policies, is provided. The discourses of social inclusion in the transformation processes of HE in SA, post the 1994 democracy, are discussed next. Issues of social inclusion such as access to HE, participation and throughput rates (graduation rates from intake to completion) of

different races and factors impinging on them are of particular relevance for this study. This section argues for a critical reflection on curriculum knowledge and its literacy practices as one mechanism of improving participation in HE.

Social inclusion is mostly used in conjunction with its antonym - social exclusion. The term social exclusion first arose in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s to deal with what was seen as a crisis in the welfare state<sup>4</sup> but the term has become mainstream (Pradhan, 2006). Atkinson and Marlier (2010) in their report on global inclusion commissioned by the United Nations, define social inclusion as a process by which poverty and social exclusion are combatted by societies. However, seeing social inclusion only as related to poverty is a limited view as it is related to more than just income. Social exclusion refers to social, cultural and political disadvantage and deprivation that prevents people from participating fully in society (Vinson, 2009). On the other hand, people experience social inclusion through access to and participation in social structures

Social exclusion and inclusion are contested notions. These notions may examine the processes whereby people are excluded and conclude that inclusion leads to eradication of inequalities. This assumption might not take into account systemic dynamics of inequality and conflict within these structures and could operate from a normative assumption with mainstream structure being the norm and 'the problem' being not fitting into that norm (du Toit, 2004). Thus, the systemic structures that people are integrated into, and their economic and social powers, need interrogation as they are not value-free and neutral (du Toit, 2004). This can be illustrated in the assumption that improved literacy automatically leads to an improved society. Graff (1979) makes reference to a literacy myth that assumes that improving the literacy of students will make a real difference to the structurally unequal nature of society.

While literacy has been found to make a difference in the lived experiences of students, social development is contingent on the availability and mobilisation of other social and economic reforms (Luke, 2008). Similarly, HE needs to take a more holistic account of the internal and external systems into which students will be integrated if it is to take social inclusion seriously.

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<sup>4</sup> Welfare provision provided by the state in various European countries and the USA was seen as inadequate in dealing with new social issues such as unemployment, rise of ghettoisation and changes in family structure.

### **2.2.1 Social Exclusion in South African Higher Education**

In the HE sector, social inclusion is framed within notions of access to HE and participation by all sectors of the population in the system regardless of background. As social inclusion speaks to issues of access and participation, it is synonymous with the social justice perspective. The social justice perspective is also concerned with equal participation for all students (Alexander and Hlalele, 2012). Social inclusion focuses on exclusionary practices in HE and how these could be ameliorated to ensure equal opportunities and participation for all. It seeks mostly to overcome exclusionary practices through policy.

Social inclusion and social exclusion are socially constructed on what is accepted as normative in a particular society. For example, in SA HE, the term under-preparedness is widely used to construct students who come from poorly-resourced schools. There is a general lack of articulation between the different knowledge types associated with schools and universities (Boughey, 2013), but this is found to be more profound where students come from such under-resourced schools. However, poor graduation and attrition rates affect all across the SA racial spectrum<sup>5</sup>, discussed below in this section, and it is a fallacy to equate under-preparedness with only Black students. It should, however, be noted that attrition and failure rates are higher for some social groups than others (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007). Scott, et al (2007) speak of an 'articulation gap' as opposed to a notion of under-preparedness. Scott et al (2007) find that because students entering HE are in the top quintile of the population regarding prior performance, they should not be seen as lacking potential for HE. With very low levels of participation in HE, under-preparedness should not be used as a basis by which to exclude students. Social inclusion, thus, needs to look beyond the point of access and interrogate issues of genuine participation. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the terms social inclusion and exclusion as they relate to processes of access and participation as well as the systemic dynamics of the teaching and learning structures of the university.

The HE sector in SA has been historically defined by social exclusion. Though shifts

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<sup>5</sup> It should however be noted that attrition and failure rates are higher for some social groups than others (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007).

began from 1990, it was still a racially-based and fragmented system at the time of the 1994 democratic elections in SA. This profoundly unequal system had been shaped through apartheid, which systematically disenfranchised the Black majority. The policies worked to exclude Black people from fully participating in HE, except to serve the purposes of apartheid ideology.

During the 1980s, HE institutions were specifically designated for the White, African Black, Indian and Coloured population. Nineteen HE institutions were designated exclusively for Whites, two for Coloureds, two for Indians and six for African Blacks (Bunting, 2002). The six African Black institutions were located in The Republic of Transkei, The Republic of Bophuthatswana, The Republic of Venda and The Republic of Ciskei, collectively known as the TBVC countries, based on the first letter of each homeland. While the rest of the world refused to acknowledge the existence of the TBVC, apartheid policy dictated that 80% of the African Black population would be citizens of these “republics” and they were not considered legal citizens of SA (Bunting, 2002).

A new constitution was introduced in 1984 which divided the national parliament into three chambers: a House of Assembly for White voters, a House of Representatives for Coloured voters and a House of Delegates for Indian voters. However, there was to be no representation for African Blacks in parliament. Education was to be an ‘own affair’ overseen by each of these Houses while education for African Blacks was not considered an own affair because they were regarded as second class citizens of SA who needed to be managed (Bunting, 2002). Education of the African Black population was considered the general affair of the Department of Education and Training (Bunting, 2002). These policies, and the specific curriculum focus of the so-called Bantu Education, entrenched acute divisions in HE.

Knowledge and educational quality were unequal across the HE sector, differentiated by these racially-distinct institutions with very different resource allocations and differences in levels of autonomy. Black institutions reflected assumptions about the career choices for Black students as well as their role in serving apartheid’s ideology. Black students were trained to be civil servants for the TBVC “countries” and to be teachers in Black schools (Bunting, 2002). Little emphasis was placed on the production of new knowledge in Black institutions.

These institutions were staffed mainly by academics trained at Afrikaans institutions (Bunting, 2002).

Student rejection of apartheid ideology and the subsequent disruptions of student protests and class boycotts were linked to the fight for liberation in SA. The rallying cry of students during the 1980s was for liberation before education. Educational mobility for all Black students was severely restricted during the 1980s not only because of the violent crushing of protests but also because of class disruptions. Institutions became characterised by poor governance as many administrators left (Bunting, 2002).

Ironically, at this time, access for Black students to HE, was on the increase. In 1986, Black students made up only 33,7% of the total enrolments but this increased to 55,2% in 1994 as a result of government reports and commissions in late 1970 and early 1980s, which made it clear that SA needed skilled Black South Africans (Le Roux and Breier, 2012).

Another level of differentiation under apartheid, besides race, was that of institutional type. Rigid binaries were drawn between two types of institutions, namely, universities and technikons. Technikons arose from technical colleges whose role was theoretical aspects of apprentice education and training (Raju, 2006). In 1967, a new HE institution emerged, namely, a college for advanced technical education designed to meet the needs of industry and commerce, which had its name changed to technikon in 1979 through the Advanced Technical Education Amendment Act (Raju, 2006).

The essence of a university was science (generation of new knowledge) and the essence of a technikon was technology (application of knowledge) (Bunting, 2002). A distinction was drawn between university pursuit of scientific knowledge in a discipline with shared methodologies and technical knowledge that concerned itself with seeking technological solutions or handling of technological tasks (Raju, 2006). The extent to which the different institutions enjoyed autonomy from the state varied greatly. Technikons had prescribed conditions around budget use and could only offer nationally approved Diplomas (known as 'National Diplomas') while universities had far greater freedom around budget allocation and the ability to build up funds. They also had control over programme development and curricula (Bunting, 2002).

The 1994 democratic elections gave rise to a new constitution, promulgated in 1996, and based on the principle of social justice for all SA society. The constitution had largely been based on the Freedom Charter, a statement of the key principles of the African National Congress and its allies outlining a future free SA and adopted in 1955. The education principle of the charter was that “the doors of learning and culture shall be opened!” (The Freedom Charter, n.d.). Now there was a concomitant need for equal participation for students to be contextualised within the broader society changes and constitutional imperatives of social justice. Institutionalised barriers to equal participation had to be overcome to eradicate marginalisation and exclusionary processes that prohibited all from participating equally.

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (2001) outlined a vision for SA HE to eradicate exclusionary processes but also to respond to new demands of globalisation and the knowledge economy (global wealth creation through knowledge). The discourses of social inclusion of the NPHE were situated within principles of constitutional social justice in its vision for an equitable and single sector from which Black people had been excluded systematically for generations. These discourses were tied to a response to economic needs nationally and globally. Black people had been excluded from full participation in the economy. However, a lack of interrogation of the economic system into which students would be integrated is problematic. So too, tying the HE mast to economic needs solely has the potential to negate the other roles of HE (see Chapter Two/section 2.3.5.2).

Reform of HE centered on discourses of “transformation” and “social cohesion” as the overarching goals of changes. The NPHE (2001) understanding of transformation is based on the White Paper 3 - A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (see Section 2.3.1 for a historical overview of the NPHE) that called for educational opportunities to be provided for all regardless of race, gender, age, creed, or class or other discrimination forms; staffing components be transformed to be more representative of the population; transformation of governance structures and institutional climates; provision of quality teaching and learning with a curriculum that responds to regional and national needs and stimulated debate and questioning (DOE, 1997). Transforming an unequal education system into opportunities for all was seen to have the potential to lead to a socially cohesive society.

State involvement in the HE system was an issue of great concern in the new South

Africa, given the levels of interference of the apartheid government. But there was nonetheless a view that without a clear set of 'levers', the HE system would not move towards transformation in ways that ensured it fulfilled its promise to facilitate social cohesion. The state, therefore, identified three levers to transform HE. These were funding (which rewards graduation throughput, teaching input and research output), a coherent quality assurance framework (for audit and comparability of qualifications) and the reconfiguration of institutional types (DOE, 1997). The NPHE's (2001) plan for a single yet diverse system and the levers to transform HE, such as the quality assurance framework and institutional types, are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two/sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4. Through policy and frameworks, the NPHE wanted to bring about systemic changes for inclusivity.

Briefly, the NPHE's (2001) vision of a transformed HE was for two fundamental aspects to be present in HE, namely, equity of access (broadening access) and equity of outcomes (fair chance of success) for all SA students (see Section 2.3.1 for a more detailed discussion of the goals of the NPHE). Participation rates for the 20 to 24 age group had declined from 17% in 1996 to 15% in 2000 and graduation rates were at 15% of total headcount (NPHE, 2001). HE imperatives were not closely tied to economic responses as well as the constitutional imperatives of social justice. As a result, a 20% participation rate of 20 to 24 year olds between 2011 and 2016 was specified to improve the participation and graduation rates (NPHE, 2001). To stimulate increases in throughput, the NPHE (2001) linked graduation rates to the new funding formula and to approval of new programmes.

Notable achievements in HE have been the development of a policy framework for HE, laying the foundations for a single and differentiated HE system; broadening access to Black students; establishing a national quality assurance framework and infrastructure and a new goal-oriented funding formula amongst others (Badat, 2010). Despite these achievements, there are powerful mechanisms that continue to militate against systemic change. These mechanisms include persistent structural inequalities throughout SA society; equating the social inclusion agenda with economic demands, poor schooling, HE quality assurance and funding frameworks that have not been as successful as intended and the lack of transformation of teaching and learning practices in HE (Scott et al, 2007). The discourses of transformation and social inclusion have largely been hollow as systemic challenges remain.

The complexities of transformation of HE cannot be linked to mere access numbers and development needs. Badat (2010) cautions that the term transformation should not necessarily be equated directly with development or creating conditions for development or that reform of institutions would result in their transformation. He argues that transformation is about empathy, changing how we think, new ways of acting and doing and that this is not reducible to changing demographics and pursuing equity targets. So too, Alexander (2013) argues for a more radical approach to transformation of SA HE where new ways of seeing phenomena and knowledge are the basis and not mere reform where the aim is to make HE processes more efficient and effective. Interestingly, the NPHE (2011), a plan to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 in SA through growth, only uses the word transformation three times in its chapter on HE (Cloete, 2011) as the HE focus has changed from transformation of society to one concerned with the link between knowledge and the economy.

Though much has been achieved in HE, a hollowness in the transformation agenda has arisen because of a focus on physical access. What have been missing from policy are mechanisms to critically interrogate the full participation of students. However, linking equity and quality without funding and programmes to improve student under-preparedness gives rise to tensions between these goals (Badat, 2010). The NPHE (2001) encouraged institutions to include extended curriculum programmes into their planning and committed to fund these programmes through the new funding formula. There was no imperative, besides the funding formula, and appeal to the moral responsibility of universities, compelling universities to examine their institutional dynamics to facilitate this.

The NPHE (2001) recognised the role played by the language of instruction in participation in HE. However, only one line is devoted to the issue of exploring a future language policy in the NPHE. Language is one of the main barriers to equity of outcomes in HE (Alexander, 2013). English and Afrikaans are insufficient as languages of teaching at HE institutions as many students lack proficiency and intuitive grasp of the idioms of these languages (Alexander, 2013). Of 21 universities in 2001, 16 used English as language of tuition with five using Afrikaans, and of 15 technikons, five used English exclusively while the rest used English and Afrikaans (CHE, 2001). The hegemony of English, and Afrikaans, to a lesser extent, at HE institutions inhibits equal participation of students. The CHE working group on

values in education identified mother tongue instruction (studying through the language one knows best) and multilingualism as two of six basic values to be promoted through education (CHE, 2001). The CHE recommended that institutions needed to include in their plans strategies for promoting multilingualism and developing African languages as academic languages of tuition (CHE, 2001). Despite this, the implementation of African languages as languages of teaching and learning or as a compulsory course at universities remains a significant and contentious challenge.

Equity of access, the first goal of the NPHE, is still a sought after ideal for all in SA HE despite increased and broadened access. The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET) finds that the SA HE sector “continues to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities with regard to access to educational opportunities and success” (2012: 11). Le Roux and Breier (2012) argue that despite all the changes in South Africa, unequal educational opportunities are still a feature affecting 75% of Black South Africans.

Access for Black African and Coloured male students has actually declined instead of increased in a transformed HE system, despite an increase in Black students as a total percentage from 55% to 68% from 1994 to 1996 (Le Roux and Breier, 2012) to over 78% of all students enrolled in contact programmes and 83% in distance programmes in 2011 (DHET, 2013). The gross enrolment or participation rate for males (which is calculated on the basis of the 20 to 24 age group) at SA HE institutions for 1996 and 2009 respectively are illustrated in Table 2.1.

|      | Africans | Coloureds | Indians | Whites |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|--------|
| 1996 | 11,5%    | 12,9%     | 38,5%   | 67,8%  |
| 2009 | 10,7%    | 12,3%     | 45,3%   | 54,2%  |

Le Roux and Breier (2012)

Table 2.1 Gross enrolment for males

It is evident that Black and Coloured participation have remained almost the same, with a very slight decrease noticeable. White participation has decreased to a notable extent and only Indians have enjoyed a notable increase in participation. The group that was targeted as being the majority remain on the periphery in terms of HE participation.

One reason for the decreasing access statistics is the slow transformation in primary and secondary education (Le Roux and Breier, 2012). In her 2013 budget speech, the Minister of Education noted that 2013 was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bantu Education Act<sup>6</sup>. She was doing this to highlight how far the system had come.

However, structural inequalities still shape most historically Black schools. Primary and secondary schools often lack adequately qualified teachers and are among the worst resourced (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). These inequalities are seen in the final high school examination (National Senior Certificate). For example, the 2006 results showed that 62% of Africans, 81% of Coloureds, 92% of Indians and 99% of Whites passed the matric exam (Le Roux and Breier, 2012). These inequalities continue to plague the education sector and change can only come from national government commitment to structural improvements.

Decreases in funding levels further exacerbate unequal access. Despite increases in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding to needy students with funding up to R6 billion in 2011 (DHET, 2012), these loans do not cover living expenses and this can impact on students who live some distance away from their institutions (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012). New proposals envisage changing the NSFAS fund to one that is class based and not race based, and covers the full cost of study (DHET, 2012; NPC, 2011). Also, the 2004 funding formula for HE does not reward institutions for admitting students who have potential from disadvantaged schooling backgrounds and this could be a factor in the decreasing statistics (Le Roux and Breier, 2012).

The second goal of the NPHE, equity of outcomes or throughput, essential to transformation, remains elusive and has become the most critical challenge. Scott et al (2007) tracked the 2000 cohort of incoming undergraduate students for five years and the 2001 cohort for four years. This was the first time data, disaggregated by race, from intake to graduation had been collected and the findings were alarming. While throughput and graduation rates were appalling across all groups, Black students did worse than White students in every disciplinary field. Black students comprised 25% of students completing in regulation time in the 2000 cohort and Black completion rates were nearly half the White completion rates (Scott et al, 2007).

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<sup>6</sup> An Act that was the basis for a racially unequal system of schooling for Black South Africans.

The explanations for the poor outcomes are multi-faceted. They range from student and staff under-preparedness for their fields as related to the articulation gap between school and higher education; teaching and learning and its conceptualisations of appropriate content and assessment; to funding and systemic ability to address under-preparedness (Scott et al, 2007). The study concluded that the racial incongruences in the completion and attrition rates negate most of the increased physical access of Black students into HE (Scott et al, 2007).

A further study of the 2005 and 2006 cohorts for all three year degree and diploma and four year professional degree (Scott et al, 2013) also showed that more than a decade after democracy, nothing substantial had changed in throughput and attrition rates among African Black and Coloured students. This study was more comprehensive because it accounted for individual programmes and not just subject categories as in the 2001 and 2002 cohort study.

The greatest attrition of students in SA occurs at the end of the first year. This rate increased from 25% in the 2001 and 2002 cohort, to 33% in the 2005 and 2006 cohort (Scott, et al, 2013). The attrition rates by race for all 2006 first-time students were African 34%, Coloured 39%, Indian 34% and White 29%. The high attrition rate is mainly attributed to the articulation gap that arises from the systemic inefficiencies of the entire educational system in SA, including well-resourced schools (Scott et al, 2013).

However, poor graduation rates are a feature for all races in SA. The findings for the 2006 cohort graduation rates (by the expected minimum time of completion) for all three and four year qualifications are illustrated in Tables 2.2 and 2.3:

| Black African | Coloured | Indian | White |
|---------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 20%           | 24%      | 28%    | 44%   |

Scott et al (2013)

Table 2.2 Graduation rates within minimum time

Table 2.3 illustrates the graduation rates within five years:

| Black African | Coloured | Indian | White |
|---------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 30%           | 31%      | 31%    | 47%   |

Scott et al (2013)

Table 2.3 Graduation within five years

Only 35% of the total student intake graduated within the extended period of five years and White completion rates are on average 50% higher than Black completion rates (Scott et al, 2013).

While this is evidence of an articulation gap between school knowledge and university knowledge across all types of schools, other factors also exacerbate poor graduation rates such as the persistent structural inequalities in SA society and the university itself and its construction of teaching and learning. With under 5% of the total population of African Black and Coloured young people succeeding in HE and this figure remaining unchanged from the 2001 and 2002 to the 2005 and 2006 cohort study (Scott et al, 2013), the issue of equity of outcomes has become the key challenge in HE.

Morrow (1993) posits that in order to create a more equal South African society and higher education sector, the crucial issue is not just the granting of formal access to the institution but rather of granting 'epistemological access'. The distinction drawn here is between equity of access (physical access to the university) and equity of outcomes (access to the knowledge production processes of the institution).

Addressing this need for equity of outcomes, or epistemological access, would require fundamental shifts in how we approach teaching and learning in HE. Scott et al (2013) find no evidence of improvement in teaching and learning in HE to close the articulation gap. Students who have been the focus of a broadening of physical access are thus not being given chances of full participation in the HE sector. To ensure the equity of outcomes envisaged for SA HE, systemic responses are fundamental and these include reform of curriculum frameworks; developing and implementing effective teaching approaches for diverse students; accountability for educational outcomes and the use of foundational programmes or extended curricula

(Scott et al, 2013). These recommendations seem feasible as they are now speaking to systemic dynamics and not processes. To ensure social inclusion, the HE system as a whole needs careful consideration.

### **2.2.2 Social Exclusion and Extended Curricula**

A flexible four year curriculum, to include foundation courses, is one proposal made in response to arguments that the three year degree and diploma have no space to respond to the needs of disadvantaged students, who constitute the majority of students (Scott et al, 2013). The 2013 report on alternative curriculum structures recognises that students differ on the basis of preparedness and background and that a rigid and uniform curriculum for all would not suit every student (Scott et al, 2013). The National Development Plan of the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2011) has also recommended a four-year degree with foundation courses to increase graduation rates. This is because equity is now more firmly linked to participation (Cloete, 2011).

The authors of the Scott et al 2013 report argue that the four-year curriculum would be the only way to induct student into the academy and into its academic discourses. Academic discourses are the new ways of thinking and using language expected in higher education (Hyland, 2009). Discourse is constituted not only by thinking and language but also by ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, and believing deemed acceptable within specific contexts (Gee, 1990). So acquiring a discourse is both a social process and a cognitive one. Students need critical enculturation into these academic ways of behaving and thinking to attain success.

For greater access and to bridge the articulation gap, Scott et al (2013) recommends this additional year to enhance access through foundation courses (courses that bridge the articulation gap) and other teaching and learning interventions. The curriculum would have two elements, firstly, the enhancement of effective learning through overt induction into academic literacies and, secondly, the development of graduate competencies and attributes such as inquiry skills (gathering, analysing and critiquing of facts) (Scott et al, 2013). Their recommendation of foundation courses speaks to the fact that they believe students are not currently being sufficiently inducted into their disciplines and supported in meeting the knowledge demands of the academy.

Foundation courses, which are increasingly being seen as the panacea for participation, need some discussion. First, a brief historical overview is needed. Foundation courses have a three decade history in SA. Tutorial programmes developed initially for Black students admitted to historically White universities did not meet the needs of disadvantaged students and foundation courses were developed with coherent courses, ultimately, leading to extended programmes (Scott et al, 2013). These programmes would address the key transitions of curricula and be based on assumptions of the learning needs of students from disadvantaged schooling backgrounds. The idea was that such courses would enable students to 'crack the code' of the academic discourses of their target programmes.

The rationale for foundation courses is provided by findings of success rates in institutions that have been implementing them. State funding allowed 15% of first time students to be enrolled in extended curriculum programmes by the end of 2006 and the success rates of students in both foundation and regular courses ranged from 60% to 85% but, mostly, from 70% to 80% for institutions (Scott et al, 2013). Using the ten percentage points stipulated by the DHET as acceptable difference between foundation and regular courses, the report finds success rates of students in the first year of their extended year (Scott et al, 2013). There is a 78% success rate for all universities for foundational courses and 68% for regular courses for 2010 and 2011 regular courses (Scott et al, 2013). They, therefore, concluded that extended programmes had made significant contributions to a reduction of student under-preparedness.

Despite the seeming success stories of foundation courses, universities need to proceed cautiously. Caveats are given about the uneven quality of extended courses as Boughey (2010: 5) identified that the courses often relied on:

commonsense assumptions in constructing students as: i) lacking skills; ii) experiencing gaps in conceptual knowledge areas; iii) in need of language development and iv) lacking the ability to think 'critically' although there is also some acknowledgment of the impact of social and personal factors in learning resulting in attempts to address 'personal growth' through the development of 'life skills'.

Scott et al (2013) agree that extended courses need better theorisation and contextualisation into mainstream courses and recommend a national structure to provide support with curriculum design. The report acknowledges the design

difficulties of embedding extended courses within rigid curricula and that strategies to promote effective learning later in the curriculum have not been followed through.

Boughey (2010) recommends a new national structure to coordinate capacity building and research related to teaching and learning drawing on models of curriculum and knowledge structures. As discussed in Chapter One/ Section 1.2, knowledge structures are the organising principles of intellectual fields. Not only does what Scott et al (2013: 117) refer to as “the irreducible core of the curriculum” need analysis to assist students with intellectual progression but also how this knowledge came to be valued needs to be held up to critique along with its continuing validity. For Scott et al (2013), the main tension is between covering the core of the curriculum and the enhancements, so given the pragmatic issue of time, difficult choices have to be made and so regular reviews of the core curriculum should be made. I would argue that this view is a limiting one and concerned with efficiency. Its underlying assumptions also need examining. The core curriculum cannot be taken for granted, and as being neutral or above question, with the aim being to merely facilitate access to it.

Radical proposals do not come without huge challenges. Scott et al (2013) argue that the dysfunctional primary and secondary school sector will not change in the foreseeable future and HE should implement strategies to counter the results of unequal educational opportunities. However, If HE attempts to fix educational problems as they manifest in HE, without locating itself within a cohesive solution, educational opportunities for students could remain limited. HE could use local schools as feeder schools and help to improve the offering of education there (Cloete, 2011) or use its research expertise to form a compact (an agreement to cooperate) with primary and high schools.

HE coexists with the broader society, with primary and high schooling and in the broader economy. For the lives of students from marginalised communities and broader society to be improved, any reformation needs be contextualised within these structures. Isolationism of HE is not the answer in a social inclusion agenda. One of HE’s goals is to prepare students to respond to economic demands (NPHE, 2001) and, therefore, to be socially included in the economy. This means it is also important for HE and its graduates to assist in the interrogation of structural dynamics of powerful and dominant economic structures. HE should not be merely a

measurable, training institution for a competitive market economy (Luke, 2008) but should develop students for an economy which has a socially inclusive nature.

A further challenge for the HE sector with the calls for fundamental reform of the curriculum could come with institutional responsibility for curriculum reform. While this rightly speaks to the autonomy of the institution and the diverse needs of institutions, some institutions may have less experience than others with curriculum design needed for quality extended courses. Guidance should be given by a national structure about whether institutional courses are meeting the needs of student profiles and that enabling teaching, learning and curricula are being developed. Scott et al (2013) do propose this and, furthermore, propose that experts be sent to institutions for guidance. Providing professional staff development opportunities for academics comes with the carrot of fewer repeating students and would serve to build the much-needed educational specialists (Scott et al, 2013). Embedding extended staff within faculties doing collaborative teaching and research with mainstream academics is also crucial to position these courses as integral and not peripheral. This could open pathways to more acceptable approaches to extended courses.

The South African Student Congress, a student body aligned to the African National Congress, has raised concerns about capacity of adequately qualified staff to oversee the proposed new four-year curriculum (SASCO, 2013). The report does speak to funding and capacity challenges through the Teaching Development Grant to fund staff development programmes (Scott et al, 2013). The capacity challenges exist but arguably should not railroad the proposal of a four-year curriculum which could begin to ameliorate inequalities in HE.

The perpetuation of stigma of such courses also needs careful consideration. As the proposed four-year curriculum will be flexible allowing students who show prior learning (that they have acquired the necessary competencies) to exit earlier and to be exempted from certain courses, it is highly likely given the realities in SA, that mainly Black students would comprise the foundation programmes. Soudien et al (2008), tasked with investigating discrimination in the HE sector, found racial discrimination pervasive across the HE sector and that for most institutions equity was a compliance practice and not an engagement with examining the underlying assumptions of its institutional climate and governance, students, staff and

epistemology. Students experience this discrimination in all social contexts of the institution. A factor related to discrimination is the academic development and support programmes developed in HE institutions. The deficit models of many of these programmes, intended to provide access to HE, can be said to stigmatise Black students as high risk and has the potential to racially stereotype these students even though students recognise the need for such interventions (Soudien et al, 2008). Heed should be taken of Soudien et al's (2008) finding so that these programmes do not continue to be stigmatised and so that their underlying assumptions are interrogated.

This is an opportune time for an examination of the systemic dynamic of the institution and its constructions of students. Students are often constructed in individual deficit ways as lacking skills with the problem being located within them and not within the social contexts (Boughey, 2012) of both the students' environments or the university's expectations. This examination of the institution would have to be done in an inclusive manner that does not pathologise anyone as there may also be resistance to examining deeply rooted practices.

Boughey (2012) argues for a rethinking and a re-understanding of why Black students fail. To do this, HE could draw on constructions of learning as socially embedded and not as deficiencies located within the individual, how they arise from the social contexts of student backgrounds which were shaped and continue to be shaped by apartheid (Boughey, 2012) and, in this way, reform of curriculum frameworks could start to be affected. A socially-embedded approach to learning would also consider the social context of the university itself and how it constructs its privileged academic learning in curriculum and pedagogy and how this accounts for why learning is taking place or not.

### **2.2.3 Social Inclusion and Constructions of Knowledge**

Examination of the systemic dynamic would also have to take into account constructions of knowledge. Young's (2011, 2012) distinction between powerful knowledge and knowledge of the powerful is useful for notions of social inclusion. It speaks to the question of what counts as knowledge and how it is produced, reproduced or disrupted. However, the two notions of powerful knowledge and

knowledge of the powerful should not be conflated (Wheelahan, 2013). Knowledge of the powerful is knowledge based on “‘who defines the knowledge?’ not ‘what the knowledge is’” (Young, 2011: 2) It is knowledge as defined by power relations and could, thus, be argued to perpetuate privilege (Young, 2011). On the other hand, powerful knowledge is knowledge itself, as objective but fallible and open to changes as it is socially constructed and its understandings enables student to move between their everyday experiences and theoretical concepts (Young, 2011, 2012). Powerful knowledge takes students beyond the particulars of experiences (Young, 2012) and gives them access to knowledge beyond their own worlds. Young (2012) points to the constraints and possibilities in giving students tools to think the unthinkable, which are either a pedagogical conservatism versus a more democratic pedagogy.

Social inequality could be mediated by the type of education students have access to as they need to know the rules of powerful knowledge in order to break them and this provides the grounds for democracy (Wheelahan, 2013). The focus here would be to see if the knowledge being given access to reproduces or disrupts social relations (Young, 2012).

However, Badat (2010: 19) argues that often universities perpetuate social exclusion through their “own internal thinking, structures, cultures and practices and their external conditioning by the wider society” and that epistemological and ontological (accounts of being and existence) aspects associated with teaching and learning, curriculum development and pedagogical practices have been mostly ignored. Universities have not grappled with the question of how the dominant discourses shaping HE intellectual spaces have been developed and reproduced (Badat, 2010). Bernstein (1975, 1990, 1999) also argues that knowledge has been a blind spot in the sociology of education as the focus has not been on its intrinsic properties and how it progresses and cumulates. While the complexities of social inclusion in HE mean that the issue can be researched from any number of different angles briefly discussed in this chapter thus far, this study focuses on the role played by the knowledge itself. This study investigates curriculum knowledge, how this knowledge is produced in the curriculum, what is valued about knowledge in the university and how students are given access to this knowledge through reading and writing practices linked to the curriculum. This focus comes from a concern about social inclusion and specifically how students are included or

excluded in the curriculum through knowledge structures and their emergent practices. This chapter now discusses the transformation of HE as driven by policy changes.

## **2.3 Transformation of Higher Education**

As discussed in Section 2.2, it was clear post-1994 that the SA HE sector had to be transformed from the divisive system of the past to one that was aligned to the democratic ideals of the new state. HE had been characterised by apartheid structures with its racially categorised institutions. This also gave rise to binaries between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, research intensive and non-research intensive, universities and technikons. Black institutions were further rendered unstable by a maelstrom of student protests, staffing conflicts, managerial incompetence as well as unstable councils and senates (Jansen, 2003). The transformation agenda intended to eliminate these binaries of advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. The aim of this section is to locate this study on inclusion and exclusion in a transforming HE landscape as shaped by HE policy changes. The NPHE has been discussed as related to the concerns of social inclusion and exclusion in a transforming SA HE in Section 2.2. The discussion moves to the NPHE's goals of a diverse and differentiated system, transformed qualification frameworks and new institutional types. This section also discusses contestations around ongoing transformation in SA HE.

Firstly, this section presents a historical overview of the policy discussions that culminated in the NPHE's quest for a diverse and differentiated system.

### **2.3.1 A Diverse and Differentiated System**

Various scenarios for a diversified HE system in a democratic South Africa post-1994 were proposed by stakeholders as it was generally agreed that HE was unequally constituted. An initial White Paper 3, A Programme for the transformation of higher education, (DOE, 1997) led to the formation of the Council for Higher Education (CHE), responsible for advising the Ministry of Education on quality assurance and standards. In 2000 this body was tasked with proposing a shape and size for HE. The CHE Report, Towards a new Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa, in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century (CHE, 2000), culminated in the publication of a NPHE in 2001.

To redress the racial fragmentation characterising HE, a differentiated and diverse system yet still single and coordinated was envisaged (NPHE, 2001). This proposal for diversity as a distinguishing feature, taken up by the NPHE, was based on the 1997 White Paper - A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (DOE, 1997). The NPHE based its plan on diversity but there were significant differences from proposals made by the 1997 White Paper and the 2000 CHE Report. The NPHE (2001) goals of equity of access and equity of outcomes (see Section 2.2.1) are among five central goals of the NPHE which were to.

...provide increased access to higher education, promote equity of access and to redress past inequalities, ensure diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape, build high-level research capacity and build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities through regional collaboration between institutions (NPHE, 2001: 18).

In order to achieve these goals, targets were set for the shape and size of HE, growth and participation rates, institutional and programme mixes and equity and efficiency goals (NPHE, 2001). Diversity was defined as various programmes types that had permeable borders and types changing with time (Bunting, 2010).

The CHE (2000) rejected the proposal of the White Paper 3 - A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (DOE, 1997) for different programmes and instead proposed different institutional types to constitute diversity. Three hierarchical types of institutions were proposed by the CHE (2000) and comprised, firstly, of bedrock institutions characterised by quality undergraduate programmes but limited postgraduate programmes. Secondly, extensive Masters and selective doctoral institutions combining both quality undergraduate programmes, extensive postgraduate programmes and selective doctoral research programmes. Thirdly, comprehensive postgraduate and research institutions with quality undergraduate programmes, comprehensive post graduate and research programmes up to doctoral level (Bunting, 2010). These three types of institutions did not meet with ministerial approval, and the NPHE (2001) rejected these structures proposed by the CHE. The proposals were rejected as it was thought that these differences between teaching and research institutions would constrain the development of institutional

strengths and responsiveness to market needs (Bunting, 2010).

Criteria for an institution's academic programme mix were proposed where institutions could decide on missions based on their contexts as an alternative to the CHE proposals (NPHE, 2001). The underlying assumption here was that institutions would have freedom to build their strengths. A Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) was given ministerial approval in 2002 and in 2007 enrolment targets for 2010 were set for HE institutions (DOE, 2002). The PQM describes qualifications and fields of study that the Department of Education approved for each institutional type.

The NPHE also provided for three new institutional types but they differed from the hierarchical institutions proposed by the CHE. Section 2.3.2 below firstly, looks at the Qualifications Framework before looking at the formation of the three institutional types. The transformation of the Qualifications Framework was seen as a significant move towards equity in HE and the building of institutional strength.

### **2.3.2 Qualifications Framework**

As a result of the National Plan's proposal for a single coordinated yet diverse HE system, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) was published in October 2007. It outlined a new unified Qualifications Framework for all HE qualifications, which would form part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The HEQF's vision was to accommodate diverse HE institutions with the autonomy to pursue their own curricula; develop graduates who could make social, cultural and economic contributions to SA and globally; have an enhanced and highquality research system; have parity with international qualifications frameworks, be flexible of new qualification types, with articulation of qualifications and the NQF as a whole (DOE, 2007).

The argument was that the HEQF would improve articulation of students between programmes and HE institutions. As it stood, qualification structures were separate and parallel (Bunting, 2010). A further basis for a unified Qualifications Framework was that public confidence in HE institutions would improve because of the accessible framework and qualification titles (Bunting, 2010). Furthermore, common parameters and criteria would encourage comparability of qualifications across the system as well as programme diversity and innovation (DOE, 2007). The Framework would consist of level descriptors, main qualification types and their descriptors,

qualification standards and designators (the specific degree) for qualification specialisation (DOE, 2007). The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) would oversee the registration of standards and qualifications based on unit standard and their designators while the Higher Education Qualification Committee (HEQC) of the CHE would oversee quality assurance.

The HEQF specified that HE would occupy levels five to ten of the ten levels on the NQF. Most importantly vertical, horizontal and diagonal progression between qualifications would be facilitated. Vertical refers to a qualification norm, horizontal to progression between qualifications and diagonal progression towards another qualification upon completion of one qualification. An example given by the DOE (2007) to illustrate the progressions, makes reference to a student with a first year of study in a Diploma field being admitted to a second year of study of a cognate Bachelor's Degree.

Each institution would have its own unique PQM designed to articulate with its vision, missions and plans (DOE, 2007), which the DOE would approve. Here too, the HEQF is aligned to the National Plan of differentiation by PQMs. The HEQF was brought into effect in January 2009 and was at first applied to new programmes only and completion date for implementation was envisaged to be 2015. After the National Plan was published in February 2001, HE institutions were required to submit details of actual and proposed programmes. These would be reviewed on the basis of their PQM fit, the mission of the university as well as regional and national needs; institutional capacity; student to staff ratios; enrolment trends and throughput rates (Bunting, 2010). Furthermore, a PQM for each institution for the years 2003 to 2006 was given ministerial approval in 2002. The PQM confirmed the programme offerings of most institutions while some institutions had programmes withdrawn once assessments were made of institutional capacity and performance with only a few new programmes being approved (Bunting, 2010).

### **2.3.3 Qualifications Framework revised**

The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2012) showed that qualifications remain separate and parallel despite the good intentions of the Framework. This could be because the NPHE (2001) did not clarify how progression would be achieved given the different knowledge focuses of different qualifications. Diploma knowledge is categorised as “primarily professional, vocational or industry

specific with the knowledge emphasising general principles and application” (DOE, 2007: 19) while the Bachelor’s Degree knowledge is “well-rounded, broad, has a knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines enabling them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context” (DOE, 2007: 21).

The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training acknowledges that the NQF has not “facilitated judgements about equivalence” and that there have been “well-meaning attempts to pretend that different types of education and training are equivalent” (DHET 2012: 15). This implies that that programme articulation, a potential advantage for students, remains opaque as it was not clarified how qualifications would be constituted to facilitate articulation. For example, the NPHE does not outline how many credits would be the minimum admission criteria to allow for articulation between qualifications. Misperceptions that arose among students were that progression equals vertical movement up the NQF ladder, not vertical movement between qualifications, and they also felt more qualified and competent than in reality (DHET, 2012). What was missing from policy was engagement with building equivalence and quality at institutional minimal level (Singh, 2008).

In 2013, the DHET released a revised replacement of the existing HEQF, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework (HEQSF). Its purpose is to address the ongoing problems noted above such as articulation between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and coherence and consistency of some qualifications in relation to needs of different professions and access goals (DHET, 2012). The main aim is to consider new qualification types to improve access based on institutional proposals for more flexibility within pathways. The new HEQSF (DHET, 2012) oversees the convergence of diplomas and degrees at honours level not masters levels; has two additional qualifications to the existing nine; recognises vocational, professional and general routes with more clarity on the articulation between these routes and, lastly, interprets some existing qualifications, for example, the Bachelor’s degree, more clearly. Articulation pathways have been spelt out more explicitly in the progression section of each qualification in this revised document. Vocational, professional and general routes are now recognised and the articulation possibilities between these routes are clarified (DHET, 2012). Having discussed revised programme articulation and qualification types, the discussion now moves to the reconfiguration and renaming of HE institutional types in SA.

### **2.3.4 Institutional Types**

#### **2.3.4.1 Emergence of new Institutional Forms**

Alongside the deliberations about qualifications and the articulation between them, there was much debate about institutional type. As noted in Section 2.2, HE institutions had been unequally constituted under apartheid. There were 36 HE institutions before 1994, of these 21 were universities and 15 were technikons, the latter of which provided vocational type programmes. Furthermore, 11 were previously White universities and ten were Black universities, eight were previously White technikons and seven Black technikons<sup>7</sup>.

One of the proposals that emerged from the White Paper 3 - A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (DOE, 1997) was that new institutional and organisational forms needed to be built as part of a single coordinated and equitable system. A report, *The Restructuring of the Higher Education System in South Africa* by a National Working Group recommended the reduction of institutions through a process of mergers and the NPHE (2001) translated this into a strategic objective that aimed to restructure HE's institutional landscape and ultimately reduced the 36 institutions to 23. The merger of HE institutions was done on the rationale that HE institutions needed to be reduced to make them more equitable and was to be based on programme and institutional collaboration (NPHE, 2001).

Three categories of institutions were approved and named as university of technology, (traditional) university and comprehensive university (Asmal, 2003). Technikons were merged into a new institutional form named Universities of Technology, which would continue offering vocational programmes. Universities would offer mainly traditional academic programmes (Asmal, 2003). A further new institutional form emerged, the comprehensive university, which would be a combination of a university of technology and traditional university and would offer both academic programmes and vocational programmes (Asmal, 2003).

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<sup>7</sup> Previously White institutions had a considerably changed student racial profile by 1994, albeit still not one that reflected the racial demographics of the country. Previously Black institutions have, however, remained almost exclusively so in terms of student racial profile.

Table 2.4 illustrates the different programme offerings by the three institutional forms:

| <b>Institution type</b>    | <b>Programme</b>                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| University of Technology   | National Certificate, National Higher Certificate, National Diploma, Bachelor of Technology, Master of Technology and Doctor of Technology.                       |
| University                 | Formative Bachelor Degrees, professional Bachelor Degrees, postgraduate Diplomas, Honours Degrees, research and professional Master Degrees and Doctoral Degrees. |
| Comprehensive universities | A combination of both above                                                                                                                                       |

DOE (2002)

Table 2.4 Programme offerings

Table 2.5 shows the categorisation of institutions:

| <b>Institution categorisation</b> | <b>Names of institutions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universities of Technology        | Mangosuthu University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Durban University of Technology,                                                                                                                                      |
|                                   | Tshwane University of Technology and Central University of Technology.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Universities                      | North West University, Wits University, University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, University of Pretoria, University of Kwazulu Natal, University of the Free State, Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape, University of Limpopo and University of Fort Hare. |
| Comprehensive Universities        | Walter Sisulu University, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Venda University, University of Johannesburg, University of South Africa and University of Zululand.                                                                                                             |

DOE (2002)

Table 2.5 Institutional categorisation

#### **2.3.4.2 The Comprehensive University**

The characteristics of the comprehensive university are significant for this study as it is situated in a comprehensive university. Comprehensive institutions were created as a result of “a governmental desire for the following four conditions:

- (i) improved access to, and articulation between, different types of programmes; (ii) efficiency gains; (iii) research synergies; and (iv) enhanced responsiveness to regional (social and economic) needs (DOE, 2002: 24).

The Ministry of Education argued that comprehensives would assist in increased student access and mobility (Asmal, 2002). Institutional specific goals were also identified for each comprehensive institution (Gibbon, 2004). Academic drift would be prevented by maintaining balance between university and technikon type programmes in the institution’s mission (DOE, 2001b), the basis on which the comprehensive university had been categorised.

Boughey and McKenna (2011) contend that the definition of comprehensives as a simple binary between technikon-type programmes and university type programmes, as evident in national documentation, does not account for the complex interplay of pedagogical approach, academic identity and extent and type of research and industry links. Muller (2004) agrees that the language being used to currently talk about technikon and university programmes is inadequate and calls for conceptual refinement of terms. Comprehensives should avoid a muddiness of academic drift where the comprehensive leans towards either more conceptual (the discipline’s epistemological core) or more contextual (applied) programmes and to counter this, comprehensives should decide which direction would dominate (Muller, 2008). Bunting (2010) cautions that the anomalies of these three institutional types would constrain them and this would challenge the borders of these three types of institutions. The blurring of binary divide between conceptual and contextual had already become evident (Muller, 2004) Straddling the binary divide between programmes could be realised if the curricula purposes and contents are analysed in a thorough process where the knowledge demands and pedagogical approaches of different programmes were respected (Gibbons, 2008). The critiques speak to the complexities of merging the disparate contexts of universities and technikons.

### **2.3.5 Ongoing Transformation Challenges in Higher Education**

This section looks at contesting views of transformation in HE and discusses the attainment of the goals of institutional differentiation. It also gives argument against foregrounding economic responses to HE to the exclusion of other HE goals.

#### **2.3.5.1 Achieving Differentiation and Diversity**

Despite the noble intentions of the National Plan, differentiation and diversity based on quality and redress remain elusive (Le Roux and Breier, 2012; DHET, 2012; Scott et al, 2007, 2013). Differentiation serves both a social justice or public good<sup>8</sup> and an efficiency and effectiveness<sup>9</sup> agenda but the danger exists that the public good agenda would be subsumed by efficiency needs (Singh, 2008). The National Plan's intent was to respond to both these goals but inequalities remain stark. Universities continued to experience transformation challenges in their academic mission with universities of technology and comprehensive universities experiencing academic drift; low throughput and participation rates (DHET, 2012) and student experiences of race and discrimination (Soudien et al, 2008). Part of the problem could be that institutions might be striving towards homogeneity and a "gold standard of research intensive institutions" (Singh, 2008: 12) and not diversity and differentiation ideals. Furthermore, it could arise from not linking differentiation strongly enough to strategies to achieve other policy goals such as quality (Singh, 2008).

Defining differentiation strategies that are workable and realistic in challenging contexts are difficult and complex (Singh 2008). In situations of extreme socio-economic and educational inequality, diversity and differentiation had to be a strategic engagement with the context and its qualifying conditionalities and that its values had to be seen in tandem with its risks (Singh, 2008). In such situations, there should be negotiation of tensions and conflicts between differentiation and other competing policy goals, in order for differentiation to become a progressive strategy that achieves quality (Singh, 2008). In the light of the Scott et al (2007) findings of continuing inequalities of access and outcomes, Singh argues that "large scale national interventions ...are still required ...(to build)... acceptable equivalences in

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<sup>8</sup> Public good can be defined as a widening of access and accountability between stakeholders.

<sup>9</sup> Effectiveness and efficiency can be defined as the efficient discharge and quality of an HE's purposes and functions.

quality and capacity at least at minimal levels across all institutional types (as) an indispensable pre-condition for credible differentiation” (2008: 261).

The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2012) recommends that these challenges could be addressed without any further categorisation of institutional type; a continuum of institutions be established from specialised research-intensive to largely undergraduate institutions; support be given to the undergraduate programmes; a post school sector be established that includes Further Education and Training and other vocational colleges, skills levy institutions and regulatory and qualification frameworks with the dropping of NQF levels and lastly, a funding formula be established that speaks to individual funding realities and quality teaching and research. It is hoped that a cohesive HE sector would be a more nuanced way of dealing with transformation. However, the recommendation for a continuum of institutions appears to be reverting back to the original CHE (2000) proposal, one that had been rejected on the basis of it entrenching privileged institutions.

It can be argued that an analysis of the systemic shortcomings of disadvantaged institutions (and also how to build on their strengths) was missing from the National Plan. Indicators to measure transformation achievements have also been missing (Bunting and Cloete, 2004).

The terms “diverse”, “diversity” and “differentiation” are pervasive throughout national documentation and are often conflated. They have been used to signify the influences of difference in the HE system as a whole, its institutions, qualifications and people positively. Yet when diversity is used in reference to race, it is often used in essentialised categories while difference, on the other hand, de-essentialises fixed notions and acknowledges fluid understandings of identity (Dornbrack, 2008).

The White Paper 3 – A Programme for Higher Education Transformation understanding of “diversity” was thought of as rigid yet the National documentation such as NPHE (2001) and White Paper (DOE, 1997) did not fully interrogate the underlying assumptions of “diversity” and “difference” at micro institutional level. The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2012: 11) finds that major problems remain in the diversity, quality and quantity of the HE sector and that

...it continues to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities with regard to access to educational opportunities and success. One of the greatest challenges facing the system is the large number of young people who face a very bleak future if major changes are not introduced.

#### **2.3.5.2 Neoliberalism and the Transformation Agenda**

Transformation in HE could be argued to be at least in part an economically responsive one (Badat, 2010) with a neoliberal agenda (Dzvimbo and Moloi, 2013; Habib, 2010; Shore, 2010). There are widely diverging views about what constitutes neoliberalism but a useful definition is its broad orientation as the political and economic practices of free markets, individual rights, enterprise, entrepreneurship, free trade, private property rights (Harvey, 2005). For Maistry, “Neo-liberalism starts from the premise that individual freedom is paramount in society. Individual advancement comes through entrepreneurship and Institutional conditions should privilege the accumulation of wealth; private property rights are secured” (2012: 5). Critiques of neoliberalism include that the market processes rather than political processes or indeed social processes are made paramount and this calls into doubt the commitment to democratic processes, and in particular that this silences social justice concerns.

Satgar (2012) argues that the South African state has internalised a neoliberal economic agenda, specifically an ‘Afro-neoliberalism’ as it incorporates African characteristics. The fight for freedom in South Africa initially envisaged a social democratic or socialist state with redistributive policies (Satgar, 2012) but in 1993 the state accepted a loan from the International Monetary Fund with the condition that SA continue with its inherited economic policies. This set SA firmly on the neoliberal path. Loans from the IMF came with conditions of structural adjustment policies such as stricter monetary policies (Berolsky, 2000) that are in line with free trade markets and that restrict the introduction of ‘pro-poor’ policies.

The New Growth Path (SAGI, 2010), a framework by the SA government to stimulate growth and employment, makes reference to SA as a developmental state and says that it is not hostage to market forces and vested interests but could align market needs to development needs with careful alliances. Despite this seemingly normative view of what SA is, a developmental state, there are forces pushing it towards neoliberalism. Satgar (2012) argues that the ‘development state’ rhetoric helps SA

legitimate its contradictions. SA speaks of a developmental state and a mixed economy, in order to hold on to the socialist ideals of the Freedom Charter, and avoid the terms 'neoliberalism'. Yet it is glaringly obvious that the macro-economic policies since 1996 all have a neoliberal agenda.

Government policies such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) of 1996, Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for SA (Asgisa) of 2006, the New Growth Path (SAGI, 2010) and the National Development Plan (NPC, 2011) all aim to create jobs and reduce unemployment through market related policies and growth. The NPHE (2001) was a response to the economic policy of GEAR (Cloete, 2011). The New Growth Path (SAGI, 2010) envisages the creation of five million jobs by 2020 with a 10% reduction in unemployment from 25% to 10%. Improving educational and skills levels are important for achieving this goal and HE specifically "must do more to meet the needs of broad-based development" (SAGI, 2010: 19). Specific targets are for HE to target 30 000 additional engineers with proposals to change the subsidy formula as required and for bridging programmes to be expanded. Besides this the policy has "little of substance" of to say about education and skills training (Archer, 2011: 1).

One of the findings of the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET), is that "the post school system is not meeting the needs of the economy and society as a whole" (2012: 11). The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2012) points to the Ten-Year Innovation Plan of the Department of Science and Technology that speaks of advancing SA through technological innovation and the production of new knowledge. This hints at a vision of universities as transnational business corporations (Shore, 2010) and judges the quality of HE transformation mostly in terms of economic responsiveness (Badat, 2010). Writing from a broad international context, Shore (2010) and Wright and Rabo (2010) argue that funding formulas and quality assurance mechanisms increasingly link the university even closer to industry needs with a concomitant lack of clarity of what the university is for. Moreover, managerial and accountability practices from corporate business have been brought into HE (Habib, 2010).

The National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2011) expands the equity goals of HE to the information-knowledge system situating the latter firmly within economic development. In the opening chapter devoted to HE, economic responses are

foregrounded and equity goals mentioned last:

Higher education is the major driver of the information-knowledge system, linking it with economic development...Universities are key to developing a nation. They play three main functions in society. Firstly, they educate and train people with high-level skills for the employment needs of the public and private sectors.

Secondly, universities are the dominant producers of new knowledge, and they critique information and find new local and global applications for existing knowledge. Universities also set norms and standards, determine the curriculum, languages and knowledge, ethics and philosophy underpinning a nation's knowledge-capital. South Africa needs knowledge that equips people for a society in constant social change.

Thirdly, given the country's apartheid history, higher education provides opportunities for social mobility and simultaneously strengthens equity, social justice and democracy (NPC, 2011: 317-138).

A diverse and differentiated HE should not be reducible to economic responsiveness by subverting the social justice agenda to an economic one because HE should serve a diversity of purposes (Badat, 2010). A sole focus on economic and developmental needs negates the role of HE to develop wider social and political values for citizenship, overlooks the contributions the humanities make and ignores the fact that developing professionals for economic development is linked to the external economic environment (Badat, 2010).

This study is located in a HE system that is being shaped and reshaped by a plethora of policies and framework to address equity and economic goals. Many of the transformation goals have been achieved, such as one single system and reconfiguration of institutions, but institutional differentiation goals and programme articulation have yet to be attained.

Scott et al (2013) argue that until we understand how HE functions within its national and global environment, we will be unable to bring about the systemic changes needed to address the current scenario of poor participation and throughput outlined in Chapter One. The macro-level forces outlined thus far in this chapter all have bearing on the day-to-day realities of teaching and learning at NMMU, the institution in which this study takes place. It is to the specifics of the study context that this chapter now turns.

## **2.4 The Study Context**

The study context of this thesis is the first-year Degree and first-year Diploma PMA courses at NMMU. First-year courses were chosen because this is the year of greatest attrition for SA students (33% in 2005 and 2006, Scott et al, 2013). Arguments were made in Chapter One that this year poses a huge challenge because of the transition from school to HE and the gap between the two. This section looks at both the institutional and programme context of the study.

### **2.4.1 The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University**

NMMU, a comprehensive university was formed in 2005 as a direct result of the ongoing transformation in SA's HE sector and the 2001 NPHE which outlined the rationalisation of the sector in the form of mergers (Pinheiro, 2010). NMMU is a merger of two universities, the University of Port Elizabeth and Vista University, and a technikon, Port Elizabeth Technikon. A brief historical overview of the three institutions is given and then the current mission of NMMU is discussed.

The University of Port Elizabeth was established in 1964. The Afrikaner-Broederbond was responsible for creating this university (O'Malley, n.d.). The Afrikaner Broederbond refers to a nationalist SA movement that influenced political processes in the apartheid years. Conservative English and Afrikaans universities largely supported the Nationalist Party's segregationist policies. The University of Port Elizabeth was a dual-medium (English and Afrikaans) Whites-only university. The language policy was a way of including conservative English-speaking White South Africans (Bunting, 2002).

Vista University was one of several multi-campus universities established in 1981 and situated in urban Black townships across South Africa. The rationale behind Vista University was to keep Black students off White campuses and in Black townships, while readying them for limited skilled labour. Their mission was to train Black students to be useful to the apartheid state (Bunting, 2002). Vista was an eight campus institution with a central office in Pretoria.

Port Elizabeth Technikon, founded in 1882, was a conservative institution that supported the policies of the nationalist government. It was an all-white institution and even up until 1990, 89% of its student body was White (Bunting, 2002). The technikon's educational mission was providing vocational training for White South

Africans.

The rationale behind the merger of the University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Vista University was to strengthen education provision in what was seen as a limited catchment area. Programme offerings complemented each other; there were also significant differences which could give NMMU greater scope, offering access to a wider range of students and meeting a greater variety of vocational needs (DOE, 2002). Furthermore, it was believed that:

Rationalisation in undergraduate diplomas and certificates was possible; A consolidated endeavour to develop as research culture could be productive; adjacent campuses allowed the possibility of shared infrastructural and administrative resources. The incorporation of the Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University would help to integrate students from different backgrounds and provide a presence in a disadvantaged community (Gillard, Saunders, Terblanche and Sukel, 2012: 15).

Perceptions prior to the merger in the three institutions revealed concerns about the balance of vocational and academic programmes, funding for students and possible retrenchments in the merged institution. The management of the University of Port Elizabeth felt that they had transformed since their Broederbond days and were providing a quality education (Portfolio Committee on Education, 2004). Though publicly it was said that all three institutions were going in as equal partners, Vista felt it was being swallowed up by the two larger institutions (Portfolio Committee on Education, 2004). This was because going into the merger were two well-resourced historically White institutions and one disadvantaged historically Black institution. Lack of funding for needy students and a high failure rate were particular concerns at Vista (Portfolio Committee on Education, 2004). Furthermore, some stakeholders at the university and technikon foresaw increasing tension between the different academic cultures of the university and the technikon.

The initial incorporation of academic programmes at the NMMU was the offering of university type and technikon type programmes with separate admission requirements as this was seen to have minimal disruption of academic activities (Ogude, 2005). The ultimate vision was for broadened access with opportunities for horizontal and vertical movement between qualifications (Ogude, 2005). However, because the HEQF framework for articulation had been unclear, this remained

uneven, as will be seen later in the discussion of articulation in the PMA programmes.

NMMU has identified, among its strategic priorities to be achieved by 2020, the need to “Determine the academic size and shape of NMMU in a manner that optimises our strategic niche as a comprehensive university and responds to regional, national and global development needs” (Vision2020, 2010: 25). In addition, to “Design and implement a range of access routes as well as progression and articulation strategies and pathways between qualification types to enhance student access and progression” (Vision 2020, 2010: 27). These priorities speak to market needs and articulation between programmes and, as noted before, the second strategic priority has been impeded by a lack of clarity on articulation in the PQM.

Despite the seemingly clear outline of its priorities, a recommendation by the Higher Education Quality Committee Audit Report on NMMU (CHE, 2009) was for an institution wide debate on the nature of its comprehensive identity as there was found to be a lack of clarity of its understandings of its institutional type. This could be interpreted as an institution still grappling with its academic identity.

In response, NMMU stated that organisational, governance and human resource demands were initially strengthened and that since 2007, the focus had shifted to institutional identity and that its Vision 2020 process provided ways of conceptualising its academic identity (NMMU Institutional Audit improvement plan, 2010). Especially pertinent to this study, one of Vision 2020’s eight strategies priorities was the development of an integrated strategic academic plan namely, that “NMMU will adopt a distinctive knowledge paradigm”<sup>10</sup> (2010: 21) characterised by a critical, liberating and social justice discourse.

The NMMU vision 2020 statement outlines its comprehensive institutional type as “situated in an ... integrative paradigm (that) purposively strives to achieve a connectedness between the knowledge domains in which the university operates, as well as between itself and the communities that it serves” (2010: vi). Furthermore, student mobility and flexibility are said to be enhanced as qualifications have many

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<sup>10</sup> Section 2.5.3 in this chapter critiques notions of disciplinary knowledge as defined by paradigms and questions their continued relevance in current HE institutions.

entry and exit points with vertical and horizontal articulation pathways between various qualification types at different levels of the HEQF (Vision 2020, 2010). However, Moeng (2009), in her study on the meanings that academics assign to the notion of a comprehensive university, concurs with the CHE (2009) report finding that among NMMU academics there is a lack of a common understanding of the term comprehensive university and that the term is shifting and intangible.

Stakeholders at NMMU indicate that this new university model has the potential to offer “unparalleled opportunities in linking more vocational (applied) type of instruction and scholarship with that of more traditional (theoretical) means” (Pinheiro, 2010: 18). So too, Foxcroft argues that, “The range of programme and articulation options... has the potential to create multiple entryways and learning pathways for applicants, resulting in increased access opportunities” (2009: 2).

Moeng finds that while 66,7% of academics view the comprehensive university as offering “access to a wider range of university and technikon programmes, with articulation between degrees and diplomas” (2009: 222), 61,2 % of academics felt that some current programmes had not changed. Academics from the ex-PE Technikon feel that ex-Technikon programmes are marginalised and the implication is that students are not offered “a sufficiently wide scope of potential programmes to choose from, career pathways and career opportunities are reduced and thus articulation possibilities between diplomas and degrees are limited “ (Moeng 2009: 326). This 2009 study supports what the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) acknowledges about the lack of success of the articulation between qualifications.

With regard to attainment of the NPHE’s (2001) goals of equity of access and participation at NMMU, Black African students were found to have the least chances of success and NMMU was encouraged by the Higher Education Quality Committee to look into its foundation programmes to improve participation (CHE, 2009). Though 60,7% of students registered were Black African at NMMU, success remains racially differentiated and more males than females were registered (CHE, 2009).

#### **2.4.2 Public Management and Administration Courses**

The first-year courses in the PMA Diploma and Degree programmes are the study focus of this thesis. This section looks at the history and philosophy of the field of Public Administration (PA), how it is conceptualised by its scholars, its curricula

framework at NMMU and the rationale for this study's concern with it. The courses have no single nomenclature in SA institutions but as Public Management (PM) and Public Administration (PA) are currently used at the NMMU as descriptors for their qualifications, these are the terms this study uses to describe the field of study. It should be noted that Administration is the term commonly used by international scholars and this study uses it in this study to describe the field in a general sense but uses PMA with reference to SA HE institutions. PM programmes have been traditionally offered at technikons and PA programmes have traditionally been offered at universities.

PA dates back to ancient times. Effective administrative organisation has characterised human settlements for as long as people have settled in large groups (Gladden, 1972). PA is defined as "the system of structures and processes, operating within a particular society as environment, with the objective of facilitating the formulation of appropriate governmental policy, and the efficient execution of the formulated policy" (Fox, Schwella and Wissink, 2004: 2). This shows that it is a function of the state, with PA as the product of government policy that carries out politically determined aims and standards. Practitioners occupy positions of leadership at the central, provincial and local spheres of government and in related parastatal institutions; they manage airports and harbours; administer health services and redevelop cities; they are involved in all aspects of criminal and public law; they help protect the environment; they are involved in land development; nuclear power development and many facets of research in the fields of technology and medicine (NMMU School of Political and Governmental Studies, 2013).

A definition for PMA as a field of study proves to be elusive as it means many things to many SA institutions. It may mean management or leadership to some and administration to others with a choice between a focus of "getting things done" or "taking charge in order to get things done" (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011: 4). The notion of what constitutes the public is also not easy to define as boundaries of what constitutes it are dissolving.

Woodrow Wilson is regarded by many PA practitioners as one of the founding fathers of the science of PA (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2010). He wrote what is regarded as a seminal essay, 'The Study of Administration' in 1886 in which he called for the systematic and scientific study of administration (Van Dijk and

Thornhill, 2010). This was in response to pervasive political corruption and he argued that political reforms could be effected by PA (Pandian, 2010). Wilson is also responsible for the Politics-Administration binary (Pandian, 2010), which has influenced debate in PA since then.

PA as a field has been influenced by a number of schools of thought from 1900 to present. Greene (2005) divides the main focus areas into the following periods:

- 1900 to 1940 was a period that advocated the principles of administration;
- 1940 to 1970 was a period that saw behaviourists advocating the empirical study of behaviour;
- 1950 to 1970 was a period that linked PA to Political Science;
- 1956 to 1970 was led by the administration-as-management school of thought which emphasised economic principles for prediction of human behaviour, leading to the emergence of comparative and developmental administration;
- 1986 to 1990s was a period known as New Public Administration with an emphasis on organisational humanism, policy advocacy, participatory bureaucracy and client-focused service delivery
- 1970 to the present has seen the emergence of professional associations to focus on professionalism and standards for education and
- 1980 to the present is known as the refounding movement with a focus on privatisation and public choice theory emphasis on public accountability and equity.

PA is marked by ongoing debates that attempt to address social realities. The move in the 1990s to privatise government administration is an argument that economic inefficiencies and high costs of public services would be alleviated by privatisation (transfer of assets and activities to private sector) (Collyer, 2003). Links should be made instead to social constructions and practices and the research argues that administration practitioners need to be mindful of the different functions of private and public entities (Collyer, 2003).

Cloete's (1967) argument that PMA is interdisciplinary and located between social and management sciences, lacking therefore a specific language and theory, still holds according to Van Dijk and Thornhill (2011). The same arguments of the 1960s about this field of study are still valid today: The content of PMA programmes is flexible and the boundaries are permeable. Though interdisciplinary studies are worthy studies, they can create tension and lead to a fragmented field (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). In contrast, Gildenhuys (2004) argues that bringing together a body of knowledge (such as Political Philosophy, Economics and Economic Philosophy,

Sociology and Social Philosophy and the Philosophy of Public Law) constitutes a philosophical and holistic approach.

Van Dijk and Thornhill (2011) advocate a link to Political Science due to the shared history and their interdependence in state functions. Garcia-Zamor and Khator (1994) claim that the fields of Political Science and PA are in ideological opposition and often antagonistic to each other with PA turning to Business Management and all other social sciences for guidance except Political Science. The reason put forward for this exclusion of Political Science is that a lack of scholarly enquiry may protect administrators from scrutiny. Different political settings explain variations in the administration's organisation and functioning of administration while differences in public administrative systems explain the advantages and drawbacks of political milieus and this illustrates the complementary relationship between Politics and PA (Garcia-Zamor and Khator, 1994).

There may be commonalities in the PA and PM programmes but not enough to suffice for a theory on it (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). Generally, lines can be drawn between PA and PM with the former seen to have a more conceptual theoretical base while PM is seen to have a contextual skills based focus<sup>11</sup>. Hodgkinson (1978 cited in Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011) theorised PA and PM as two ends of a continuum, with the former representing the more philosophical, abstract and thereby higher end and the latter the universal functional lower end.

Though PA has more of a conceptual basis, the main concern for scholars in both Public Management and Public Administration is with an understanding of the practice and not theory (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). This makes the field vulnerable to an overconcentration on localised practice and individual choice. Van Dijk and Thornhill (2011) argue for elimination of dichotomies of theory and practice in curricula and advocate a balanced approach of both. They note, however that their call is hindered by an absence of a coherent conceptual philosophy in the field. Scholars should strive towards a more theoretical framework because it enhances understanding of the link between administration and the public, the synergies that exist between knowledge and action in academic fields and because

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<sup>11</sup> Notions of conceptual and contextual disciplinary knowledge are discussed in more detail in section 2.5.2 in this chapter.

the role of government is becoming increasingly complex (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011).

After 1990 (with the release of Nelson Mandela and unbanning of political parties opposing apartheid and the move to a more democratic SA), PMA underwent a self-search for meaning in this transforming SA. Scholars met in 1991 at the Mount Grace for a conference to consider “the character of the post-apartheid public service, the nature of appropriate public sector training for the new administration, and the state of the public administration discipline that was to serve it” (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012: 102). Scholars felt that the programme borders were too arbitrary, the view was a narrowly apartheid based one and that the focus should shift to promoting more democratic and participatory government and public services in pursuit of a just and equitable society with more scientific rigour in analysis, explanation of phenomena (Masemurule, 2005). Furthermore, PMA was restricted and reified to one view only and the lack of research underpinning this field led to a narrow skills approach (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012). Despite this debate, there was no scholarly renewal of PMA following the conference (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012). Instead SA institutions started leaning towards western notions of PMA of a more managerial approach that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s (Masemurule, 2005).

Despite the appeal for a more theoretical framework, Masemurule (2005) argues that since 2000, PM has taken on a more skills-based approach and continues to be characterised by a theoretical vacuum. He states that PM study manuals are put together with information gleaned from various courses and are the preferred texts, rather than peer reviewed textbooks. Government practices are given a descriptive and not a critical lens leading to an instrumentalist approach, reducing students to instruments of regurgitation (Masemurule, 2005). Van Dijk and Thornhill caution that a skills-based approach would lead to students “*doing* public administration and (not) *being* public administrators” (2011: 15) and advocates for a balance between the two. Moreover, the field of PMA should not only explicate current knowledge but generate new knowledge (Kroukamp, 2011). The argument essentially is that the knowledge being presented in these programmes in SA universities keeps students from the forms of knowledge and contexts they have to deal with locally and

internationally and hinders the possibility of creative and critical responses to a changing public environment.

### 2.4.3 Public Management and Administration Courses at NMMU

PMA courses were offered at the University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth Technikon and at Vista University prior to the merger. Tables 2.6 and 2.7 show the PMA courses offered at institutions prior to the merger:

| Institution                  | Course                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vista University             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA (Major in Public Administration)</li> <li>• Bachelors in Administration (BAdmin)</li> <li>• Honours in Public Administration</li> <li>• MA in Public Administration by dissertation</li> </ul>                                 |
| University of Port Elizabeth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA (Major in Public Administration)</li> <li>• Bachelors in Administration (BAdmin)</li> <li>• Honours in Public Administration</li> <li>• Masters in Public Administration</li> <li>• D Phil in Public Administration</li> </ul> |
| Port Elizabeth Technikon     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in Public Management</li> <li>• Bachelor of Technology in Public Management</li> <li>• Master of Technology in Public Management</li> <li>• Doctor of Technology in Public Management.</li> </ul>                         |

Table 2.6 PM and PA courses pre-merger

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA (Major in Public Administration)</li> <li>• Bachelors in Administration (BAdmin)</li> <li>• Honours in in Public Administration</li> <li>• MA by dissertation in Public Administration</li> <li>• Masters in Public Administration (MPA: coursework and treatise)</li> <li>• D Phil in Public Administration</li> </ul> |
| Public Management     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in Public Management</li> <li>• Bachelor of Technology in Public Management</li> <li>• Masters in Public Administration (MPA:coursework &amp; treatise)<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• D Phil in Public Management</li> </ul>                                                                                             |

Table 2.7 PM and PA courses post merger

As seen in the discussion in Section 2.4.2, PM seems to have a skills-based approach and PA a skills based approach with some conceptual theory. The distinction could have ramifications for the type of knowledge being provided at the diploma and degree levels for students.

This thesis's concern with the PMA courses is based on the ongoing debates about the nature of its curriculum, the implications of this for articulation between degree and diploma courses and for student inclusion and the perceived importance of the field in SA.

Kroukamp (2011: 20-21) places emphasis on the importance of PMA for the young SA democracy:

An efficient public service is vital to a well-functioning country that maximises its developmental potential and the welfare of its citizens. The public service should play a particularly important role in developing countries, striving to extend services and reduce inequalities, and demonstrating to citizens that their society is capable of organising itself in an efficient way. In South Africa the public service is unfortunately rapidly gaining a reputation of inefficiency, corruption and incompetence as governmental institutions routinely receive qualified audits thereby undermining, rather than maximising, the developmental potential of the country.

<sup>12</sup> Articulation has been achieved on postgraduate level with the Bachelor of Technology in Public Management articulating to the MPA and DPhil.

Kroukamp (2011) looks to the field of education and training to assist in building these capacities and argues HE should assess the nature of teaching and learning activities to ensure a more efficient and responsive public service. This speaks to the focus of this study of the kind of knowledge being privileged in the first-year curriculum and if its practices include or exclude students from meaningful participation in the academy and external world.

Research into PMA in SA concern themselves with narratives of decline and dysfunctionality in public policy implementation, historical legacies as they impact on the public sector and the lack of research in the field (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012; Mubangizi and Theron, 2011; van Rooyen, 2013,) and mechanisms to ameliorate these (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012; Nzimakwe, 2011; Raga, Taylor and Albrecht, 2011; Schurink, 2010; Schurink and Auriacombe, 2010; van Rooyen 2013). Research is also concerned with the nature of the curriculum, whether it privileges skills or theory and current philosophical focus areas, for example, citizen value and public leadership as current dominant themes in SA (Kroukamp, 2011; Masemurule, 2005; Mubangizi and Theron, 2011; van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). A further concern is whether the curriculum is technocratic, emphasising processes or democratic, emphasising development theory or social policy (Mubangizi and Theron, 2011). In their study of five universities, Mubangizi and Theron (2011) find the PMA curricula to be mainly technocratic. It should be noted that it is not clear in the methodology how they arrived at this conclusion and how the principles of the curriculum were analysed. Their findings do imply, however, that students are being excluded from knowledge they need to function effectively in their field.

As discussed, PMA scholars assume that a shift in focus would lead to a more theoretical conceptualisation but what may be missing is a closer examination of how the knowledge in the curriculum currently builds and progresses in its quest towards a more theoretical abstraction and what underlying generative principles it follows. These concerns are attended to in this thesis and the theoretical framework for examining knowledge structures is discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

The new privatisation discourse that pervades the philosophical intents of the field, (Collyer, 2003), means that corporate models are being used to ensure a more efficient public service. If this discourse is evident in the curricula, it could mean that other more intellectual pursuits of knowledge building in fields may be relinquished.

This is just one example of the kinds of issues that the literature on PMA qualifications raises and which this study on the knowledge structure of current programmes intends to interrogate.

The PMA courses at NMMU are still offered on the same campuses that they were prior to the merger with the course curricula structured differently. The Diploma courses are offered on a campus that continues to offer technikon-type diplomas while the Degree courses are offered two kilometres away on the ex-UPE campus. This might have implications for the extent to which curriculum is a collaborative affair.

The divides between the courses are not only physical but extend to curricula as well. Different admission criteria exist for the Diploma in Public Management and the Bachelor of Administration (BAdmin). This partly reflects the nationally set admission requirements for diploma and degree study (HEQSF, 2013). The National Diploma, which is on NQF Level 5 (the level for diplomas stipulated on the NQF) and with a total NQF credit of 360, has the following admissions criteria:

Admissions point score of 27<sup>13</sup> and in school subjects:

- A minimum of 40 to 49% in English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa<sup>14</sup>
- 40 to 49% for Mathematical Literacy<sup>15</sup> or 30-39% for Mathematics core<sup>16</sup>
- Scores between 22 and 26 points are allowed to write an Access Assessment Test (English, Numeracy and Mathematics test at NMMU) and
- in addition, all prospective diploma students write an English Proficiency Assessment Test. If they obtain 50% or more, they do Communication in English A (a professional English for the workplace course) and if they obtain less than 50%, they do Communication in English B (Arts Prospectus, 2013).

The BAdmin, which is on NQF Level 6 (the level for three year degrees stipulated on the NQF) and, like the degree programmes, has a total NQF credit of 360 has the following admissions criteria:

Admissions point score of 32 and in school subjects:

---

<sup>13</sup> Each undergraduate student applying to NMMU requires a particular admissions point score for different courses

<sup>14</sup> isiXhosa is an official SA language.

<sup>15</sup> A school subject that uses basic Mathematics to solve everyday problems.

<sup>16</sup> A school subject focused on mathematical problem solving and reasoning

- a minimum of 40 to 49% in English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa;
- 50 to 59% for Mathematical Literacy or 30-39% for Mathematics core and
- scores of between 22 and 31 points are allowed to write an Access Assessment Test (Arts Prospectus, 2013).

The curricula for the two programmes also differ markedly. While the Diploma comprises only of compulsory modules the Degree allows for more choice as it has one compulsory module per semester and a choice of major from nine different disciplines.

The compulsory modules for the first-year of the Diploma in Public Management, which will be the subject of this study are:

- Public Resource Management I (PRM 1111),
- Public Service Delivery I (PSD 1111),
- Self-Management I (PSM 1111),
- Public Decision-Making I (PDM 11120, and
- Public Office Management (PQM 1112) (Arts Prospectus, 2013).

Public Information Services I (PIS 1111) and Public Information Practices II (PIP 2112) are further compulsory modules but as they are computer literacy courses and are not offered by lecturers in the department, they will not be the subject of this study.

The compulsory modules for the year Degree in Public Administration, which are the subject of this study are:

- Ethos of Public Administration (SPA 101),
- Constitutional Framework for Public Administration (SPA 102),
- Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration (SPA 103) and
- Administration for Development (SPA 104) (Arts Prospectus, 2013).

Furthermore, BAdmin students can choose any major from the following disciplines: English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, French, Industrial Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Business Management, Political Studies and Public Management.

Fundamental modules (of 12 credits) are English Language Studies/Practical English/Professional English and computer literacy modules/End user computing (Arts Prospectus, 2013). Recommended electives are isiXhosa for beginners, Understanding Cultural Diversity, Anthropology, History, Economics, Economic History, Labour Law and Accounting (Arts Prospectus, 2013). These student elective courses will not be the subject of this study.

Such structural distinctions between the two programmes are carefully scrutinised in the discussion chapter of this study. For now, suffice to say that even though articulation has been addressed at the postgraduate level with the BTech articulating to the MPA and DPhil, they have not been addressed as per the NPHE at the undergraduate levels. The Diploma and Degree programmes have different entry requirements and NQF levels. The Diploma can progress to a Bachelor of Technology Degree and the BAdmin Degree can progress to a BA Honours: Public Administration. Both Bachelor of Technology and BA Honours are currently at NQF level 7 but the HEQSF places the exit level for diplomas at 6 and for degrees at 7, with Honours at level 8. The NQF credits for the Bachelor of Technology at NMMU is 120 whereas there are 130 for BA Honours: Public Administration. The HEQSF is also silent on the remaining existence of the BTech Degree. On the face of it, the binaries remain along vocational and traditional lines in terms of the nature of their curricula knowledge with no articulation possibilities, diagonally, horizontally and vertically between the diploma and degree as envisaged by the NPHE.

This discussion on the PA field and the specific study context of NMMU and PMA programmes now leads to me to a discussion of disciplinary and curricula knowledge. The classification of disciplinary and curricula knowledge also needs contextualisation in a study concerned with knowledge.

## **2.5 Disciplinary and Curricula Knowledge**

Understandings of knowledge, what it is, what counts as knowledge and how it is produced and reproduced have been much contested and interrogated. As this thesis is specifically focused on the issue of knowledge, this section discusses ways in which disciplines and curricular knowledge have been described in the literature and how these understandings are shifting within HE. While this chapter provides a broad overview of understandings of knowledge, Chapter Three takes the issue further by explaining how knowledge is theoretically framed in this study.

### **2.5.1 Singulars and Regions**

Singulars and regions are one way of categorising disciplines. New emerging fields of knowledge, referred to as 'regions of knowledge' (Bernstein, 2000) have important

implications for this study at a comprehensive institution. Singulars are defined as disciplines constituting specialised discrete discourses with strong boundaries, practices and hierarchies which are mostly orientated towards their own development (Bernstein, 2000). Traditional disciplines such as Geometry or Anatomy are examples of singulars. A region, on the other hand, joins together independent disciplines and they could either be specialised or interdisciplinary (Muller, 2008). Regions have recontextualised singulars into bigger units and they are said to face inward towards the singulars' disciplines and outwards towards the external field of practice (Bernstein, 2000). They are thus operational in both fields. Engineering and Law are examples of regions. Bernstein (2000) argues that regionalisation raises legitimacy questions for the pedagogic culture of singulars and weakens their boundaries.

Furthermore, 'fourth generation professions' are emerging such as Tourism and journalism and these professions are "more diffuse, fluid, less organised, and consequently sends out more ambiguous, frequently contradictory signals about professional requirements to the academy" (Muller 2008: 17-18). The core knowledge base of such new regions are not yet stable and an accepted and incremental body of knowledge is not established, they often do not have foundational disciplines in their core curricula and often suffer from a weak professional identity develops as a result (Muller, 2008). One of the issues for the teaching of regions would be the changes in orientation of identity towards a greater external identity (Bernstein, 2000).

To relate the above discussion to my study, PMA is a region, because as will be discussed in detail later in this thesis in Chapters Five and Six, it draws on multiple disciplines and is very explicitly focused on the world of work. The extent to which this regional nature affects the Diploma and the Degree is of interest and will be taken up during the data analysis.

### **2.5.2 Conceptual and Contextual Coherence**

A central concern for educationalists is the issue of coherence. How do the sections of a programme hold together? How does the knowledge build up across the years? There have been a number of ways in which the literature describes the issue of coherence across curriculum knowledge. Curriculum knowledge as it is produced

from disciplinary knowledge is the focus of this thesis. It is a fallacy to conflate curricula and disciplinary knowledge as the curriculum presented to students differs from disciplinary knowledge produced by scholars (Muller, 2008).

Muller (2008) suggests that the heuristics of 'conceptual and contextual coherence' are a way of making sense of different kinds of curricula. Conceptual coherence in a curriculum refers to a more research-oriented academic mission with more formative education provision, in other words, a focus on the epistemology of the discipline (Chisholm, Volmink, Ndhlovu, Potenza, Mahomed, Muller, Lubisi, Vinjevold and Ngozi, 2000). There is also a hierarchical abstraction and increased levels of difficulty of concepts as they build upon each other (Muller, 2008). Contextual coherence in a curriculum, on the other hand, has a more externally oriented academic mission focusing on the external environment's educational and training needs and is segmentally connected and focused on being adequate to a context (Muller, 2008). In conceptual coherence, the focus is on internal adequacies of truth or logic while for contextual coherence, this adequacy is externally determined by professional bodies (Muller, 2008). However, curricula could have a mix of both conceptual and contextual qualities in differing degrees (Muller, 2008). The degree of conceptual and contextual qualities in the PMA programmes will be analysed in Chapters Five and Six.

The conceptual versus contextual understanding of coherence in a curriculum implies that individuals and programmes behave in particular ways as result of bodies of knowledge and can be (mis)construed as a deterministic approach (Becher and Trowler, 1996). Perceptions of traditional binaries between disciplines do not engage with the nature of what constitutes the knowledge of discipline and vocational or applied based programmes. Section 2.5.4 will argue that such binaries are no longer realities in HE. This might also help with the ways in which comprehensive universities define themselves, and with their mix of vocational, professional and formative programmes.

### **2.5.3 Knowledge Typologies**

A number of typologies have been used to classify disciplinary knowledge. The typologies discussed below postulate that consensus around what constitutes disciplinary knowledge among scholars is the significant factor in knowledge creation. Knowledge typologies include Kuhn's (1970) paradigm development and

Durkheim's (1951) social integration as these concepts underpin the approaches that have followed.

### **2.5.3.1 Kuhn's Paradigm Development**

Kuhn (1970) developed the notion of paradigms distinguishing knowledge domains. He conceives of a paradigm as scholars agreeing widely on the particular methods, goals, programmes of study and research questions to advance knowledge in a given field (Pfeffer, 1993). It is in essence the "shared theoretical structures and methodological approaches about which there is a high level of consensus" (Cole, 1983: 112). The major tenet in Kuhn's theory is that a discipline develops through changes in a paradigm. Kuhn (1970) illustrates how a paradigm develops by distinguishing between normal science and revolutionary science. In this view, normal science proceeds with its normal work until an anomaly or intellectual revolution influences it and changes the paradigm and science normalises until another revolution (Kuhn, 1970). The paradigm thus determines the discipline, he argues.

There are distinct differences between disciplines with high paradigmatic and low paradigmatic levels. If a discipline is highly paradigmatic, it is said to have a high level of consensus within its practitioners about what should be researched (Jones, 2011) and how this research should be undertaken. On the other hand, if it has low levels of paradigmaticism, it is said to have less consensus about what should be researched and the methods used (Jones, 2011). The typologies, discussed below, are embedded in the notion that some knowledge domains have a stronger and more centralised social organisation maintaining a higher paradigm while others are more fluid and contested (Rawling, McFarland, Dahlander and Wang, n.d.).

### **2.5.3.2 Durkheim's Mechanical and Organic Solidarity**

The typologies in this section operate from a Durkheimian concern with social integration of members of a collective. Durkheim (1984) postulated that social integration and order occurs through solidarity of individuals and specifically through mechanical and organic solidarity. He defines mechanical solidarity as the integration of members of a collective through the mutual sharing of a body of beliefs and values (Hargens, 1975). Organic solidarity is the integration of members through the interdependence of specialised individual actions and tasks (Hargens, 1975). To

put it another way, mechanical solidarity is “shared understandings” among scholars and organic solidarity is “collaborative work production” (Rawling, McFarland, Dahlander and Wang, n.d.: 8). Both organic and mechanical solidarity are present to differing degrees as no collective integrates through only one (Durkheim, 1984).

A further concept related to social integration that Durkheim (1951) developed is that of anomie. Anomie or normlessness is the notion that explains when individuals become less constrained by group norms like in cases of great turmoil (Durkheim, 1951). Durkheimian organic solidarity, mechanical solidarity and anomie have been widely used to underpin categorisation of disciplines.

### **2.5.3.3 Consensus Typologies**

Jones (2011) argues that the typologies (discussed below) that have received the most attention from researchers are those of Hagstrom (1964), Hargens (1975), Zuckerman and Merton (1972), Lodahl and Gordon (1972), Biglan (1973a) and Becher (1989).

Hagstrom's (1964) classified knowledge on the basis of consensus among scholars of each other's contributions. Scholarly anomie or lack of solidarity was the main reason for lack of consensus. Hargens (1975) extended Hagstrom (1964) study of a single discipline to a systematic comparison of disciplines. In a parallel to Durkheim's notions of solidarity, Hagstrom (1964) postulated that there are two dimensions of social integration: normative and functional integration. Normative integration defined as the degree to which members of a discipline agree on norms, values and beliefs essential to research in their subject (Hargens, 1975). Functional integration is defined as the harmonising of information and behaviour related to specialised contributions of a discipline's constituent units, for example, if there is professional communication among a discipline's members and if they are aware of each other's work (Hargens, 1975).

Zuckerman and Merton's (1972) disciplinary approach classified disciplines on the basis of disciplinary codification. By codification they mean the “the consolidation of empirical knowledge into succinct and interdependent theoretical formulations” (Zuckerman and Merton, 1972: 303) about which there is consensus. Lodahl and Gordon (1972) extended Kuhn's (1970) paradigm development concept to show the level of consensus by comparing disciplines. Consensus denotes certain theories

and findings that have been proven and accepted and can be used as the basis for future investigations (Lodahl and Gordon, 1972).

Biglan's (1973a) typologies of hard versus soft, pure versus applied and life versus non-life disciplines have been widely applied to distinguish between disciplines. This typology is based on a concern with similarities and differences in different fields (Alise, 2008) and particularly with faculty members' perceptions of the subject matter in different disciplines in their fields (Biglan, 1973a). The dimensions on the typology involve the degree to which a shared paradigm exists in the field, the degree of concern with application of disciplinary knowledge and whether or not the discipline is concerned with life systems (subject matter makes reference to any type of living thing) (Alise, 2008). Biglan (1973a) proposed the following disciplinary typology to distinguish disciplines in higher education institutions (see Table 2.8):

|                | <b>Hard</b>             |                                       | <b>Soft</b>             |                           |
|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
|                | <b>Life</b>             | <b>Non-life</b>                       | <b>Life</b>             | <b>Non-Life</b>           |
| <b>Pure</b>    | Biology<br>Biochemistry | Mathematics<br>Physics                | Sociology<br>Psychology | Literature<br>Linguistics |
| <b>Applied</b> | Agriculture<br>Medicine | Civil Engineering<br>Computer Science | Education<br>Nursing    | Accounting<br>Law         |

Goel (2010)

Table 2.8 Biglan's (1973a) typology

Disciplines are distinguished on the basis of the Kuhnian notion of paradigm as to whether they have “consensus or sharing of beliefs within a scientific field about theory, methodology, techniques and problems” (Lodahl and Gordon, 1972: 58). The paradigm determines whether the discipline is hard or soft while applied or pure refers to the extent of concern with practical application of the discipline. High paradigmaticity leads to increasing specialisation, higher functional differentiation, interdependence and cooperation while low paradigmaticity results in low differentiation, interdependence and social connectedness (Muller, 2008). Hard disciplines have a high degree of paradigmatic consensus while soft disciplines have more nebulous paradigms and pure has little concern for practical application (Alise, 2008). The focus areas for disciplines are as follows: hard-pure focuses on mastery of the physical environment; hard-applied on problem-solving and knowledge

application for the creation of products; soft-pure on creative and intellectual pursuits and soft-applied on personal growth, reflective practice and lifelong learning, and on professional practice enhancement (Goel, 2010).

Becher's typology distinguishes between "the social aspect of knowledge communities and the epistemological properties of knowledge forms" (Becher, 1989: 1). He questions whether Kuhnian analysis of differences in degree of consensus is not as a result of historic or social circumstance and, therefore, little to do with the nature of the discipline. He proposes ascribing a tribe (academic culture) to each territory (disciplinary knowledge) discipline with each tribe having its own cultural and cognitive style. A territory is the cognitive perspective while a tribe is the social perspective. The relationships between tribes and territories are emphasised because "in practice, academic cultures and disciplinary epistemology are inseparably intertwined" (Becher and Trowler, 2001: 23). The different cultural and cognitive styles of the tribes essentially look at the ways in which academics in the different tribes behave and their attitudes to their disciplines. Each tribe has a stake in defending its territory (disciplinary boundaries) to the detriment of intellectual cohesiveness (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

Becher (1989) finds Biglan's hard, soft, pure and applied categories useful as he argues they are more subtle distinctions of the cognitive dimension. Hard disciplines have higher social connectedness, teaching collaboration and thus are more likely to spend less time on lesson preparation and teaching than soft disciplines (Muller, 2008). Hard disciplines spend more time on research with postgraduates while soft disciplines supervise more outside their own specific areas and research and publish less as a result (Muller, 2008).

Becher adds a social context in his typology of knowledge to the four sets of properties in the cognitive dimension (Alise, 2008). To categorise this dimension he proposes a spectrum between convergent (tightly knit disciplines with clarity on mutual cohesion and identity) and divergent (loosely knit disciplines) and urban (narrow study area) and rural (broader study area) (Becher, 1989). Becher does raise two caveats about his typology. Firstly, that forms of knowledge will change with the passing of time (Becher, 1989). Secondly, the boundaries between hard and soft, pure and applied cannot be applied precisely as there are differences within one so-called homogenous discipline (Becher, 1989).

Tables 2.9 and 2.10 illustrate some of the main aspects of Becher's (1989) typology:

| Hard pure Pure Science                                                                    | Hard applied Technologies                                                                     | Soft pure Humanities and Pure social sciences                                                     | Soft applied Applied social sciences                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Competitive, gregarious, politically well-organised, task oriented, high publication rate | Entrepreneurial, cosmopolitan, role oriented, patents rather than publications, contract work | Individualistic, loosely organised, person oriented, low publication rate, funding less important | Status anxiety, prey to intellectual fashions, power oriented, low publication rate, vulnerable to funding pressures |

Muller (2009: 211)

Table 2.9 Cultural style of tribes

| <b>Hard pure</b>                                                                                                                                      | <b>Hard applied</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>Soft pure</b>                                                                                                                                        | <b>Soft applied</b>                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>e.g. Physics</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>e.g. Mechanical Engineering</b>                                                                                                                                | <b>e.g. History</b>                                                                                                                                     | <b>e.g. Education</b>                                                                                                   |
| Cumulative;<br>iterative;<br><br>Atomistic;<br>Concern with universals;<br>Impersonal;<br><br>Value-free;<br><br>Consensus over significant questions | Purposive;<br><br>Pragmatic;<br><br>Know-how via hard knowledge;<br><br>Mastery of physical environment;<br><br>Uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches | Reiterative;<br><br>Holistic;<br><br>Concern with particulars;<br><br>Personal;<br><br>Value-laden;<br><br>Lack of consensus over significant questions | Functional;<br><br>Utilitarian;<br><br>Concern with enhancement of semi-professional practice;<br><br>Uses case studies |

Becher and Trowler (2001)

Table 2.10 Cognitive style of tribes

Underpinning the above typologies is the notion that all fields have paradigmatic development based on their consensus level (Jones, 2011). This is in keeping with a

Kuhnian (1970) notion that the most powerful stimulus for the development of highly specialised discipline is commitment to a paradigm and that the paradigm determines the discipline. Sayer (1992: 73) takes issue with Kuhnian notions of paradigms and argues that they do not take into account redundancy and tensions that are unresolved between theories nor do they address issues of overlap between theories, the implication being that theories are:

... all tightly welded together by relation of logical entailment into a monolithic block. It then appears that there can be no shades of difference of meaning, only either total conformity (within paradigms) or total incompatibility (between paradigms).

Biglan (1973a) and Becher's (1989) typologies also operate from a paradigmatic basis but look at variations between disciplines not within a discipline, their thinking is that the discipline determines the paradigm which is static (Alise, 2008). The classification approaches centre on the role of academic and on what they do. They speak to academic perceptions, practices and experience, attitudes and behaviours. Alise (2008) argues that Biglan's classification system is more cognitively based as its concern is with the structure and production of knowledge. However, Biglan's (1973a) typology has a focus on faculty's perception of their own work and that of their colleagues (Alise, 2008) and not on how the intrinsic principles of knowledge develops and builds.

#### **2.5.4 Shifts in Classification of Disciplinary Knowledge**

Becher's (1989) proposal of tribes that comprise the academic world with their own rules and norms which then compete for territories has come under strong scrutiny. Becher and Trowler (2001) find that epistemological factors affecting academic culture have changed long standing practices and the traditional absolutist links between tribes and territories have consequently transformed. Becher (1989) alluded to the danger of applying absolutes when he proposed his framework initially and, as a consequence of new emerging forms of knowledge, stronger emphasis is placed on the relative nature of categories.

Becher and Trowler (2001) have questioned these dichotomous typologies given shifting socio-economic and HE landscapes. Changes in the HE academic culture have been brought about more so by external factors than internal ones. Shifts in socio-economic contexts have concomitant shifts within HE institutions and that is

why the idea of a traditional university needs reconsideration. Due to neo-liberal economic policies in post-industrial developing countries, HE now operates in an environment where there is competition for scarce resources, globalisation, massification, a change in relations between HE, governments and industry and corporatisation of universities (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Market demands will determine academic nature and specialisation. This argument speaks to the study context of this thesis, the comprehensive university, whose primary aim is to synthesise with market needs of the region it finds itself in. There is a deepening of relations between HE and multi-nationals as they develop new products; the foregrounding of vocational education in HE; technoscience as associated with international markets is centralised and global intellectual property strategies emerge to create new research areas for HE (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Questions are raised about the strength of the discipline as a key factor in academic identity given the shifting nature of the university (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

Becher and Trowler (2001) argue that responsiveness to market needs has primarily changed the way in which knowledge is conceptualised with epistemology becoming socially constructed and interpreted. Though still significant, the denotation of disciplinary knowledge of special has diminished and so needs a rethinking (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Boundaries shifts between HE and other educational sectors result in knowledge claims becoming relativised (Becher and Trowler, 2001). These shifting boundaries are no longer compatible with the idea of a traditional university where work is done in separate discipline based departments. The claim of separate discipline departments is negated when often “adjoining disciplinary groups lay claim to the same pieces of intellectual territory” (Becher and Trowler, 2001: 60). In some parts of a comprehensive university, academic departments are on the basis of the programme and not the discipline and this has implications for the idea of disciplinary tribes.

The identity of the academic has also changed with academics also entering from outside academia and who are associated with new professional programmes in the university. This is especially true of the comprehensive university in the case of the applied disciplines. Changes on the socio-economic landscape are related to changes in academic identity, with academics having to forge new identities and face new pressures. The academic profession has become more stratified with tighter

defined areas of responsibility (Becher and Trowler, 2001). According to Becher and Trowler (2001) academic autonomy is reduced in a more centralised HE system, core academic tasks and research have also fragmented owing to HE's responsiveness to market needs and new courses have to be developed in tune with market responsiveness leading to a higher workload for academics.

A further shift in education is massification with more and more students gaining entry to universities and resulting in a change to academic culture and epistemology. While massification is a global phenomenon, as HE becomes more widely accessible, massification has particular pertinence in the SA context. It has been one of the central tenets of the NPHE (2001) in SA to provide more access and for global competitiveness (Jansen, 2003) and this leads to an increasing shift to vocational education. Growth in student numbers has also been experienced at the NMMU. A further reason for massification could be the perception that an increase in enrolments is one way of alleviating financial constraints in a competitive environment. Student profiles and readiness for HE have also changed as a result and with it calls for changes in curricula (Scott et al, 2013) as was illustrated in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

As discussed in this chapter, market needs are impacting on the PMA curricula and of interest to my study is the effect of these and other shifts in academia on the PMA programmes in my analysis. Beyond the caveat that dichotomous binaries are no longer applicable, the concern with the typologies discussed in this section is with creating enough categories to fit differences among empirical practices but they should be critiqued for the kind of theorising they use (Maton, 2011). They have been useful as ideal types (Shay, 2011) but they do not focus on the capacity of intellectual fields to build knowledge and concepts that could be used in and across fields (Maton, 2011). I concur with Maton that "these models, like others of their kind, are re-descriptions of empirical characteristics rather than conceptualisations of structuring principles" (2011: 4). I will use the models of Biglan and Becher in the data analysis chapters to show general characteristics of the PMA programmes. LCT is the main analytical framework for the structuring principles of these programmes as these models do not allow for such critical deconstructions.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The comprehensive university is eight years old in SA at the point of this study. This fairly new institution is seeking to define its academic mission in its enactment of both conceptual and applied knowledge (Muller, 2008). This study at a comprehensive university in a transformed and transforming HE landscape, hopes to add to scholarly enquiry on the nature of the knowledge types of a degree and diploma, what knowledge is privileged, what the reading and writing practices are in this knowledge and how this includes or excludes students from powerful forms of knowledge needed to function in both the academy and the external workplace environment. This study may also assist in thinking about articulation possibilities. The study focus is also not on a traditional single discipline but one that is newer and interdisciplinary and still searching for its own identity. Having provided in this chapter a broad overview of the national, institutional and programme context of this study and various considerations of knowledge in a changing HE system, I now turn in Chapter Three to the theoretical framework of this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Three is a discussion of the theoretical and analytical framings of my study. The first section on Critical and Social Realism is a brief introduction to the ontology or metatheory within which I locate my study. The next section, LCT, is a discussion of the substantive theory employed in my study. This chapter serves to position this study and to spell out the intent and the means by which the study was undertaken. This is essential for reasons of validity, understanding and critique of the approach.

#### **3.2 Critical and Social Realism**

Ontology is philosophical because it involves “thinking about thinking” (Sayer, 1992: 3). A discussion of philosophical underpinnings becomes relevant in research because philosophy serves as what Bhaskar (1989) has termed ‘underlabourer’ to substantive theories by giving them conceptualisations of reality and the world. The philosophy becomes a metatheory in this way. To make the distinction between substantive theory and philosophy clearer, a substantive question could be one such as “what causes inflation?” while a philosophical question could be “what is the nature of explanation?” (Sayer, 1992: 5).

I do not see facts as speaking for themselves, so I concur with Sayer (1992) that they do not have the authority claimed for them. I, therefore, need a philosophy that allowed for a more nuanced understanding of reality for the conceptualisation of the objects of my study. As a result, I draw on a Critical Realist (CR) philosophy as it is an ontology of the nature of being as opposed to an epistemology of knowledge or truth (Bhaskar, 2008, 2011). Though ontology has epistemological implications (Bhaskar, 2011), it is an epistemic fallacy to reduce ‘statements of being’ to ‘statements of knowledge’ (Bhaskar, 2008). The possibility of our knowing the world does not define the world (Bhaskar, 2008) because our knowledge of the world is always partial and fallible. By asking “what the world must be like for science to be possible” CR begins from what the world must be like for it to be knowable (Bhaskar,

2008: 26).

The critical dimension of CR is that it seeks to produce knowledge that frees, and this also appeals to my study's focus on social inclusion and justice. To pursue emancipation, a good understanding is needed of how the social world works and how it could work differently, and this is offered by the CR perspective (Elder-Vass, 2010). This understanding of potential change involves identifying the structures at work generating events or discourses (Bhaskar, 2011). For my research the identification of discourses in the social world is of relevance. The PMA first-year curriculum discourses and the discourses related to reading and writing are identified to try to understand if the discourses enable epistemological access.

CR ontology is said to be the underlabourer for science or knowledge and provides a critique of conceptual systems and the forms of social life in which they embed themselves (Bhaskar, 2011). Of relevance for my study is that CR is often called upon as an underlabourer for Social Realism (SR), the substantive theoretical approach used in my study.

Firstly, I briefly introduce some key concepts of CR and argue that it makes valuable claims about reality and social phenomena. CR is a rich philosophy and I have restricted my discussion below to a few key concepts of this perspective as pertains to my study. Particularly, I draw on its account of the world which is that the world exists but that it exists independently of our knowledge of it, as our knowledge of it is a fallible and incomplete account and that the world is stratified (Bhaskar, 2008; Sayer, 1992). Secondly, I introduce SR as the substantive theory in this study.

### **3.2.1 Realist Ontology**

CR offers a powerful alternative to positivism and constructionism. Positivism sees truth values in knowledge as being obtained through the observable while constructionism sees them as constructed. Positivism assumes that it is the highest form of knowledge to which all should aspire but this prejudices discussion of how different types of knowledge are appropriate to different functions and contexts (Sayer, 1992). Both positivism and constructivism propose only one true way of attaining knowledge while CR proposes many ways of understanding reality. In a CR philosophy, it is disingenuous to understand knowledge as purely gained through observation, that it can be reduced to what we can say (knowledge as derived from

facts), be regarded as a thing or that science is the highest form of knowledge (Sayer, 1992). Conflict between positivism and post modernism arises because of the choice that might have to be made between the independent reality of being in the ontological dimension and the relativity of our knowledge thereof (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson and Norrie, 1998).

CR claims that it can overcome the conflict between the ontological dimension and the relativity of our knowledge by combining ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental relationality (Archer et al, 1998). The philosophical basis of ontological realism in CR is that it sees a reality of knowledge that exists other than itself and provides limits on what could be known, though not on what could be believed (Maton and Moore, 2010). So a Truth is acknowledged but our knowledge thereof is understood to be incomplete, which leads to the notion of epistemological relativism. Epistemological relativism distinguishes between Truth and socially produced knowledge that changes as a result of time and socio-cultural context (Maton and Moore, 2010). Judgemental rationality, a further feature of CR, means that there are rational ways in which judgements can be made about the merits of knowledge claims and how this knowledge is produced (Maton and Moore, 2010). So while different knowledges are understood to exist (epistemological relativism), they are not all considered to be equally valid or pertinent, as many forms of postmodernism would argue; rather judgemental rationalism is called for to identify the best possible knowledge attainable at any time. As CR brings together realism, relativism plus the critical dimension, it is an ontology in which my study on curriculum and literacy practices is well located.

### **3.2.2 Stratified Ontology**

CR postulates that knowledge can be gained about the world as it is. It sees reality as both multi-dimensional and stratified (with structures and events), differentiated (with open and closed systems) (Archer et al, 1998) and changing (Bhaskar, 2011). An open system refers to the conditions that do not have regular sequence of events or constant conjunctions while a closed system such as a laboratory has these constant conjunctions (Archer et al, 1998). CR postulates that the world is an open system where multiple mechanisms are at play at any time, and that it exists independently of our knowledge of it, in other words it is real, but our knowledge of it

is fallible (Sayer, 1992).

Mechanisms, events and experiences are seen to constitute three overlapping domains, namely the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar, 2008), which are irreducible to each other. The real domain refers to structures and mechanisms that are relatively enduring, exist in the natural and social world, are independent of our knowledge of it and generate events (Elder-Vass, 2010). The mechanisms endure even when they do not act (Archer et al, 1998). The actual domain refers to material existence, which are things and the events they undergo, and comes about when the real is activated while the empirical makes reference to events that are actually observed or experienced (Elder-Vass, 2010). Phenomena that are generated at the level of the actual might or might not be observed at the level of the empirical.

The empirical is a subset of the actual, which in turn is a subset of the real (Elder-Vass, 2010). However, an ontology which collapses the real, actual and the empirical means that the ways in which these three domains are brought into harmony with each other cannot be revealed (Bhaskar, 2008). Table 3.1 illustrates the three domains:

|             | Domain of real | Domain of actual | Domain of empirical |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Mechanisms  | √              |                  |                     |
| Events      | √              | √                |                     |
| Experiences | √              | √                | √                   |

Bhaskar (2008)

Table 3.1 Actual, real and empirical

CR, therefore, posits that there are “enduring structures and generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable phenomena and events” (Bhaskar, 2011: 2). These structures and mechanisms are real but do not always manifest themselves and rarely are empirically identified by people (Bhaskar, 2008). These structures and mechanisms are, however, “not immune to empirical check” (Sayer, 1992:5) as “they are not unknowable...and can become manifest to men in experience” (Bhaskar, 2008:37). The world can only be understood if the structures generating events or discourses can be identified (Bhaskar, 2011). The reality of structures is, however,

irreducible to events. Understanding is obtained via a critical examination of structures and generative mechanisms. The role of the researcher is thus not just to capture the multiple experiences and observation at the empirical level, nor to detail the events that have occurred at the actual level but rather to identify the multiple mechanisms from which such events and experiences have emerged in an open system.

Structures can be enabling or constraining events and, in this way, negate a deterministic critique (Archer, 1995). CR holds that nature's generative mechanisms exist as causal powers of things (Bhaskar, 2011). Transfactuality, another dimension of CR's depth ontology, is the non-empirical universality of laws, which are the causal powers or tendencies of generative mechanisms (Archer et al, 1998: 6). The laws are said to operate even if they were unknown and undetected by human beings (Bhaskar, 2011). The laws are neither actual nor empirical but transfactual or universal (Archer et al, 1998). At the level of the real, objects and structures give rise to these causal powers. These are the generative mechanisms, that in turn cause events that may be observable but the objects and mechanisms are often not observed (Bhaskar, 1998 in Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011).

Phenomena arise at the level of the actual when "mechanisms combine to generate the flux of phenomena that constitute the actual states and happenings of the world" (Bhaskar, 2008: 37). CR works to discover these causal powers or tendencies of underlying mechanisms that produced events. The issue for the researcher such as myself becomes how to discover this shifting mix of mechanisms at the level of the real (Archer et al, 1998). Lawson (in Archer et al, 1998) argues that in an open system when there are two or more comparable populations involved and because of our background knowledge, we expect a specific relation of outcomes between these populations but the outcome is often a surprising relation to us. Then there has to be an unknown and unidentifiable causal mechanism working there (Archer et al, 1998). Researchers can also employ a contrastive explanation by identifying differences between two groups whose outcomes were expected to be the same (Archer et al, 1998). The complete causal conditions of any phenomenon cannot be identified but rather single sets of causal mechanisms (Archer et al, 1998) can be established through research. Emergence, namely "situations in which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects gives rise to new phenomena" (Sayer,

2000: 12), is significant for the workings of mechanisms. A combination of objects can often trigger a mechanism with an outcome that is dependent on the objects but not reducible to it (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011).

To conclude, the discussion on the realist position taken in this study, this ontology is one that holds that:

The social world is always pre-structured... (which means that) agents are always acting in a world of structural constraints and possibilities that they did not produce. Social structure, then, is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of intentional human agency (Bhaskar, 1978 in Archer et al, 1998: xvi).

### **3.2.3 Social Realism**

While CR provides a philosophy of the world in its entirety, both natural and social, SR is a theory of how the human world works. This study is positioned within a SR tradition, which conceptualises knowledge as both a fact and a social phenomenon. In doing this SR bridges the gap between positivist absolutism and constructivist relativism and their conceptualisations of knowledge as either based on rational truth or on social influences, with SR emphasising the fallibility of knowledge instead of it being absolute or relative. CR, as previously discussed, is an ontology that seeks to probe layers of reality and SR takes this ontological philosophy to the study of social phenomena and reasserts that reality is stratified and that the researcher needs to move from the level of the experience to get to the level of the real (Maton and Moore, 2010).

SR aligns itself to the CR philosophical basis of ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality. SR emphasises both the sociological nature of knowledge as seen in the strategies as used by individuals who are located within a field of struggle over capital forms, and the epistemological nature with its knowledge claims (Maton and Moore, 2010). By examining the curriculum of PMA programmes, this study attempts to gain insight into a “specified, discrete object of study” (Maton and Moore, 2010: 4). The “nature of knowledge as an object” is vital in SR understanding of what can be known about the world (Maton and Moore, 2010: 4).

This study’s analytical framework, (see section 3.3), draws on both New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). It is thus important for me to briefly consider how these two frames align to a CR and SR ontological position.

While LCT proponents have classified their position as SR (Maton and Moore, 2010), NLS theorists have themselves not claimed a SR position and could be argued to take a social constructivist position. While NLS theory claims that different literacy practices are valued and understood in different ways, which could be considered a relativist position, they do indicate that these emerge from mechanisms such as Gee's Discourses<sup>17</sup> (2008, 1990) which suggests a realist basis to the claims. These realist claims necessitate careful consideration of their application and development in my study.

### **3.3 Legitimation Code Theory**

The analytical frame for this study of knowledge in the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree programmes and their associated literacy practices is drawn from the work of Bernstein and Bourdieu and substantially developed by Maton into a field that has come to be known as Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). An outline is, firstly, given of the central tenets of Bourdieu's theory of social practice. I argue that some of Bourdieu's concepts are useful for this study as LCT has built on his key ideas. However, there are limitations in Bourdieu's concepts for this study's concern with the underlying principles of knowledge. This leads me to, secondly, discuss Bernstein and Maton's concern with conceptual descriptions of the condition of an intellectual field and its cumulative development of knowledge in the field of LCT in sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3. I also look at the ways in which to address limitations of knowledge in NLS conceptions of literacy in section 3.4. LCT's conceptions of knowledge are employed as substantive framework in my study, as I agree with Shay that they are "finer-grained theoretical and analytical tools for the analysis of the diverse and changing forms of educational knowledge which constitute higher education curricula" (2011: 316).

#### **3.3.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice**

Bourdieu set out to develop a coherent theoretical framework to analyse the social world. His work is situated within a socio-historical framework. The lenses from his

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<sup>17</sup> Discourse is seen as ways of being, acting, believing, saying and valuing in the world (Gee, 1990). Discourses with a small d, for example connected stretches of languages such as conversations or essays, all form part of Discourse with a capital D (Gee, 1990). Discourse with a capital D refers to particular socially acceptable ways of behaving and being in social groups that entitles a person to be a member of that group (Gee, 1990).

framework that are useful for my study of PMA curriculum knowledge and literacy practices are his notions of habitus, capital and field.

### **3.3.1.1 Habitus**

Bourdieu made valuable contributions to our understandings of knowledge with his conceptualisation of habitus as one form of social practice. Bourdieu's (1984) formula for social practices is graphically illustrated as:

(Habitus x capital) + field = practice.

I explain habitus, capital and field each in turn below, as these are the important concepts for this study.

For Bourdieu, habitus refers to:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (1990: 53).

Bourdieu (1977) argues that dispositions predispose action and reaction by agents in particular ways and generate regular practices, perceptions and attitudes which are not rule governed. Thus, individuals incorporate structured structures in their actions (Bourdieu, 1977). Dispositions are acquired in a gradual process of inculcation, and early childhood experiences play a central role as they integrate past experiences; reflect the social conditions of their acquisition; are durable as being ingrained in the individual's body so as to endure throughout the individual's life history; are transposable as they can generate multiple practices and perceptions in other fields besides the one in which they were acquired (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu is arguing here that individuals are disposed to particular ways of behaving and being in particular circumstances based on the communities they come from. Habitus explicates the conditions under which individuals have become who they are and how the body is said to be present in the social world and how the social world is said to present in the body (Reay, 2004). Habitus is a result of both free will and structures (Bourdieu, 1991) and it transcends theory and practice through its intersection of structuring structures (action) and structured structure (objectivity)

(Öztürk, n.d.).

While the notion of habitus has been critiqued as being too deterministic, Reay (2004) contends that the habitus has the ability for new creative responses and can transcend social positions that produced it. Habitus is able to transcend theories and practice with its structured structures and structuring structures, which both shape and are shaped by social practice (Öztürk, n.d.). An individual is structured by their history and the present but they structure their present and future practices (Maton, 2008).

### **3.3.1.2 Cultural Capital**

Capital is used as an economic metaphor in Bourdieu's work but should not be seen in a narrow economic sense, such as material wealth. It refers to fields that may not have an economic logic but may correspond with an economic logic broadly in their orientation towards increasing other kinds of capital, forms of power, such as cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1991). The multi-dimensional space of the social world is uncovered through the powers of capital forms (Bourdieu, 1987). Cultural capital is defined as the "knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisition as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications" and plays a critical role in power relations in society and symbolic or social capital, which refers to accumulated prestige or honour (Bourdieu, 1991: 14). His argument is that one acquires cultural capital through one's upbringing.

There is also interplay between economic, cultural and social forms of capital as the one converts into the other. This is illustrated in Bourdieu's (1988) social reproduction theory where he argues that the school system through sophisticated mechanisms reproduces the structures of cultural capital and through it, social capital. The transmission of cultural capital is ensured across generations with the practices of dominant groups being rewarded by educational institutions:

If, in the particular case of the relationship between the school and the social classes, the harmony appears to be perfect, this is because the objective structures produce class habitus and in particular the dispositions and predispositions which, in generating' practices adapted to these structures, enable the structures to function and be perpetuated (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 204).

The embodiment of cultural capital in the habitus can be a powerful way of

interpreting literacy practices in this study. A student's habitus may not have the cultural capital that HE privileges, for example, what is considered to be effective reading and writing competencies. Students need to learn the dispositions which include the reading and writing practices of HE in order to negotiate this new field, and become part of a structuring structure. Compounding the issue of the acquisition of cultural capital is the field itself and if its internal and external curriculum languages of curriculum are weak, acquisition would be challenging for students. Acquisition of literacy practices and understandings of curriculum form the key aspects of cultural capital in my study.

Students may not have the middle-class privileged cultural capital that would help their success in HE. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) explain that academic hierarchies in HE reproduce social hierarchies to the disadvantage of working class students. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), this could be a factor for explaining why working class children often do not enter HE or drop out once they have entered. Bourdieu's (1988) point about cultural capital disadvantaging working class (and in the South African case, Black) students as well as it serving a neo-liberal agenda in modern day SA are important points to consider.

### **3.3.1.3 Field**

Field is defined as a social context or fields of action (Bourdieu, 1991) and "a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and economy" and as "a veritable social universe where in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted" (Bourdieu, 1993: 162-163). The accumulation of capital in a field allows for one form of capital to be converted into another with the field always being a site of struggle for the maintenance or change of the distribution of the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Warde sums up a field as "having particular stakes and commitment to these stakes, a structured set of positions, a set of strategic and competitive orientations and a set of agents endowed with resources and dispositions" (2004: 13).

Bourdieu's (1991, 1993) concept of field can be applied to HE as a field of action where the HE field exerts its own struggles on its agents (students and staff), about acquisition of cultural capital in this field in terms of the habitus brought to the field.

Knowing what constitutes and underlies knowledge, the field and how to produce it are concepts that are, however, not undertaken in Bourdieu's theory of social practice. Bourdieu's conception of field does not explore how to identify activities that specify a field, for example it does not analyse the specific characteristics of a field such as literature or politics (Warde, 2004). A further critique of field is that it does not account for moral satisfaction of agents in its focus on competitive capital gains (Warde, 2004). Many commentators feel that the formula and Bourdieu's use of practice is confused and often conflated with field and that it is not certain what it actually refers to (Warde, 2004). Practice is not, however, the focus of this study but habitus, capital and fields, which are more nuanced concepts and more useful for this study. Significant for this thesis's concern with underlying principles and generative mechanisms of PMA knowledge, is Maton's (2008) argument that the underlying principles of habitus and capital which result in practice are not abstracted and there are no generative mechanisms underlying fields.

### **3.3.2 Bernstein's Theory on Pedagogic Practice**

Key concepts from Bernstein's (1971, 1973b, 1975, 1990, 1999, 2000) theory on knowledge in education are also drawn upon by LCT. My study employs his concepts to analyse lecturer understandings of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree curriculum as well as the reading and writing practices of PMA first-year

Diploma and Degree students. This section argues that Bernstein's theory has more relevance for my study as it looks at the underlying properties of knowledge in the curriculum and not merely its features such as other typologies presented in the previous chapter do. Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse looks at the contents of knowledge, how it is transmitted and evaluated. Maton (2008) argues that Bernstein's approach has more potential than Bourdieu's for explaining and driving integrative and cumulative knowledge-building.

Before I begin a discussion of his theory, it must be noted that Bernstein has been a controversial figure in the sociology of education. He has had critiques levelled against him of not attending to class issues and of having a cultural deficit understanding in his notions of elaborated and restricted communication codes for middle class and working class children (Sadovnik, 2001; Singh, 1997). Bernstein described differences in the ways in which language was used by different social classes but this was mistakenly understood as Bernstein claiming that there were

“essential differences between working and middle class people, rather than a description of learned forms of language use complexly caught up in relations of class power in educational institutions” (Singh, 1997: 1). The restricted and elaborated codes identified by Bernstein are functionally related to the social division of labour (Sadovnik, 2001). His work is also thought of as lacking empirical grounding and is seen as very dense, which he and others tried to attend to in later work (Bernstein, 1996; Morais, 2002).

Bernstein (1990, 1999) argues that the sociology of education should shift its focus to the selection, classification, distribution, transmission and evaluation of educational knowledge. In his view, a focus on these aspects of knowledge were missing from the research as “the sociology of education has rarely turned its attention to the analysis of the intrinsic features constituting and distinguishing the specialised form of communication realised by the pedagogic discourse of education” (Bernstein, 1990: 165). The concern in research has rather been with the social constructions of knowledge and perceptions of its related hegemonic characteristics such as characterised by class, gender and race for example. This is evident in Foucault’s (1970) emphasis on the interplay between power and knowledge and Bourdieu’s (1984) selected focus on the relationship between social structures and educational processes.

This is not to say that Bernstein was not concerned with how power relations in society played out in educational processes. Bernstein argues that his code theory was an attempt to link macro-levels of family and educational structures and processes and so give an explanation for unequal educational performance (Sadovnik, 2001). It draws attention to macro power relations and the micro practices such as transmission, acquisition, evaluation and positionings that evolve because of these (Bernstein, 1990). In his theory of pedagogic practice, Bernstein (1990) examines the processes and content of schools and postulates a set of rules for the transmission and acquisition of content. Sadovnik (2001) argues that Bernstein’s work has shown how schools do indeed reproduce social class advantages. He links the micro of underlying principles to the macro levels of social structure, class and power relations. The link between such micro and macro structures is seen to be pervasive, regardless of the intent or focus of the curriculum. Bernstein distinguishes between a pedagogic practice that is vocationally based and one that is independent of the market and legitimated by the autonomy of

knowledge and he concludes that neither of these practices eliminate the reproduction of class inequalities (Sadovnik, 2001).

Though influenced by Foucault's work, Bernstein takes a very different approach to Foucault's analysis on discourse. Foucault focuses on relations *to* while Bernstein focused on relations *within* with Foucault focused on social relations and Bernstein on intrinsic structures of knowledge (Maton, 2004). This is illustrated in Bernstein's (1990) argument that discourse itself is taken for granted and that the voice missing from pedagogic discourse is its own voice.

Bernstein's theory is a rich one, and I have attempted to distill from it only the concepts that I employed in my study. In sections 3.3.2.1 to 3.3.2.6, I discuss pedagogic discourse, pedagogic device, code, classification and framing, fields of knowledge and knowledge structures. These notions all form part of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic transmission, the construction and acquisition of knowledge transmitted, which is in essence the study of knowledge itself (Maton, 2004). These concepts are employed as underpinning LCT and as crucial to my analysis of the underlying principles regulating PMA in order to consider the particular knowledge forms that have been privileged in PMA and its associated literacy practices.

### **3.3.2.1 Pedagogic Discourse**

To give an overview of Bernstein's theory, it concerns itself with analysing pedagogic discourse and its generative principles (Sadovnik, 1995). He defines pedagogic as "the rule which embeds a discourse of competence (skills of various kinds) into a discourse of social order in such a way that the latter dominates the former" (Bernstein, 1990: 183). This rule is said to regulate the transmission and acquisition of knowledge. Though he calls it a discourse, Bernstein states that pedagogic discourse is not a discourse but a principle that gives rise to a discourse. It is the principle that appropriates other discourses. This means that it takes discourse from its site, relocates and refocuses it into another pedagogic site (Bernstein, 2000). Thus it is, in essence, a recontextualising principle meaning that it creates. recontextualising fields and agents who have recontextualising functions (Bernstein, 2000).

Pedagogic discourse consists of two discourses, regulative discourse and

instructional discourse. Bernstein (1990) has conceptualised regulative and instructional discourses by building on Halliday's notions of four vital contexts in the family. Halliday's contexts are regulative (the child as positioned in a moral system), instructional (access to competencies to manage people and objects), inter-personal and imaginative contexts (Bernstein, 1990). Only regulative and instructional discourses were, however, found to be relevant by Bernstein for pedagogic discourse. Regulative discourse, or discourse of social order, translates society's dominant values and regulates how the knowledge form is transmitted (Morais, 2002). Instructional discourse (discourse of competence) makes reference to what is transmitted (Morais, 2002). Regulative discourse, the dominant discourse, creates order, relations and identity while instructional discourse creates specialised skills and their relationships to one another (Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein (2000) argues that regulative and instructional discourses are embedded in one another to create one discourse and pedagogic discourse is the rule that has led to this.

Analysis of instructional and regulative discourses can allow one to see the knowledge being valued as revealed by the evaluation criteria. For example, if a lecturer indicates an answer is right or wrong, they will be making reference to instructional discourse, that is, the knowledge, cognitive competences and scientific processes (Morais, 2002). Furthermore, if an indication is given of what is missing from the answer, making evaluation criteria explicit, framing strength would increase (Morais, 2002). Regulative discourse is addressed if the lecturer has made the evaluation instruments explicit to the student thereby opening up the space for contestation of the marking and if the lecturer has taken the individual student being addressed into account (Morais, 2002). Framing at the level of the regulative discourse is, hereby, weakened.

### **3.3.2.2 Pedagogic Device**

Bernstein developed the notion of pedagogic device to account for how pedagogic discourse is being constructed (Maton, 2004) and to account for the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication (Bernstein, 1996). The pedagogic device is a mechanism that distributes the "thinkable" among different social groups and also identifies what may be thought and who may think it (Bernstein, 1999, 2000). Actors in educational fields use the device to regulate the principles and

social bases of three rules which are distributive rules, recontextualising rules and evaluation rules (Bernstein, 1990). The intrinsic grammar (a metaphorical concept) of pedagogic discourse is said to be provided through these three rules (Bernstein 1990, 2000). Distributive rules regulate relations between power, social groups, consciousness forms (who transmits what to whom under which conditions) and their productions and reproductions; recontextualising rules on the other hand regulate the constitution of discourse while evaluation rules find realisation in pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). Symbolic control (specialised agencies of control such as religious, legal or education) is materialised through the three rules of the pedagogic device (Bernstein, 1996).

Of particular relevance for my thesis are the distributive and recontextualising rules of the pedagogic device. My study focus is the PMA curriculum (or 'field of recontextualisation' in Bernsteinian terms). Distributive rules that mediate access to the curriculum (Wheelahan, 2013), and recontextualising rules, that are the means by which pedagogic discourse is created (Bernstein, 2000), become significant issues of study in my thesis. Though my study does not have a focus on pedagogy, evaluation rules are also important. These are explored in marked student assessments to see which literacy practices are valued by lecturers. Maton contends that "in the course of ongoing struggles within pedagogic fields, actors strive to control the pedagogic device in order to be able to shape the form taken by pedagogic discourse and so further their own interests" (2004: 2). It is of interest to see the form of the pedagogic discourse of PMA knowledge and what it reveals about issues of control in the field by its actors.

### **3.3.2.3 Code, Classification and Framing**

Code, classification and framing are important notions in Bernstein's theory. The notion of code plays a central role in Bernstein's (1999) theory and is defined as a regulative principle that underlies the processes of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. The processes of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation constitute the structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice (Sadovnik, 1995). Bernstein's notion of code is similar in some ways to Bourdieu's habitus. Bernstein's code differs from it as habitus is more general and extensive in its regulation and is specialised by class and fields (Bernstein, 1990). Bernstein (1990)

builds on Bourdieu's habitus by suggesting that code can be seen as the pedagogic grammar of specialised habituses.

Linked to code is Bernstein's conceptualisation of legitimate text. Text is defined as anything that needs evaluation (Bernstein, 2000). To produce a text, students need to acquire recognition rules of the context and realisation rules for producing a legitimate text (Morais, 2002). This speaks to my study focus of the reading and writing practices of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree field. Pedagogic discourse involves the selection and production of appropriate texts (Morais, 2002). The two dimensions contained with realisation rules are selection of meanings, and respective textual production. So, to produce a legitimate text, the student selects the relevant meanings and produces the text according to those meanings (Morais, 2000).

Both these rules have to be acquired for legitimate texts to be produced. If students recognise the context of HE and their discipline and how they are positioned in relation to it but do not acquire the realisation rules, "they cannot then speak the expected legitimate text" (Bernstein, 2000: 17). Essentially, this means that they have not acquired the pedagogic code.

In Bernstein's early work on curriculum (1971, 1973b, 1975), he developed the concepts of classification and framing within school knowledge. Classification is defined as the relationship between contents (Bernstein, 1971), or the "degree of boundary maintenance between contents" and is concerned with the "insulation or boundaries between curricular categories (areas of knowledge and subjects)" (Bernstein, 1973b: 88). It is the extent of delineation from one discipline's content to another (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

Furthermore, Bernstein (1999) used two curriculum codes, namely, collection and integrated within the concept of classification. A curriculum that has a strong classification (C+) is known as a collection code. In contrast, a curriculum that has a weak classification (C-) is an integrated code (Bernstein, 1999; Luckett, 2010). The integrated code is one where subject boundaries, that may have been previously insulated, are now blurred and hence integration code is the regulating principle (Bernstein, 1999). Integration codes can be confined to one subject or cross subjects (Bernstein, 1971). These modalities of collection and integration codes help shape

educational identity and consciousness in different ways (Maton, 2007). The collection code emphasises educational knowledge with specialisation being based on the possession of knowledge, while with the integrated code, educational knowledge is weakened and educational identity is less certain (Maton, 2007). The emphasis is on fixed teacher and student roles in the curriculum based on the collection code and on achieved roles for students in the curriculum based on an integrated code (Sadovnik, 1995).

Sadovnik (1995) and others (for example Case, 2012; Maton, 2007; Wheelahan 2011) suggest that there has recently been a shift in curricula premised on the strong classification of the collection code to the weaker classification of the integrated code. In Bernstein's view the shift from collection to integrated curriculum can be traced to the Durkheimian evolution from mechanical (shared understandings of a body of beliefs) to organic solidarity (interdependence of specialised individual actions/productions) (Atkinson, 1985).

Despite the value of the conceptualisation of the modalities of collection and integrated codes for school knowledge, Atkinson (1985) argues that the classification issues of boundary maintenance and change and the conditions under which these changes occur are not fully developed by Bernstein. While classification is concerned with boundaries between knowledges, framing refers to the pedagogic practices where knowledge is transmitted. For Bernstein (1971) frame makes reference to the context form where knowledge is communicated and received. A boundary exists between what may or may not be transmitted in pedagogical encounters and frame refers to how strong this boundary is. It has to do with how much control teachers and students have over how knowledge is selected, organised, paced and timed (Bernstein, 1971, 1999). It is about how much agreement there is about the content transmitted to students. When there is strong framing (F+), it implies that the teacher and students have a limited degree of control options and when there is weak framing (F-), it implies that they have more freedom in how things are done in the classroom and who decides that (Bernstein, 1999). While framing is a key concept to account for how knowledge is recontextualised into curriculum and pedagogy, it too was not fully developed by Bernstein and has been greatly extended within LCT, as will be discussed in section 3.3.3.

#### **3.3.2.4 Power and Control**

Bernstein (1996) later developed his original concepts of classification and framing further by constructing them as reflections of power and control relationships. Classification is linked to power. Dominant power relations are said to establish boundaries and determine the relationships between boundaries and between categories (or subject contents). Power is the insulation of one subject from another (Bernstein, 1996). Power relations determine who gets access to particular forms of educational knowledge (Singh, 1997) as “framing is about who controls what” (Bernstein, 1996: 12). It is control of the selection of the communication, its sequencing, pacing, criteria and control of its social base (Bernstein, 1996).

These control relations are used to establish legitimate forms of communication that are appropriate to different categories or contexts such as teacher-student relations in specific curricular areas (Singh, 1997). The strength or weakness of classification and framing depends on the negotiating power of teachers and students (Singh, 1997). For example, a discipline that is highly classified, has a strong collection code and strong framing, is one where academics have strong agency (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

The conceptualisations of classification and framing also serve to negate arguments that Bernstein’s theory largely uses dichotomies. Classification and framing strengthen the grammar of what has been called ideal types in Bernstein theory, for example collection versus integration and the ability of the organising principles to generate a range of forms (Bernstein, 1996).

#### **3.3.2.5 Knowledge Fields**

This section now moves to Bernstein’s notion of the three knowledge fields, which are significant in the analysis of my study. Bernstein (1999) suggests that knowledge takes quite different forms as it moves from one field to the other. Firstly, there is the field of production. This is roughly the realm of the production of knowledge, and is to be found in texts such as academic journals and conference presentations. Then there is the field of recontextualisation, which is where knowledge from the field of production is selected and adapted to develop a curriculum. A number of issues affect how knowledge is recontextualised from the field of production into the field of recontextualisation, such as national education

policies, but “since the specialised knowledges in the realm of production rest directly on the material base, there surely must be a limit to the amount of recontextualising they can bear before defeating their purpose” (Maton and Moore, 2006: 28). Finally, there is field of reproduction of knowledge, which is the field of pedagogy, where the field of recontextualisation undergoes further shifts as it is enacted in the classroom.

Production and recontextualisation are most strongly linked to classification rules, which determine the boundaries of what can and cannot be included within that knowledge. Classification does also impact on the field of reproduction but this field relates more to framing as it is to do with pedagogic practices. The pedagogic device plays a key role in reproduction as it regulates pedagogic discourse. There are differences between the fields of knowledge production and recontextualisation and reproduction and thus fields of knowledge production are irreducible to fields of reproduction (Maton and Moore, 2001).

My study focuses on the field of recontextualisation and its classification of discourse. My argument is that an analysis of this field will lay bare the different values assigned to PMA knowledge by lecturers and what counts as legitimate discourse in this field in the first year. Production governs what is happening in recontextualisation and my study postulates that the analysis of knowledge structures in the field of recontextualisation and the extent of disciplinary classification can also give valid information about PMA knowledge and the different values assigned to it.

### **3.3.2.6 Knowledge Structures**

Bernstein (1999, 2000) further distinguishes between knowledge as firstly, schooled discourse, which he terms vertical discourse and secondly, everyday discourses which is termed horizontal discourse. Bernstein (1999) argued that there is a different form of knowledge realised in horizontal discourse to that of vertical discourse. Horizontal discourse has characteristics of being “oral, local, tacit, context dependent and specific, multi-layered and specific and contradictory across but not within contexts” and all potentially have access to it because of common histories (Bernstein, 1999: 159).

In contrast, a vertical discourse refers to a form that is “coherent, explicit,

systematically principled, structured” (Bernstein, 1999: 159). The knowledge here is specialised, symbolic and explicit. It has regulative principles that structure it according to time and space, construct it, evaluate and distribute it to different groups and individuals (Bernstein, 1999, 2000). It is within the vertical discourse, that the three knowledge fields of production, recontextualisation and reproduction are to be found and which can be found to have stronger or weaker classification and framing.

Within the vertical discourse, Bernstein further differentiates between hierarchical knowledge structures and horizontal knowledge structures. Hierarchical knowledge structures, such as the natural sciences (Maton and Moore, 2001), are said to have very general propositions, theories and knowledge with this knowledge being integrated at lower levels towards more abstract levels while horizontal knowledge structures are said to comprise a series of specialised languages (Bernstein, 1999; Luckett, 2010). A hierarchical knowledge structure has very general propositions with theories and knowledge being integrated at lower levels and moving towards greater integrating propositions which would operate at more abstract levels (Bernstein, 1999, 2000). Visually, it can be portrayed as a pyramid. The theory that functions as most abstract would be at the top of the pyramid.

On the other hand, a “series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and criteria for construction and circulation of texts” characterises horizontal knowledge structures” (Bernstein, 1999: 162). These are, for example, subjects within the humanities and social sciences. Each language may have different and even opposing assumptions and its own criteria with a new language signaling development (Bernstein, 1999).

Figure 3.1 illustrates Bernstein's (1999, 2000) distinctions between knowledge:

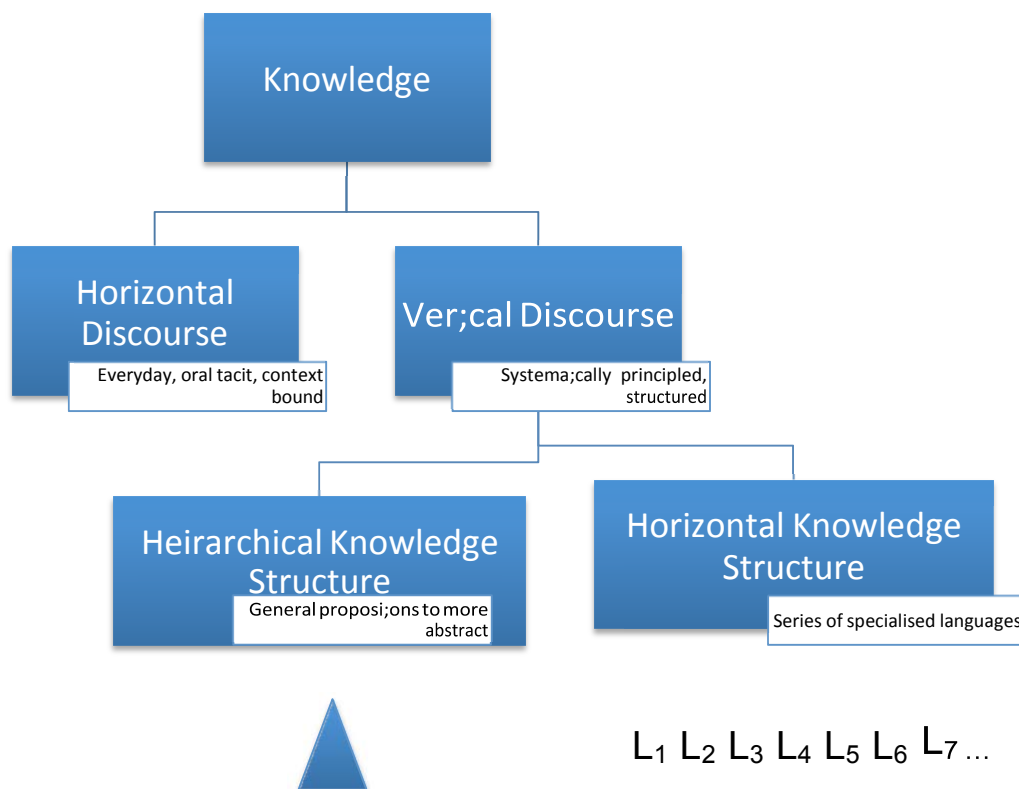


Figure 3.1 Bernsteinian Knowledge

Two dimensions determine the relations within hierarchical knowledge structures and horizontal knowledge structures. Muller (2007 cited in Maton, 2008) terms these dimensions verticality and grammaticality. Hierarchical knowledge structures develop by integrating and subsuming knowledge while horizontal knowledge structures develop through the addition of an incommensurable segment (Maton, 2008). How knowledge develops describes the dimension of verticality.

Horizontal knowledge structures have different languages with stronger or weaker powers or what Bernstein calls grammars. A strong language would be one that is explicit and conceptual with descriptions being relatively precise, and empirical relations can be formally modelled (Bernstein, 1999; Lockett, 2010; Maton, 2010). For example, a knowledge structure such as physics generates strong grammar and others such as sociology generate weak grammar (Maton, 2008). A language that has a strong grammar is different from a language that has weaker powers and hence a weak grammar (Bernstein, 1999; Maton, 2010). These aspects operate as

L1 (internal language of description) and L2 (external language of description) with weaker or stronger languages of description in knowledge structures (Maton, 2008). This is the dimension for grammaticality. The two dimensions of verticality and grammaticality are said to determine whether a knowledge structure can build cumulative knowledge, which is the goal of all education (Case, 2012).

In order to acquire a hierarchical knowledge structure, a perspective should be acquired as “a hierarchical knowledge structure is the only pathway to ‘truth’” (Bernstein, 1999: 165). The acquirer has to acquire ‘a gaze’, which is a particular mode of recognising and realising what constitutes authentic reality (Bernstein, 1999). To become an insider the acquirer needs to be in a social interactional relationship with those who already have the gaze (Bernstein, 1999). Acquiring a perspective is more challenging in the social sciences as the language here may be weaker and the form the gaze has to take is often not very explicitly described.

Bernstein was not clear, however, on what the underlying principles are for these two dimensions of verticality and grammaticality and how they work together to enable knowledge building (Maton, 2008). Furthermore, his mapping of knowledge structures is open to critique of being dichotomous (Maton, 2009). The issue arises of whether there are shifts between horizontal and vertical discourses and hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures and how the disciplines and subjects of university and school education fit within Bernstein’s model (Maton, 2009).

### **3.3.3 Legitimation Code Theory**

LCT is the analytical frame for this study and it builds on and extends the work of other theorists and in particular, Bourdieu and Bernstein. Bernstein’s focus was the heuristic nature of his ideas and generation of theory (Atkinson, 1985). His theory allowed for a lens through which to view knowledge as an object of study (Maton and Moore, 2001). His language of description has systematically described the differences between the discursive practices of intellectual fields and has raised the question of how to conceptualise the generative principles of these fields (Maton, 2007) and how to enact them in substantive research (Maton, 2013).

LCT works to overcome what can be viewed as dichotomous ideal types in knowledge structures (Maton, 2009). Maton (2009) argues that Bernstein has merely

raised the issue of the kind of discourse one could discover in the knowledge structures but not what makes it horizontal or hierarchical. Maton views Bernstein's contributions as a "valuable first step on which to build by conceptualising the principles underlying discourses and knowledge structures" (2013: 10). Bernstein's work has contributed towards the study of analysis of pedagogic discourse itself. But little help has been given in applying his ideas as operational model (Maton, 2013) to say something meaningful about what underlies knowledge and how to analyse it. The question that arose from Bernstein's work is "What lies behind the ongoing reproduction, transformation and change of intellectual fields as sites of knowledge productions?" (Maton and Moore, 2001: 160). In particular, Bernstein's work raised the question of how knowledge changes over time in a cumulative or segmented fashion.

LCT focuses on how the analysis can be taken up and what the significance is for educational knowledge. LCT uses Bernstein's theory as its principle foundational framework and develops it to show the structuring principles of intellectual fields, its cumulative building and transferring of knowledge (Maton, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013). LCT understands knowledge claims and practices as 'languages of legitimation'. Languages of legitimation encompass both Bourdieu's relations to and Bernstein's relations within knowledge. According to Maton "Social power and knowledge are intertwined but irreducible to one another; knowledge comprises both sociological and epistemological forms of power" (2010: 37).

LCT can be used as an analytical tool to unpack embedded tacit knowledge. It is a multi-dimensional analytical toolkit with each dimension focused on a particular set of organising principles (or legitimation codes) that underlie practices (Maton, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013). LCT can thus be conceptualised as both a theoretical framework for the study of the sociology of education and as an analytical framework for such studies. As a rapidly developing and highly generative theory, LCT comprises an increasing number of analytical tools. For the purposes of my study, Specialisation Codes of legitimation will be employed as analytical tool.

LCT views knowledge as having two dimensions: social relations of power and epistemology (Maton and Moore, 2001). The central argument of LCT is that different settings of the relations between the two dimensions form the basis of differing modes of legitimation in the field of production (Maton and Moore, 2001).

They describe differences between the intellectual fields in terms of the organising principles of knowledge production.

LCT proposes the notion of an epistemic device to complement Bernstein's pedagogic device. The epistemic device is defined as being "the means whereby intellectual and educational fields are created, maintained, reproduced, transformed and changed." (Maton, 2007: 2). It is the precondition of knowledge production and provides the means for one to change relations within fields (Maton and Moore, 2001). The epistemic device complements Bernstein's pedagogic device, which are resources for knowledge codes (Maton and Moore, 2001), and they both "form the basis for production, recontextualisation and reproduction of knowledge" (Maton, 2007: 2). The epistemic device regulates how knowledge claims came to be seen as legitimate: based on external relations of power or intrinsic principles of knowledge (Maton and Moore, 2001). These devices are intended to "illuminate educational knowledge and practice more generally." (Maton, 2007: 2). Control of the epistemic device equals symbolic control, as whoever has control of it will control a field's structure and grammar (Maton and Moore, 2001; Maton 2004).

LCT adds to Bernstein's knowledge structures (hierarchical and horizontal) by arguing for the existence of knower structures. This is because in situations where knowledge is less explicit, with integration codes and horizontal knowledge structures, a different basis for knowledge formation must exist, which then is a knower structure (Maton, 2010). The focus of a knower structure is on the social relations between knowledge and its subject or author and the gaze of a legitimate knower (Maton, 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that every knowledge structure has a knower structure and that they have structuring significance of their own (Maton, 2010). So we can speak of horizontal knowledge structure, horizontal knower structure, hierarchical knowledge structure and hierarchical knower structure. A field can thus develop either through knowledge or knower structure.

Knowers are structured differently in the hierarchical and horizontal structures. According to Maton (2007) in the hierarchical knower structure, knowers are systematically principled and hierarchically organized. An ideal knower exists in this structure and develops when new knowers are integrated at lower levels (Maton, 2007). Hierarchical knower structures have either strong grammars with explicit biological and/or social bases of the ideal knower but they can also have weak

grammars with tacit biological/social bases of knowers (Maton, 2007). “The situation of a hierarchical knower structure is the site or basis of its recontextualising principle” (Maton, 2007: 8) or selection and adaptation of knowledge.

In contrast a horizontal knower structure is characterised by a series of knowers that are strongly bonded, each knower has its own specialised mode of acting and being. Their habituses are non-comparable and they have as their bases different social backgrounds and histories (Maton, 2007).

The purpose of sociology of education studies is to uncover which of the structures, hierarchical knower or horizontal knower, are dominant and the purpose this serves.

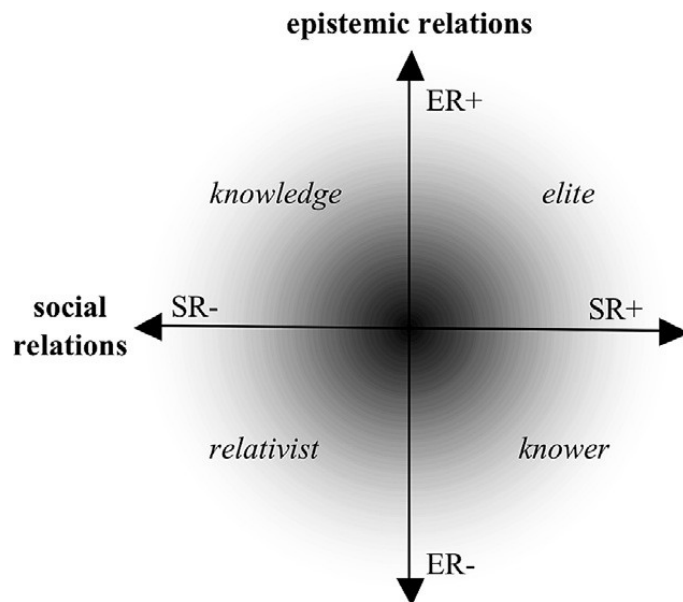
### **3.3.3.1 Specialisation Code**

The Specialisation Code is one dimension of LCT and one which I will use as an analytical tool for the PMA curriculum. Maton (2011) uses Specialisation Codes of legitimation to analyse the principles underlying the forms of the four knowledge-knower structures (hierarchical knowledge structure, hierarchical knower structure, horizontal knowledge structure and horizontal knower structure). Specialisation refers to that which characterises someone as individual and distinctive and thereby legitimate (Maton, 2011).

Practices, beliefs or knowledge claims are said to be about or oriented *towards something* and *by someone* and, as a result, distinctions are made between epistemic relations (ER) and social relations (SR) in this specialisation dimension (Maton, 2000, 2010, 2011). Maton (2004) argues that knowledge claims are by somebody and about something. So an ER distinguishes the knowledge structure (what you know), while the SR distinguishes the knower structure (who you are) (Maton, 2010, 2004). Both ER and SR can be strongly (+) or weakly (-) framed and classified (Maton, 2010). Together the strengths will give the specific epistemic device (Maton, 2004). ER and SR are analytically distinct but empirically interrelated dimensions of knowledge and practice within intellectual fields of productions (Maton & Moore, 2001). They are not dichotomous ideal types but have relative strengths (Maton, 2010) and so differing variations of weaker and stronger may be found.

In this view four principal code modalities (ER+/-, SR+/-) are possible (Maton, 2010). These are a knowledge code, a knower code, an elite code and a relativist code.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the Specialisation Codes of legitimisation:



Maton (2010)

Figure 3.2 Specialisation Codes

A knowledge code foregrounds knowledge, principles and procedures that are specialised and are viewed as the basis of achievement with actors being downplayed (ER+SR-) (Maton, 2011). A knower code foregrounds the attributes of actors and the basis of achievement are knowers who have for example, born, cultivated or socially based gazes (ER-SR+) (Maton, 2011). Maton (2010, 2004) describes an elite code where both specialised knowledge and being the right kind of knower are emphasised (ER+SR+). Maton (2010, 2004) emphasises that elite does not mean social exclusivity but refers to both knowledge and dispositions being possessed. Lastly, there is a relativist code where neither knowledge nor knower is significant (ER-+ SR-) (Maton, 2010, 2004).

One field can thus progress through knowledge building and another through knower building (Maton, 2010). The main purpose of a knowledge code is to develop knowledge and to train knowers as the means for doing so, while the main purpose of a knower code is to develop knowers and the creation of specialist knowledge is the means (Maton, 2010).

To conclude this section, Specialisation Codes as developed by LCT are useful tools for analysis of understanding of knowledge forms in PMA. The focus is to identify

knowledge-knower structures and the literacy practices that students are being inducted into. This chapter now discusses how notions of literacy practices and LCT can be linked in a study of knowledge and literacy practices.

### **3.4 Legitimation Code Theory and New Literacy Studies**

This chapter has positioned the research ontologically as being as CR and has then moved on to discuss the key substantive theories of Bourdieu, Bernstein and how these developed into LCT. LCT was discussed as both the substantive theory that accounts for the structure of knowledge in a curriculum and as the analytical framework which is used to interrogate the data, as will be briefly returned to in the next chapter. There is a need, in concluding this chapter, to briefly discuss why NLS, which orientates the study's concerns with literacy practices, as discussed in Chapter One, was not used as an analytical frame in its own right.

Despite literacy being irrefutably linked to knowledge in NLS research, there are limitations in the literature concerning the relationships between fields of knowledge and the nature of academic literacy practices. As noted in Chapter One, HE learning involves adapting to “new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge” (Lea and Street, 1998: 157), and so it makes sense that properties of knowledge-producing fields, and their principles and procedures (Maton and Moore, 2010) need foregrounding in our understanding of how students acquire (or fail to acquire) the requisite literacy practices. This is because knowledge, though seen as an integral part of the social practices approach to literacy, has not had as much attention as identity and other cultural practices in the NLS research. NLS has not focused on knowledge-knower structures, their different forms and modalities and generative principles (Maton, 2007), though it has indicated that the context is key to the development and privileging of certain literacies. Even though NLS engages with the notion of students adapting to new knowledge and sees itself as “rooted in conceptions of knowledge” (Street, 2003: 77-78), little explicit attention is given to the intrinsic features of knowledge.

Studies are starting to link NLS conceptions of literacy as localised practice and LCT. Humphrey and Robinson (2012) reported on a toolkit developed for academic literacies to be used by all teachers. They examine the high stakes reading and writing texts and the teacher's role as literacy expert to provide quality teaching of

texts. They conclude that abstract ideas need unpacking with concrete examples but also repacking by abstracting away from the concrete into generalised understandings (Humphrey and Robinson, 2012) in teaching of texts.

NLS does not expand much on how knowledge is constituted and so any relationships between the fields of knowledge forms and academic literacies remain uninterrogated. It tends to foreground the contextual and views reading and writing as making sense only when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which they form part (Barton, 1994; Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1994). NLS has foregrounded student experiences as they make sense of university meaning making (Coffin and Donahue, 2012). This is done through ethnographic studies with in-depth interviews where students and lecturers reflect on academic writing in an autobiographical account of the interviewer's language and literacy learning, study of institutional documentary data and student textual data and observation (Coffin and Donahue, 2012). Coffin and Donahue (2012) argue that if a challenge is made to knowledge making and practices within HE such as the one NLS makes, this challenge needs to be premised on an understanding of knowledge building, and the reasons for it being privileged as well as how it is being privileged. That would mean drawing on theories of sociology of education and knowledge. This may help with the operationalisation of how NLS perceives practices. My study is informed by NLS as orienting framework and is an attempt to focus on knowledge to build on the conceptualisations of literacy within NLS.

As there seems to be little engagement in NLS theory with the 'how' of uncovering the ways of knowing of academic disciplines, an analytical tool such as LCT's Specialisation Codes can help to give a better understanding of the underlying knowledge forms and its literacy practices. Specialisation Codes would equip outsiders to knowledge such as literacy specialists with a valuable tool to gain insight into knowledge forms and its literacy practices. Differing forms of knowledge give rise to different literacies, literacy practices are localised, ideological and therefore differing knowledge forms should at least in part underpin different literacy practices. A voice silenced by notions of social constructions is thus knowledge in NLS and hence the analysis of PMA knowledge can be taken up via LCT Specialisation Codes to see if it will tell me anything about the literacy practices that are valued in the PMA programmes.

Though this study foregrounds knowledge, and I have argued that this is a significant blindspot in much NLS research, it needs to be noted that knowledge alone is not responsible for emergent literacy practices. Because education happens in what Critical Realists call ‘an open system’ (Archer et al, 1998), a number of causal mechanisms are at play in any social context. The causal mechanisms of knowledge structures, focused on in this study, are but one set of structures at the level of the real leading to the events and experiences in the PMA Diploma and Degree programme. Contextualised mechanisms that play a role might include the institutional relationships, context and authority as they are embedded in and interact with diverse student academic literacy practices (Lea and Street, 1998). These mechanisms also include disciplinary relationships, for example, student and teacher identity and student-teacher relationships as the interaction between teachers and students is “a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and literacy ideas held by the participants, especially the new learners and their position in relations of power” (Street, 1994: 78). Furthermore, teacher pedagogical approaches in reading and writing practices and the difficulty of teachers in making the tacit dimension of disciplinary discourses (ways with words) explicit and leading to opaque language (Gee, 1990; Heath, 1983; Jacobs, 2007a; Street, 1994) also impact on literacy practices.

Though these critical understandings of literacy as social practice also need foregrounding in knowledge-knower structures, my study focus is specifically on theorising lecturer understanding of curriculum knowledge and its localised literacy practices as these play an important role shaping possibilities for students (McKenna, 2004). Lecturers are key recontextualising agents (Shay, 2011) as they select what counts as PMA knowledge and they therefore wield enormous power.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This study draws on LCT’s knowledge-knower structures and its dimension of Specialisation Codes to analyse the knowledge and principles and procedures that are present in lecturer understandings, curriculum texts and marked student assessments.

The findings will be used to conclude which knowledge forms are being privileged in the first-year of the PMA Diploma and Degree programmes, the literacy practices

emanating from this knowledge, and the opportunities given to students to engage in these literacy practices. The next chapter maps out the actual steps taken in undertaking this research.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Methods and**

### **Methodology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Methodology is often seen as one of a trio in the philosophy of science that includes ontology and epistemology (Moses and Knutsen, 2012). In Chapter Three, I argued for my study's ontology, which was defined as a development of an account of being, and its epistemology, which explores understandings of what knowledge is (Gray, 2009). In this chapter, I turn to the methods and methodology employed in my study.

While methodology is the more abstract strategy whereby a researcher achieves her goals, methods are the tools to achieve these goals (Potter, 1996). Methodology is described as “the ways in which we acquire knowledge” and asks “How do we know?” (Moses and Knutsen, 2012: 4-5). Methodology involves an investigation into concepts and theories (Moses and Knutsen, 2012) in order to systematically solve a research problem through description, explanation and prediction of phenomena (Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi, 2013). It is the study of which methods are best to produce reliable knowledge (Mose and Knutsen, 2012). Method is the research techniques such as data collection methods and the analytical tools.

Sayer takes a broad overlapping view of method, social theory and philosophy of social science and sees method as the “clarification of modes of explanation and understanding, the nature of abstraction, as well as the familiar subjects of research design and methods of analysis” (1992: 3). This is a more helpful perspective than a narrow sense of techniques as one's choice of method reflects one's conceptualisation and theorisation. In this chapter, I draw on Sayer's (1992) account of methods and provide an overview of both the methods and methodology used in my study.

My methods and methodology are aligned to the social realist ontology and epistemology, which as discussed in Chapter Three, conceptualise knowledge both as ontological fact and as epistemological social phenomenon. It also sees knowledge as fallible (Sayer, 2000). I draw on CR's notions of a stratified ontology of the real,

actual and empirical domains, as discussed in the previous chapter, as opposed to a flat ontology that only proposes an actual or real level or a conflation of both (Sayer, 2000) in the methods and methodology of my study. As will be seen in this chapter, CR and SR guides how I collect the data in the manner that I do and the analysis thereof.

## **4.2 Research Questions**

All research is inquiry and necessitates research questions. I arrived at the following broad research questions for what my study sets out to do:

The main research question of my study is:

What are the knowledge-knower structures of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree programmes and what literacy practices emanate from these?

The research sub-questions of my study are as follows:

- What are the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula?
- What kinds of literacy practices are students expected to perform in the first-year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula?
- How do these literacy practices relate to the PMA knowledge-knower structures?

These research questions are aligned to my CR ontological and SR epistemological positions in this study to allow for intensive research into a detailed analysis of knowledge-knower structures and the ways in which literacy practices relate and enable access to these. Intensive research looks at the workings or changes in a process in a particular case or small number of cases (Sayer, 1992). The research questions are grounded in realist theory, a perspective of the world as an open system with causal powers (Sayer, 2000). The questions explore underlying generative structures and powers at the level of the real as well as events such as the curricula and literacy practices at the level of the actual. In a CR tradition the real consists of whatever exists, natural or social, regardless of whether we have access to it and it also consists of objects with their structures and powers that enable them to behave in particular ways (Sayer, 2000).

My research questions examine the structures of the PMA Diploma and Degree

curricula and their causal powers, in this case how lecturers understand what must go together in the curricula based on their experiences and influences. In realist terms, the world is characterised by emergence or situations where the conjunction of two or more features result in new phenomena, which have properties irreducible to their constituents. For my study I would need to identify what happens to knowledge in the PMA curricula at the level of the actual as a result of lecturer understandings and influences upon it.

My questions also explore the nature of the objects of literacy practices and what is expected for student practices at the level of the actual. The level of the actual is what happens when causal powers become activated (Sayer, 2000). I used lecturers' understandings and, the documented curricula at the level of the empirical to argue for my claims of what happens in the PMA curricula. Furthermore, I used a realist causal criterion to show that what happened cannot explain what could have or have not happened (Sayer, 2000). CR is compatible with a number of research methods and the choice of research method would depend on the nature of the objects being studied and the research focus (Sayer, 2000).

### **4.3. Abstraction as Methodology**

Abstraction was employed as the methodology in my study. There are many abstraction-based methodologies that are concerned with the study of the isolation of phenomena from a wider context to explore their meanings, both in isolation and as part of the context being isolated from. In its undertaking of abstraction, my study has used the LCT framework and its Specialisation Code (see Chapter Three/sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.3.1).

Sayer (1992) argues that intensive research uses abstraction and structural analysis to examine the nature of relations and structures. Knowledge abstracts from particular conditions, constituents of the whole are abstracted, while keeping in mind what is being abstracted from (Sayer, 1992). Isolating a particular aspect allows one to see it with more clarity, however, features should not be treated as if they exist in isolation of each other (Lawson in Archer et al, 1998). Abstraction involves the isolation in thought of a one-sided or partial aspect of a concrete object, which could be people, institutions or activities (Sayer, 1992). What are being abstracted are the different aspects that together make up the concrete object. For example, a HE institution is

influenced by national policy, its location, mission and vision, the research output of its academic staff, its academic identity etcetera. If each of these influences is isolated through abstractions, it is a way of starting to conceptualise what their combined effect would be on the HE institution and this allows us to start making sense of this object. According to Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002), abstraction advances from the concrete object to the abstract and then moves back to the concrete. It allows us to grasp the concreteness of objects though it should be noted that not all concrete objects are empirically observable (Sayer, 1992).

The nature of relations that abstraction examines can either be external or contingent and internal. An object is external if it can exist without the other. It is said to be contingent as it is not a necessity for it to be in a relation but neither is it impossible that it can (Sayer, 1992). An object is internal if it is dependent on the other and furthermore, it is in an asymmetric internal relation when one object can exist without the other but not vice versa (Sayer, 1992).

Extending this analysis to my study, the PMA curricula and the lecturers would be internally related as the latter informs the former. They are in an asymmetric internal relation as the lecturer can exist without the PMA curriculum (and teach perhaps on some other related course) but the PMA curriculum cannot exist without lecturers (though who knows how technology might shift this in the future). The PMA literacy practices and PMA curricula have internal relations as the literacy practices emanate from the curriculum. The curriculum's literacy practices and the PMA students also have internal relations. The literacy practices expected of students exist as assessments of their competence in PMA and it is through these practices that students are assessed and deemed to have succeeded or failed.

Taking this one step further to the issue of cumulative knowledge building<sup>18</sup>, the relations between the curriculum and cumulative knowledge building are contingent, one can exist without the other but co-existence is possible. However, not having cumulative knowledge building in the curriculum could constitute a concrete object that has negative effects for student learning. To put it differently if the curriculum as concrete object does not have an internal relation with the aspect of knowledge that

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<sup>18</sup> Cumulative knowledge building refers to new knowledge building on and integrating past knowledge (Maton, 2009).

cumulatively builds, students might not be able to transfer this knowledge successfully to future contexts.

Abstraction also identifies and examines structures. These are sets of objects or practices that are internally related (Sayer, 1992). The internally-related objects of the PMA curricula include outcomes, theories, concepts, practical examples, tasks, assessments, writing and reading practices, pedagogy, perceptions of student learning, philosophy, history (where conditions are not of the lecturer's choosing) and is influenced by HE institution, its position in the institution, the research in the field, field philosophy and history, lecturer philosophy and position in institution amongst others. Together they form the PMA curricular structure. Researchers should not see structural analysis as providing the complete picture but see it as the first steps to research and the important question for researchers would be what it is about structures that may produce the effects under study (Sayer, 1992). So in my study this is phrased as: What are the knowledge-knower structures of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree programmes and what literacy practices emanate from these?

#### **4.4 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is suitable for this study as this approach focuses on the real world – people's everyday practices – and on studying the complexity of these phenomena as they occur in natural settings (Leedy and Ellisa Ormrod, 2005; MacArthur, Graham and Fitzgerald, 2008). Qualitative research would allow me to study the qualities (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2005) of the knowledge-knower structures of the PMA programmes and the academic literacies emanating from them. Through qualitative research, I could develop a language of description to better understand and theorise about how PMA knowledge builds and the literacy practices these students are expected to demonstrate. The knowledge-knower structures and the literacy practices in the PMA programmes will be studied in all their dimensions and layers (Leedy and Ellisa Ormrod, 2005) so that there is a focus on depth of understanding (Henning et al, 2005). The "deep, intense and holistic overview of the context under study" (Gray, 2009: 164) is in keeping with the intensive research required by a realist approach. This will be done in an analysis of the generative mechanisms of PMA knowledge in the curriculum. My research is related to quality or kind. I am working primarily with lecturer understandings of

curricula and student literacy practices which qualify as qualitative study.

Characteristics of a qualitative approach are that emerging themes are often verified with informants and via reflexivity, the researcher's reflections on her own actions and observations, could become part of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994 and Flick, 2006 cited in Gray, 2009). A qualitative research design is also appealing to me because of its flexibility. Investigators could enter it with some idea about what they intend to do and with a theoretical foundation but design decisions are made throughout the study (Willis, 2007). Qualitative research does not necessarily proceed with pre-specified and carefully planned steps (Willis, 2007). I, thus, did not need to stick rigidly to the design and could let the research experience (with its potential challenges or new interesting possibilities) guide my decisions about method. Research becomes in this way a nonlinear and iterative process as data collection, data analysis and its interpretation influence one another as they occur throughout the study (Willis, 2007) and result in redesign. Gray (2009: 173) calls this the "emergent" feature of qualitative research when initial ideas about design change during the research process.

Qualitative research is sometimes criticised as being unscientific, anecdotal, subjective and lacking generalisability (Gray, 2009). It is, therefore, important in qualitative research to show rigour in the research design and through attention to validity and reliability. Issues of validity and reliability are addressed later in this chapter, but, first, I turn to the research design.

## **4.5 Case Study of Public Management and Administration Programmes**

Using a qualitative methodology I conducted a case study of the PMA Diploma and Degree programmes at a comprehensive institution. Case studies are said to be histories that have a point and that concern a case of something (Moses and Knutsen, 2012). It is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003 cited in Gray, 2009: 247). The case study approach is most suitable for this study as it focuses on gaining an "in- depth study" of a "phenomenon that has identifiable boundaries" (Henning et al, 2005: 3) and from multiple perspectives of its complexity and uniqueness (Thomas, 2011). The case study is not a research method or technique but is a focus or choice of

what is to be studied (Thomas, 2011).

According to Moses and Knutsen, case studies have been successfully used to investigate causal processes as they exist in the real world as “the social scientist engaged in this kind of process often looks at a finer level of detail... as her aim is to unearth evidence of a causal mechanism buried in the experience of a particular case” (2012: 134). Their discussion on causal processes relates mainly to a naturalistic or empirical perspective, which believes that there are regularities in the world that can be experienced, described and tested empirically. However, this can be applied to the CR perspective in its study of social concepts and causal powers as it strives to not only describe a situation at the levels of the actual and empirical, but to look at its causal powers at the levels of the real.

I am doing a CR case study and this means that I am not able to generalise in a loose sense, but I do identify mechanisms that could be at play and have similar effects in other contexts. They may have different effects though because they are enacted in open systems, with any number of possible mechanisms and structures being active at the level of the real.

This study focuses on the case of PMA. It is a nested case study (Thomas, 2011) of the first-year PMA Diploma and Degree programmes. The programmes are nested as they form part of the broader field of PMA. The ultimate aim is to understand the two types as part of the wider case of the PMA field in the first year to see how they fit within the larger field.

#### **4.6 Research Site**

The research sites were the Second Avenue and South Campuses of NMMU in Port Elizabeth. The PM Diploma is offered on the Second Avenue Campus while two kilometres away, the PA Degree is offered on the South Campus. These campuses form part of the merged comprehensive university, as described in Chapter Two/section 2.3.1.

#### **4.7 Data Collection**

A case study can use multiple data collection sources. Interviews and analysis of documentation and marked student assessments have been used in my study. These methods have both strengths and weaknesses as discussed below in this

section.

Table 4.1 illustrates the data collected and analysed for the first-year PM Diploma which are discussed in Chapter Five:

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lecturer interviews        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Akhona</li> <li>• Natasha</li> <li>• Rebecca</li> <li>• Sam (All lecturer names used are pseudonyms)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Study guides               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Decision-Making study guide</li> <li>• Public Office Management study guide</li> <li>• Public Resource Management study guide</li> <li>• Public Service Delivery study guide</li> <li>• Self-Management study guide</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Textbooks                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gildenhuys, J. (2004). <i>The Philosophy of Public Administration A holistic approach</i>. Stellenbosch: SUNPRESS.</li> <li>• Du Toit, D., Knipe, A., van Niekerk, D., van der Waldt, G. and Doyle, M. (2002). <i>Service excellence in governance</i>. Cape Town: Heinemann.</li> <li>• Badenhorst, C., Ferreira, E., Groenewald, D., Joubert, H., Marcus, J., Steenkamp, S., Swanepoel, F., van der Berg, A., van Heerden, A. and van Rooyen, A. (2005). <i>Business and Office Administration: An outcomes-based approach</i>. Sandton: Heinemann</li> </ul> |
| Lecturer Materials         | Selected PowerPoint slides and Study notes of all four modules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Marked student assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Decision-Making class task</li> <li>• Public Office Management Assignment 2013</li> <li>• Public Office Management class test 2013</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Assessments                | <u>Self-Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class test one 2012 and memorandum</li> <li>• Class test two 2012 and memorandum</li> <li>• June 2012 examination and memorandum</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 2012 examination and memorandum</li> </ul> <u>Public Decision-Making</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class test two 2012 and memorandum</li> <li>• Sick test May 2013 and memorandum</li> <li>• 2013 Assignment and rubric</li> <li>• November 2012 Examination and memorandum</li> </ul> <u>Public Service Delivery</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• July 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• 2013 Assignment and rubric</li> <li>• Class test one 2013</li> </ul> <u>Public Office Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test one 2013 and memorandum</li> <li>• Test two 2013 and memorandum</li> <li>• November 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment 2013 and rubric</li> </ul> <u>Public Resource Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class test two 2010 and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment 2012 and rubric</li> <li>• June 2012 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• July 2012 examination and memorandum</li> </ul> |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 4.1 Diploma Data

Table 4.2 illustrates the data collected and analysed for the first-year PA Degree which are discussed in Chapter Six:

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lecturer interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yanga</li> <li>• Lily</li> <li>• Sam (All lecturer names used are pseudonyms)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Study Guides        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide</li> <li>• Ethos of Public Administration study guide</li> <li>• Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide</li> <li>• Administration for Development study guide</li> </ul>                                                          |
| Textbooks           | <u>Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gildenhuys, J. and Knipe, A. (2006). <i>The organization of government: An introduction</i>. Pretoria: Van Schaik. (Chapters One, Twelve and Thirteen).</li> <li>• Craythorne, D. (2003). <i>Municipal Administration: A handbook</i>. Kenwyn: Juta</li> </ul> |

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                   | <p>and Co.</p> <p><u>Ethos of Public Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Du Toit, D. and Van der Waldd, G. (1999). <i>Public Administration and Management: The Grassroots</i>. Kenwyn: Juta. (Chapters One to Seven).</li> <li>• Gildenhuys, J. 2004. <i>The Philosophy of Public Administration: A Holistic Approach</i>. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. (Chapters Four, Seven and Eight).</li> </ul> <p><u>Administration for Development:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No textbooks prescribed</li> </ul> <p><u>Constitutional Framework for Public Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloete, J. (1996). <i>Accountable Government and Administration for the Republic of South Africa</i>. National Book Printers: Goodwood.</li> </ul>                                                                                                            |
| Study notes and PowerPoint slides | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional Framework for Public Administration Module Study notes: Units one to four</li> <li>• Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration: Assignment lecture PowerPoint slides</li> <li>• Administration for Development PowerPoint slides: Units one to nine.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Marked student assessments        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethos of Public Administration Assignment 2013.</li> <li>• Administration for Development Assignment 2013</li> <li>• Administration for Development Semester test 2013.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Assessments                       | <p><u>Ethos of Public Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• Term test 2013 and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment and rubric</li> </ul> <p><u>Constitutional Framework for Public Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• June 2012 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment and rubric</li> </ul> <p><u>Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• Module test 2011 and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment 2012 and rubric</li> </ul> <p><u>Administration for Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2013 examination and memorandum</li> <li>• Term test 2012 and memorandum</li> <li>• Assignment 2012 and rubric</li> </ul> |

Table 4.2 Degree Data

Marked student assessments were also collected to see the nature of the literacy

practices students were demonstrating. I only collected class tasks, tests and assignments done in 2013 for the Public Office Management, Ethos of Public Administration, Administration for Development and Public Decision-Making. As discussed under research constraints and enablements in section 4.9 below, assessments were returned to students and the only assessments that were available were those that were not collected by students. The assessments had been marked, as I wanted to see the literacy practices which lecturers valued in the assessments.

#### **4.7.1 Data Collection: Lecturer Interviews and Curricula Documentation**

Prior to my interview sessions with PMA lecturers, I piloted the interview questions with a Business Management lecturer, though I did not include this data in my analysis. I chose the Business Management field as it is close to PMA programmes in its management focus. The rationale behind piloting the interview was to assess the validity and clarity of questions. To ensure my credibility as interviewer, I used a critical friend as observer during the pilot interview. The critical friend had insight into the theoretical framework I am using as well as experience with interviewing. The role of the observer was to give me feedback on the following: how I get started; build up rapport and trust; my prompting and probing; my questions (do they speak to my research objectives); control of interview; verbal and non-verbal feedback; improvising and listening skills; observing respondents and closing the interview. The discipline was close to one being studied and the interviewee was a willing participant. I went through the same procedure as I would with the 'real' interviews, by having a preliminary introduction and informed consent process, recording and closing of the interview.

The observer and I wrote separate reflection notes after interview. After the writing of reflective notes, I debriefed with the observer around the following questions: What worked? What did not? Which areas am I struggling with? How can I unpack or probe more? Was the data rich or not, significant or not? And Could the data fit into analytical framework and theoretical framework? The outcome of this discussion was that I would need to see student writing with academics' feedback (this was not something I had originally planned to do) in order to see the knowledge being valued by lecturers and the literacies students need to demonstrate to succeed. It also

showed me areas I was struggling with and how I could probe more. It did serve a further purpose of settling some of my nerves around interviewing.

Participants were selected for this study on the basis that they lecture the first-year PMA modules in 2013 in the Diploma and Degree. Table 4.3 gives the demographics of the participants and the modules each taught:

| Lecturer | Module                                                                        | Diploma/<br>Degree | Qualifications | Years<br>in HE | Home<br>Language       |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Akhona   | Self-Management                                                               | Diploma            | Doctorate      | 5              | isiXhosa               |
| Natasha  | Public Decision-Making                                                        | Diploma            | Masters        | 3              | English                |
| Rebecca  | Public Service Delivery and Public Office Management                          | Diploma            | Masters        | 4              | English                |
| Yanga    | Constitutional Framework for Public Administration                            | Degree             | Doctorate      | 5              | isiXhosa               |
| Sam      | Public Resources Management<br>Regional Metropolitan and Local Administration | Diploma<br>Degree  | Doctorate      | 20             | Other African Language |
| Lily     | Administration for Development<br>Ethos of Public Administration              | Degree             | Masters        | 12             | isiXhosa               |

Table 4.3 Participant demographics

After the pilot interview, I went about setting up and conducting interviews with six PMA first-year lecturers. I conducted semi-structured interviews by compiling a list of issues I wanted to cover in the interview. This gave me the freedom to probe or ask follow-up questions (Thomas, 2011) and it also meant that I did not have to follow a specific order of questions. I used the list as a reminder of the issues.

I drew up an interviewing schedule for the three lecturers who taught all the first-year Diploma modules and the three who taught all the first-year Degree modules. Emails were initially sent to lecturers introducing myself, my study topic and requesting participation in this study in the form of an interview of 30 to 40 minutes. Included in

the email was the ethics clearance number and details I had obtained from the Central Ethics Committee at NMMU and an indication that the proposed study had been approved by the Education Higher Degrees Committee at Rhodes University. All potential participants agreed to take part in the study.

The interviews were all 35 to 40 minutes in duration and were all held in the participants' offices. At the start of the interview, I thanked them for their willingness to participate in the study, went through the ethics of anonymity and their right to withdraw at any stage and requested their permission to follow up with further questions (after the interview, if the need arose). I also informed them of the verification of the data, in that they would see the interview transcriptions to verify that it was an accurate reflection of what they had said. I requested permission to record the interviews and also gave them an overview of what it was I was researching and the main issues I would cover in the interview. I told them how long the interview would be and, lastly, I got the participants to sign the consent form after going through it with them. All of the foregoing helped with the building of rapport so that the possibilities of obtaining "rich, honest and illuminating data" (Gray, 2009: 380) were enhanced.

The seating arrangements were such that the participant and I sat across from each other at his/her desk. Gray (2009) notes that furniture between an interviewer and participant creates a safe distance between the two. Being in the participants' offices also meant they were in familiar territory where I was the guest. I made notes in conjunction with the recording and this proved to be helpful especially when I discovered that the battery had died in the last five minutes of one interview

During the interviews, lecturers were probed on the PMA knowledge-knower structures and the reading and writing practices students were expected to demonstrate. A broad overview of the discussion was as follows: what comprised the PMA programmes, what were the aims and structure of the programmes, what kind of content it included, what kind of attributes were needed by students, what they understood about student learning and what kind of reading and writing students engaged with and what kinds of assessments they used. More specifically, the interrelated aspects of the curriculum that I abstracted in the interviews were the following:

- content overview
- outcomes
- theory and/or practical concepts in module
- philosophy of module
- providing access to knowledge
- critical thinking
- texts and supplementary material
- student profile
- student attributes
- student learning and preparedness
- student achievement in module
- reasons for student choice of PMA
- experiential learning
- classroom pedagogy
- nature of assessments

The next step was to abstract the epistemic relations and social relations in the curriculum.

Furthermore, I abstracted about the curriculum's literacy practices from the interviews in the following aspects:

- nature of reading and writing practices in tasks and assessment
- perceptions of student ability
- module, school and institutional literacy support
- aspects of reading and writing practices that were valued.

#### 4.7.2 Data Analysis

An analytical frame is essential as it is the way in which a researcher does the analysis (Thomas, 2011). I used LCT to do a holistic analysis of my study. Table 4.4 shows the research techniques and processes of data analysis:

|                                                                                                     | Data source                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Frame for data analysis                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula? | <p>Lecturer interview transcripts</p> <p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study guides,</li> <li>• Marked student assessments,</li> <li>• Test, examination question papers and memoranda,</li> </ul> | Specialisation codes (epistemic relations and social relations) |

|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment topics, guidelines and rubrics,</li> <li>• Class tasks,</li> <li>• PowerPoint slides,</li> <li>• Lecture notes and</li> <li>• Prescribed and recommended textbooks.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                 |
| What kinds of literacy practices are students expected to perform in the first- year of the Diploma and Degree PMA curricula? | <p>Lecturer interview transcripts</p> <p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study guides,</li> <li>• Marked student assessments,</li> <li>• Test, examination question papers and memoranda,</li> <li>• Assignment topics, guidelines and rubrics,</li> <li>• Class tasks,</li> <li>• PowerPoint slides, Lecture notes and</li> <li>• Prescribed and recommended textbooks</li> </ul> | Specialisation codes (epistemic relations and social relations) |
| How do these literacy practices relate to the PMA knowledge-knower structures?                                                | <p>Lecturer interview transcripts</p> <p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study guides,</li> <li>• Marked student assessments,</li> <li>• Test, examination question papers and memoranda,</li> <li>• Assignment topics, guidelines and rubrics,</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         | Specialisation codes (epistemic relations and social relations) |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class tasks,</li> <li>• PowerPoint slides,</li> <li>• Lecture notes and</li> <li>• Prescribed and recommended textbooks</li> </ul> |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

Table 4.4 Research Techniques

To manage the coding of the data, I used NVivo 10 software. I loaded both the interview transcriptions and the electronic versions of the documentation onto the software. Where electronic versions of the documents were not available, I transcribed up pertinent sections directly into the software.

The interview data were initially coded using broad initial themes and then using tools from LCT. I used the node function on Nvivo10 to code the initial emerging themes in the six interviews as:

- Academic support
- Accessing knowledge
- Assessment
- Class participation
- Classroom pedagogy
- Course content
- Course outcomes
- Critical thinking
- English as an additional language
- Experiential training
- Literacy interventions
- Making content accessible
- Practical knowledge
- Reading and writing literacy
- Reasons for choice of PM as study
- Role of university in literacy
- Simplification of content
- Speaking in class
- Student achievement
- Student attributes
- Student preparedness
- Student profile
- Supplementary material
- Texts used in course
- Throughput rates

Having undertaken this broad unfocused coding, which ensured that I was very

familiar with my data, I then coded using the tools provided by LCT:

- Classification: collection and integration codes
- Specialisation codes: epistemic relations and social relations and the curricula documents were then coded using the same focus on Specialisation codes of ER and SR to determine the knowledge-knower structures of PMA.

## **4.8 Validity and Reliability**

Consideration must be given to dominant perspectives in social science of validity and reliability. Campbell and Stanley (1963 cited in Willis, 2007) developed a framework of internal and external validity that evaluates a research study's quality, in essence its validity and reliability. Internal validity asks if the study can be replicated with the same results for another researcher (Willis, 2007). In other words is the data gathered reliable. A study that meets the conditions for reliability of its findings and conclusions when replicated by another investigator who does the same case study (Gray, 2009), shows "the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields a certain result when the entity being measured [has not] changed" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005: 29). Basit, on the other hand, states that reliability is a "necessary prerequisite to validity" (2010: 69) but that qualitative research does not seek duplication to claim reliability. Instead, it includes "trustworthiness, honesty, distinctiveness of content, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail and depth of response and significance of the research to the participants" (Basit, 2010: 70). I thus need to ensure that my data collection instruments and my analytical procedures are well conceived.

Furthermore, internal validity becomes an issue for case studies that are investigating causal factors as extraneous factors could threaten outcomes (Gray, 2009). This happens if you set out to prove that *x* occurred because of *y* and so you look for significant associations between the two to disregard another variable (Gray, 2009). CR resolves this dilemma, as in their quest to discover causal mechanisms they do so with the notions that mechanisms may or may not be observable or active, the complete set of mechanisms cannot be identified and the finding may be surprising for an expected relation between objects (Archer et al, 1998).

External validity wants to answer questions of generalisability (Willis, 2007). To

ensure that the conclusions drawn are 'truly warranted by the data' and if generalisations can be made beyond the research situation (Leedy and Ellisa Ormrod, 2005), validity must be considered. For validity, accurate conclusions must be drawn about the data. Given the above definitions of internal validity, it becomes a particular problem for case studies given that the findings are not generalisable. To ensure accurate conclusions in this study and thick description of the data, interviews and text collection will be used as a means of triangulation.

Triangulation is usually used in qualitative research to strengthen validity and reliability. Essentially this means finding multiple data sources to confirm conclusions (Willis, 2007). For my study, triangulation was done across information sources (interviews with Diploma and Degree lecturers), and with document analysis and student assessment analysis. This allowed me to gain a fuller understanding of the PMA programmes. It should be noted that triangulation was a positivist concept that seeks to verify facts (Willis, 2007). I used it here in the sense of it allowing me to gain a better understanding of objects but not to claim one true reality. I agree with Lincoln and Guba (2000 cited in Gray, 2009) that the reality of my study's findings would inevitably change over time. External validity could also be ensured if the research methods used are systematic with the potential to be replicated and potentially reproduced by other researchers (Willis, 2007).

Validity and reliability are based on assumptions of generalisable and replicable universal laws (Willis, 2007). CR does not accept this as research's foundational goals as they base research on their perspectives of epistemological relativism, ontological realism and judgemental rationality. To review these notions, CR's epistemological relativism dimension sees our understanding of reality as being socially constructed and that knowledge is not a universal truth as it changes based on time and context; while ontological realism sees a reality as existing other than our knowledge of it and judgemental rationality means that there are rational ways in which judgements can be made about the merits of knowledge claims and production (Archer et al, 1998; Maton and Moore, 2010). By employing intensive research and abstraction of causal mechanisms and events, CR research can be considered rigorous in its endeavour to judgemental rationality. In addition, Sayer argues that "... causal powers of objects are generalisable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects" (1992: 243) but that actual and contingent patterns are unlikely to be generalisable.

## 4.9 Research Constraints and Enablements

This section discusses the factors that impeded my research but it also entails a look at aspects that facilitated my research. I will discuss the latter first. Firstly, I knew most of the lecturers by sight or acquaintance, which made it easy to establish initial contact with them and to feel somewhat at ease during the interviews. The Diploma lecturers had offices close to a commuting office that I use on the Second Avenue Campus so ease of access was facilitated. The Degree lecturers were in close proximity to each other so travel was not difficult. The lecturers did not have to be convinced to grant me interviews, even though I had thought so at the initial lack of response. Follow up requests were all met with a positive response and it was clear that the problem was just a question of finding a suitable time to meet.

After sending an initial email to lecturers requesting an interview, I had no responses. In fact, the pilot interviewee was most keen to participate and responded immediately to my request. With all six of my participants, I had to follow up with a second email a week or so later, and in some cases had to have phone calls and visits to their offices before I could get confirmation of interviews. The first interviewee was interviewed on his last day at work as he was leaving to take up another post. He was packing up his office and was obviously in a rush and seemed rather distracted. We were interrupted by cell phone calls and knocks at his office door, which exacerbated the situation. The first interviewee code-switched between English and isiXhosa which made it hard to me to capture exactly what he was expressing, given the limited nature of my isiXhosa. I did not interrupt him to ask what he meant as I should have. It was also difficult to hear him clearly. I felt less than happy after this interview. I also felt this way because my impression was that he had not given rich data, however, later when I carefully looked at and coded his transcripts, I felt differently. The transcriber also noted that she had problems hearing him clearly and tried as best as she could to capture what he had said. The other interviews went more smoothly.

Two interviewees were very new to teaching in HE but they were the most optimistic about their courses and the students. I wondered how reliable their input was because of their inexperience.

The recorder battery died just before the end of one interview and I only discovered this when downloading the interview. Luckily I had made notes during the interview.

By the second or third interview I felt less intimidated by the process and could easily interrupt a flow of thought that went off for too long and my verbal and non-verbal responses seemed more natural. I knew by then which questions participants had difficulty with such as understandings of 'conceptual' which I by then could give an accessible definition of.

Closing the interview and switching off the recorder often resulted in rich discussion where I had to hastily switch it on again. I wrote reflective notes after each interview. This helped me to think about where I could probe more and whether I was getting sufficiently rich data.

The Nvivo10 software I used for coding was not a very difficult programme to learn and I coded easily.

A limitation of my study is that I was only looking at the curriculum and not classroom practices, which could have given me insight into how the curriculum is enacted in the classroom. I needed to limit my study to the curriculum as it would have been too wide to include classroom practices. My focus was thus on the field of recontextualisation, though further interrogation into the field of reproduction would be a useful way to take this study further. A further limitation is that this study only looks at the first year of the Diploma and Degree and later years could give different data.

A major limitation was the collection of curriculum documentation. After the interviews it was agreed that lecturers would send me the curriculum documentation such as study guides, assessments and PowerPoint slides. Only three lecturers had prepared these for me and it was a battle getting the documents from other lecturers. I sent emails but these were not responded to and I had to end up visiting their offices to ask them to collate these documents while I waited. I could not obtain all the PowerPoint slides and lecture notes from the lecturers as they only sent me a selection. I am aware that these may not be representative of all that that was covered in lectures.

A wide variety of textbooks are recommended as supplemental readings in the PMA programmes but the analysis was limited here to prescribed and recommended textbooks as lecture units are closely based on these.

Finally, I had decided that marked student assessments would be a valuable way of

analysing what lecturers valued in PMA knowledge. The limitation of collecting assessments was that by the time I had interviewed the lecturers, most assessments had returned to students. The only ones remaining were those that had not been collected. I have used these to give a cameo of what lecturers value but they cannot be claimed to be representative of all first year PMA assessments.

#### **4.10 Ethics**

I need to be particularly mindful of the ethical considerations of this study. I obtained consent from the NMMU to conduct the study in the institution (The Central Ethics Committee, The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Director of the School of Governmental and Social Sciences and the Head of Department of Political and Governmental Studies) and from the lecturers to voluntarily participate in this study.

In this study, participants were assured of their right to privacy and confidentiality, that the study is non-invasive, voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage and pseudonyms will be used. This study is not an evaluative study of the NMMU programmes rather the site is being used for a detailed understanding of the knowledge-knower structures and literacy practices of the PMA programmes. I need to be mindful of the fact that I am an outsider to the programmes but am encouraged by Jacobs that the collaborative exploration can lead to both mainstream and literacy lecturers “gaining new insights” (2010: 229) into the disciplinary discourses. Trowler (2011) also notes that the concepts of insider and outsider are fallacies as we are rarely entirely either and that we should rather speak of a continuum of insider and outsider.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

Having given an overview of the methods and methodology to be used in my study, I now turn to Chapters Five and Six which are the discussion of my data findings. Chapter Five presents the analysis of the Diploma modules and Chapter Six is the discussion on the Degree modules.

## Chapter Five

### Data Discussion: Diploma in Public Management

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses PM lecturer understandings and the understandings encapsulated in curriculum documentation of “what counts as valid knowledge” (Bernstein, 1971: 203) in the first-year PM Diploma curriculum at NMMU. The chapter is an attempt to identify the discourses in PM that have been “selected, appropriated and repositioned to become educational knowledge” (Maton and Muller, 2007: 10) from the field of production into the field of recontextualisation (Bernstein, 1999).

Table 5.1 illustrates the five compulsory modules in the first year that were taught by four lecturers, and which provided the data analysed in this chapter:

| Module                                | Lecturer |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Public Resource Management I PRM 1111 | Sam      |
| Public Service Delivery I PSD 1111    | Rebecca  |
| Self-Management I PSM 1111            | Akhona   |
| Public Decision-Making I PDM 1112     | Natasha  |
| Public Office Management PQM 1112     | Rebecca  |

Table 5.1 First-year PM Diploma modules

To understand what counts as knowledge in the PM Diploma, this chapter will discuss data findings for Biglan (1973a) and Becher’s (1989) typologies discussed in Chapter Two, the regional nature and the strengths of the epistemic relations and social relations of the PM Diploma and the literacy practices that emanate from the knowledge code.

#### 5.2 Biglan and Becher’s Typologies and Public Management

Before beginning the discussion on the data findings for the regional nature,

epistemic relations and social relations for the PM Diploma, I, firstly, consider how the typologies discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.5.3 could be applied to the PM Diploma. As noted in Chapter Two/section 2.5.4, these typologies are useful for general categories of disciplines and this is how they will be employed in this section. I am mindful of concerns that these typologies do not account for the relativity of disciplinary knowledge in their emphasis of dichotomous types. The analyses in Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 respond to these concerns.

Biglan's (1973a) typologies comprise of hard, soft, pure and applied dimensions for disciplines. In terms of Biglan's typologies, the PM Diploma at NMMU could be categorised as 'soft-applied' as its focus is personal growth, reflective practice and lifelong learning, and on professional practice enhancement (Goel, 2010). This is because the PM Diploma looks to the world of practice in order to foster growth and lifelong learning among practitioners.

For Biglan (1973a), disciplinary consensus arises in particular from lecturer perceptions. Discussion on data findings for lecturer insights for the PM workplace focus and interdisciplinary nature is given in more detail in section 5.3. However, an indication of the findings for the workplace focus and interdisciplinary nature as garnered from lecturer interviews is given here briefly to show consensus about the discipline. In response to a question about the outcomes of their modules, lecturers clearly aligned them to external PM practice: *"...basically we just prepare them as future employees of public officials..."* (Interview: Akhona); *"the importance of making correct decisions in big organisations"* (Interview: Natasha); *"...So in Public Decision-Making ... we look at ... professional conduct..."* (Interview: Rebecca) and *"Students are expected to understand the importance of the management of resources by the public sector"* (Interview: Sam). . Furthermore, the following extracts provide evidence for the interdisciplinary nature of the PM Diploma: *"...development goes hand-in-hand with service delivery..."*; *"...what are political parties and what is required in terms of political parties?..."* (Interview: Rebecca) and *"We move on to legislation and public policy documents..."* (Interview: Natasha) and *".... Maslow's hierarchy of needs..."* (Interview: Akhona). What can be seen in the lecturer extracts was that their modules drew on disciplines such as Development Studies, Political Studies, Law and Psychology making the PM Diploma an interdisciplinary field. Thus, the shared Kuhnian (1970) paradigm (which Biglan draws on) of the PM Diploma was that the disciplinary knowledge had a strong

workplace focus and was of an interdisciplinary nature.

Becher's (1989) typology understands disciplines as having an interwoven relationship between tribes (academic cultural) and territory (disciplinary knowledge or cognitive aspect). It was argued that PM Diploma could be categorised as 'soft applied' according to Biglan's (1973a) typology. The PM Diploma could be characterised as a divergent field with loosely-knit disciplines in Becher's typology. Biglan's typologies illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of the PM programme. Furthermore, it could be argued that in terms of Becher's (1989) typology, the cultural dimension of the PM Diploma was characterised by apprehension about its status, vulnerability to intellectual trends, low publication rates and concern with power (Muller, 2008) (see Chapter Two/section 2.4.2 for a discussion on these concerns). PM cognitive style could be characterised by functional knowledge, use of case studies and enhancement of Public Management and Administration practice (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Evidence of this cognitive style could be seen in the lecturer responses to questions of practical versus theoretical aspects of their modules: *"...Once you complete your degree... you are ready to be in the job market so we always expect you need to manage yourself well in the work environment..."* (Interview: Sam); *"Ja it [Public Service delivery] has a lot of... there are case studies..."* (Interview: Natasha); *"I keep with case studies with the POM [Public Office Management] more because that's more practical..."* (Interview: Rebecca) and *"to show them how resources are articulated, they are structured and how they are utilised and how the government also exercises control over it so that the resources are utilised in the interest of all"* (Interview: Sam). The cognitive or knowledge approach of the PM Diploma is discussed in more detail in sections 5.4 and 5.5.

It was argued in Chapter Two, section 2.5.4 that absolute disciplinary binaries are no longer realities in HE and Becher (1989) cautioned that his typologies were relative. Section 5.4 attends to this concern and looks to the data to see what it reveals about the nature of the knowledge of the PM Diploma.

### **5.3 Regional Nature of Public Management**

The first conclusion I was able to draw about the nature of the knowledge in the PM Diploma curriculum is that it could be characterised as what Bernstein (2000) refers to as a region. Regions draw on multiple disciplines and are very explicitly focused

on the world of work (Bernstein, 2000). In contrast to regions, Bernstein (2000) has defined singulars as disciplines constituting specialised discrete discourses with strong boundaries, practices and hierarchies, which are mostly orientated towards their own development. Regions draw on a number of related singulars to constitute themselves.

In his discussion on curricula at comprehensive universities, Muller noted that new disciplines are drawing on multiple singulars to form a new field or region that “support a domain of professional practice” (2008: 17). While professional curricula are always regions, some professions, such as Law and Medicine, have more stable bases that were developed over centuries (Muller, 2008). In contrast, fourth generation professions, discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.5.1, may have a weaker base as the core knowledge is not yet stable, they may lack a foundational disciplinary core in their curricula and may lack an accepted body of professional knowledge (Muller, 2008). I begin my discussion on the regional nature of the PM Diploma by considering how the National Diploma has been positioned in SA national documentation.

### **5.3.1 The National Diploma**

National documentation has positioned all diplomas in particular ways and has emphasised knowledge and skills associated with the workplace. Diploma knowledge generally has been categorised as:

... primarily professional, vocational or industry specific with the knowledge emphasising general principles and application. The purpose of the diploma is to develop graduates who can demonstrate focused knowledge and skills in a particular field. Vocational diploma programmes typically include a simulated work experience or work integrated learning (WIL) component (DOE, 2007: 19).

The DOE (2007) categorisation of diploma knowledge and skills as vocationally related remained much the same in the new HESQF (DHET, 2012: 24) and this kind of qualification was described as having:

...a vocational orientation, which includes professional, vocational, or industry specific knowledge that provides a sound understanding of general theoretical principles as well as a combination of general and specific procedures and their application. Diploma programmes typically include an appropriate work-integrated learning (WIL) component.

The emphasis in the National Diploma was on skills and knowledge that were underpinned by theoretical principles. A small but perhaps significant addition to the new HESQF definition was the word “*theoretical*” as in “*industry specific knowledge that provides a sound understanding of general theoretical principles*” (DHET, 2012: 24). This addition may be as a result of envisaged articulation between programmes at honours level and not only masters level, as discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.3.3. It also speaks to the definition of a region as facing inward to the multiple singular disciplines that it draws on and facing outwards to the external field of practice (Bernstein, 2000).

Having shown that the national documentation generically characterises the National Diploma as a region, I now show how the PM Diploma is characterised as a region, based on its relationship with the working world.

### **5.3.2 The Public Management Diploma and the Working World**

I draw on the data from the interviews and curriculum documentation to show the extent of the relationship between the PM Diploma and the working world.

#### **5.3.2.1 Lecturer Interviews**

During the interviews, I asked first-year PM Diploma lecturer participants to give me an overview of their module course content. Although I did not expressly ask for their understandings of what the course content was for, the vocational purpose of the PM Diploma was strongly evident in all of their responses. The grammar was strong for their descriptions of this vocational nature of the Diploma, for example, in their explanations they all spoke of the connection between principles taught and PM practice. The following extracts were examples of lecturer understandings of the centrality of preparation for the workplace in the PM Diploma curriculum: “[*My module*] is aimed at training middle level managers” (Interview: Sam) and “We always expect you need to manage yourself well in the work environment” (Interview: Akhona).

However, some differences were evident of the degree to which theoretical versus practical components were present in PM curricula. I asked lecturers if they thought their first-year modules were more theoretical or practical. I was attempting to see here if PM was drawing more on its singulars or facing more outward to external practice. For Akhona, the external identity of a region was stronger in the first year

than the internal identity that considered theories from the singulars that it drew on. Although Akhona felt that while there were aspects of theory in the Self-Management module, he did not give much attention to this. He felt that theories distracted first-year students from the focus of what is needed in PM practice: *“theories, like under course management there will be Maslow’s hierarchy of needs... remember it’s a first year module so I don’t delve much on theories, once you get to the theories you will be confusing them so I just limit”* (Interview: Akhona).

However, some modules placed more emphasis on theory. Natasha and Rebecca, who had also highlighted the practical and work-place nature of their modules, emphasised the dominance of theory in their modules: *“It’s more theoretical. I would say about 60% theory and 40% practical because they need to know...”* (Interview: Natasha) and *“more theory based so knowing what the legislature is made up of, knowing what the executive is made up of”* (Interview: Rebecca). Sam, however, only emphasised the theoretical nature of his course in the interview: *“Since it’s a first year, it’s more of an introductory programme. It is more conceptual, leading to practical”* (Interview: Sam). The knowledge focus as well as the workplace concern in the extracts above was evidence of PM as region looking inwards to its singulars but using the principles from the singulars to face outwards towards practice.

Pedagogical practices as described in the interviews with lecturers, also revealed the emphasis on the workplace. The following extracts demonstrated the importance of application of principles learnt to the workplace. The application took the form of case studies, for example: *“what I did with them last year was a lot of case studies in class so they look at the things...I take them off the Internet, I don’t take them out of the book because I find an article where it’s about office administration or personnel and then how they apply their work duties, and then I ask them simple questions and then they go through it in class”* (Interview: Rebecca) and *“I try as much as possible to have case studies,... where I would find an article in the newspaper and I would tell them, tell me how you would apply rational decision-making to this article or what do you think that the government should do in order to ensure that there’s proper service delivery”* (Interview: Natasha). The rationale for Rebecca and Natasha’s use of case studies, to the extent that they did in the Public Service Delivery, Public Office Management and Public Decision-Making modules, was for application to practice. Akhona’s reasons for using examples were also to make his content workplace focused so that students: *“come to understand the concepts, in particular,*

*... actually they need to imagine them in the work environment*" (Interview: Akhona).

Related to the vocational nature of a diploma was experiential learning (internship), which is a significant component in the PM Diploma. This demonstrated the importance of the external world of practice in the PM Diploma. In their third year PM Diploma students complete a minimum of three weeks internship training at an approved institution. Thereafter, they have to do a PowerPoint presentation to PM lecturers on their work experience. They also have to submit an assignment and complete a log book that was signed off by the mentor at the selected institution. The following extracts showed a common belief among lecturers that the experiential learning component in third year should involve practical application of learning from years one to three: *"At third-year level they do experiential training and then there they will go out into the real world and apply decision-making"* (Interview: Natasha) and *"third year when they do the experiential training and when they have their presentations, this module of Self-Management always surfaces as one that has been useful to them in their training"* (Interview: Rebecca). Having shown that lecturers strongly foregrounded the vocational nature of the PM Diploma, I need to assess textbook findings for a PM Diploma workplace focus.

### **5.3.2.2 Textbooks**

The prescribed and recommended textbooks for the PM Diploma underscored the significance of the workplace in the curriculum. The preface of the prescribed textbook used in PM Diploma modules, started off with the question *"What would anyone want to know about the subject of Public Administration to become an efficient and effective chief executive officer or....a good public administrator?"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 1)<sup>20</sup> and the premise that *"Our final products, in the form of academically qualified public administrators, must be able to apply their acquired academic knowledge and skills in practice."* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 3). The Public Decision-Making module used Chapter Five of this textbook where there was a strong emphasis on the external world of practice as seen in the following excerpt: *"Decision-making is an omnipresent function in the life of every public administrator."* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 174). Chapter Two in the textbook covered Maslow's hierarchy of needs<sup>21</sup> which was the one of the focus areas of the Self-Management module. Not surprisingly, this chapter related Maslow's needs to public needs that officials were

confronted with in practice and that which they would have to attend to. This was apparent in the following quote: *“Public needs form the basis for deciding on the nature of public functions to be executed for delivering public services to satisfy such needs”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 75). The chapter on Public Resources Management also foregrounded the organisational context: *“After mastering the knowledge and skills of the Public Management functions, the public administrator is ready to manage the resources required for executing the programme to realise the organisation’s long-term objectives and short-term targets”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 243).

The recommended textbook for the Public Decision-Making and Self-Management modules also placed emphasis on the external world of practice *“The contemporary public manager should thus know how to work with the public in general...”*, and *“This increased public involvement in decisions and Public Decision-Making challenges the effectiveness of public managers”* and *“Once you have mastered the ability of self-management, managing others in the workplace will be a lot easier”* (du Toit, Knipe, van Niekerk, van der Waldt and Doyle, 2002: 336,381)<sup>22</sup>. du Toit et al (2002: 56) defined public service delivery as not only making reference to an outcome but also to *“the results of intentions, decisions and action undertaken by institutions and people.”* This pointed to the close association the curriculum concept of Public Service Delivery had with the workplace context. Chapter Two, Public Resource Management placed emphasis on macro and micro contexts of resources in practice that had become the focus of public managers (du Toit et al, 2002). The workplace emphasis was also obvious in *“Public Resource Management therefore aims to manage resources allocated by politically legitimate means to public institutions in the most effective and efficient way”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 32).

The prescribed textbook for Public Office Management introduced its chapter entitled ‘The Administrator’s Duties’ with the following statement: *“To plan and pave our*

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<sup>20</sup> The Self-Management and Public Decision Making modules use *“The Philosophy of Public Administration A holistic approach”* by Gildenhuys (2004) as their prescribed textbook. It is the recommended textbook for the Public Service Delivery module.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Maslow postulated that human needs are hierarchical in nature and that they range from lower order, for example, physiological needs, to higher order needs, for example, self-actualisation needs (Gildenhuys, 2004: 57-58).

<sup>22</sup> *“Service excellence in governance”* by du Toit et al (2002) is the prescribed textbook for the Public Service delivery and Public Office Management modules. It is the recommended textbook for the Public Decision Making and Self-Management modules.

*careers in the administrative occupations, we need to ascertain what the duties and functions of an office administrator are*” (Badenhorst, van Rooyen, Ferreira, Groenewald, Marcus, Steenekamp, Swanepoel, van den Berg and van Heerden<sup>23</sup>, 2005: 91). It went on to describe the specific functions within the administrative department.

### 5.3.2.3 Study Guides

The strong relationship between knowledge and practice was also reinforced in the module study guides. In the Public Decision-Making study guide, unit outcomes were clearly linked to external practice. For example, the focus of unit five, Policy Making, was on policy at different levels of practice: *“Political party level, legislative level,”* and *“administrative level”* and political policy at *“central, regional”* and *“local government spheres...”*(Public Decision-Making study guide). In unit five of the module, *“Participants Instrumental in Making Policy Decisions”*, attention was paid to identifying *“policy actors”* and decisions made by parliament, portfolio and select committees (Public Decision-Making study guide).

Unit five of the Self-Management module, *“Principles of Enhancing Effectiveness and Efficiency”*, foregrounded the context *“organisations”* and the *“delegation, control and supervision, flexibility and coordination”* principles needed in self-management (Self-Management study guide). A specified outcome<sup>24</sup> for Public Office Management was to *“Identify important skills that are required in the administrative environment”* (Public Office Management study guide) and for Public Service Delivery it was to *“Be able to apply the principles of service delivery in an ethical manner to ensure a high level of professionalism in the public sector”* (Public Service Delivery study guide). A specific learning outcome for the Public Resources Management module was for students to: *“Describe and explain the institutional arrangement of the public sector”*. Examples listed under core content in the study guide were: *“The role of the following in Public Resources Management: The legislature, The executive, ministry of finance and the treasury, The auditor-general”* and *“The administrative authority”*. Having provided evidence for a workplace

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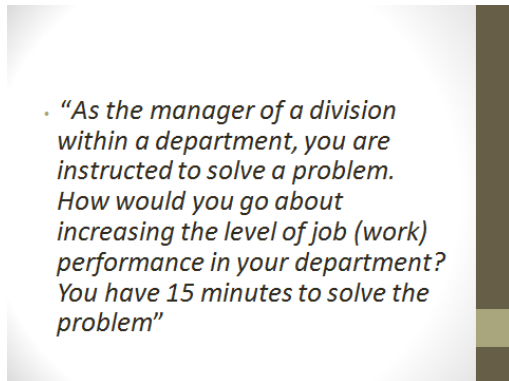
<sup>23</sup> *Business and Office Administration: An outcomes-based approach* by Badenhorst et al (2005) is the prescribed textbook for Public Office Management.

<sup>24</sup> A specified outcome makes reference to the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes students have to demonstrate.

emphasis in the study guides, I now consider findings from selected curriculum materials.

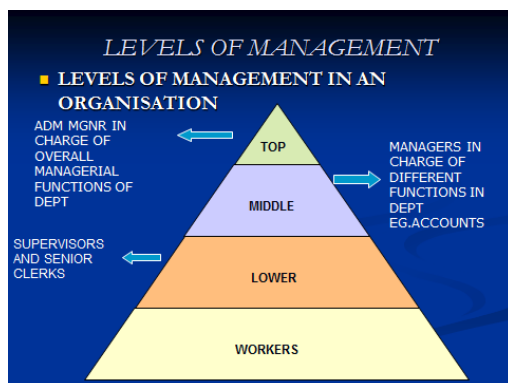
#### 5.3.2.4 Curriculum Materials

Class tasks focused student on problems to be solved in the workplace. For example, a PowerPoint slide asked that students imagine themselves to be managers and to consider ways in which to increase work performance:



Public Decision-Making PowerPoint slide

This workplace focus was also reflected in a Public Office Management lecture PowerPoint slide on the organisational structure of the workplace and in a Public Resources Management PowerPoint slide on the roles and functions of the Auditor General:



Public Office Management PowerPoint slide

## Auditor-General

Independent - auditing of all public institutions.

Functions; Powers. - Constitution 1996 sec 188;

Auditor-General Act 12 of 1995;

The role of the Auditor-General: to determine the manner in which the executive authority has executed its financial functions; which includes efficient expenditure of public funds and resources; as well as the effective utilization of stock, equipment and personnel;

The auditor-general examines the:

Regularity and legality of financial transactions;

Economy and avoidance of waste;

Efficient utilization of resources.

### Public Resources Management PowerPoint slide

I now analyse module assessments to determine the extent to which it was influenced by workplace practice.

#### 5.3.2.5 Assessments

Lastly, I consider findings from assessments regarding a PM Diploma workplace emphasis. The attention given to the external world of PM practice (both local and national spheres of practice) was also evident in the planned assessments. The following excerpts from examination papers showed the extent of this emphasis: “1.3 Describe in detail any **six** guidelines to managing yourself in the workplace” (Self-Management examination); “2.2 Explain any **five** ways of time wasting in the work environment” (Self-Management test one); QUESTION 2 “Policy affects people and it is in their interest to participate in public matters.” With reference to this statement, identify and discuss in detail four (4) actors in public policy-making” (Public Decision-Making examination); “4. Briefly explain the importance of administering and managing development at the national sphere of government.” (Public Service Delivery Test); “Discuss the role of information technology in regulating Human Resources in the public administrative environment of external clients in the public sector” (Public Office Management assignment topic) and “The role of the Municipal Council in the Management of Public Resources in South Africa” (Public Resources Management assignment topic).

#### 5.3.2.6 Conclusion

The multiple examples provided all demonstrate a deep curriculum concern with practice in the world of work, as evidenced in the interviews, study guides, assessments, textbooks and teaching material. In realist terms the PM Diploma

would have an internal relation (Sayer, 1992) with the working world as they are dependent on each other. Having discussed the relationship between the PM Diploma and the working world, I can now look at the second defining quality of a region, which is its interdisciplinary nature.

### **5.3.3 The Interdisciplinary Nature of the Public Management Diploma**

I draw on data from the lecturer interviews and study guides to show the interdisciplinary nature of the PM Diploma.

#### **5.3.3.1 Lecturer Interviews**

When lecturers spoke of the outlines of the various module units in the interviews, it became apparent which fields they were drawing on. For example, the Public Resource Management module drew on fields such as Business Management, Marketing, Human Resource Management, Logistics, Economics and Financial Information (many of which are themselves regions): *“What is public resources, what are the arrangements the market practices....and other concepts, like what is human resources, what is finance information?..... Logistics comes in, we even go practically into, let’s say, supply management then we go into human resources management, we go into programme management, project management”* (Interview: Sam).

On the other hand, the Self-Management module drew on the fields of Psychology and Business Management: *“We take a look at self-concept to understand themselves... how to become a company leader of the organisation”* and *“... there will be Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.”* (Interview: Akhona).

The Public Service Delivery module drew on Business Management principles and Development Studies: *“Okay, types of public services, what is public service delivery, the origin of public service delivery, how they should go about it in terms of what is required by the public,...”* and *“I do development also. So what is development, what is required for development, the goals of development, all of that...”* (Interview: Rebecca).

The Public Decision-Making module drew primarily on the field of Business Management: *“the importance of making correct decisions in big organisations as well and in this context we also discuss the dynamics of legislation issues...”* (Interview: Natasha).

Finally, the Public Office Management module drew on both Business Management and Administration: *“Business and Office Administration... It’s a general book but we use it. Administrative duties so the role of the administrator and then records management, we do that.”* (Interview: Rebecca). While lecturers had not explicitly given the fields that the PM Diploma drew on, it became evident in their discussion of the content of their modules which fields they were looking to. I will now discuss findings from the textbooks for the interdisciplinary nature of the PM Diploma.

### **5.3.3.2 Textbooks**

The PM Diploma textbooks demonstrated the extent of the interdisciplinary nature of the PM Diploma. For example, the list of contents of the Badenhorst et al (2005) textbook revealed that the fields of Economics and Business Administration were being drawn on: *“Economic Structures, Financing/Banking and Stock Markets, The office environment”* and *“Financial Record keeping”*. A further example can be found on the contents page of the du Toit et al (2002) textbook: *“Public Administration and Management, Public Resource Management, Human Resource Practice, Public Office Management and Self-Management”*. The Gildenhuys (2004) textbook was more explicit in its comments: *“...one must conclude that the teaching of Public Adminsitration requires a multidisciplinary approach. It involves some knowledge of Political Philosophy, Economics, Economic Philosophy, Sociology, Social Philosophy and the Philosophy of Public Law (Constitutional and Administrative Law)”* (2002: 15). Having shown that textbooks were looking to singulars to define the PM Diploma field, I now discuss findings from the study guides for the interdisciplinary nature of the PM Diploma.

### **5.3.3.3 Study Guides**

The study guides also pointed to the fields that PM Diploma modules drew on. The Public Resources Management study guide listed the following textbooks among additional reading requirements for students: Erasmus and Visser (1997), *Government Finance* and Gildenhuys (1993), *Public Financial Management* (Public Resources Management study guide). Students were also required to read the following Acts of Parliament: *“South Africa. Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (as amended) and South Africa: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (as amended)”* (Public Resources Management study guide). These textbooks and acts

showed that the field of Economics was being drawn on.

The Self-Management module also included a unit on Public Financing as was shown by this extract: “*The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 1 of 1999*” (Self-Management study guide). These extracts showed that the modules drew on the fields of Economics and Finance.

The Public Decision-Making module also drew on Law as the unit on Policy-Making included the following: “*The policy-making process: initiation phase, research and analysis phase, policy formulation phase, policy approval phrase and implementation phase*” (Public Decision-Making study guide). Similarly, the Public Service Delivery module drew on the field of Law. This was shown in the following extract: “*the learner will...have knowledge of ...legislative framework for service delivery...*” (Public Service Delivery study guide).

#### **5.3.3.4 Conclusion**

The data strongly demonstrated that the PM Diploma was a region that faced inward to fields such as Business Management, Psychology, Human Resources Management, Marketing, Law, Logistics and Financial Information Studies. Furthermore, the PM field drew on the fields of Political Philosophy, Economics, Economic Philosophy, Sociology, Social Philosophy and the Philosophy of Public Law. Therefore, the PM field could be characterised as multidisciplinary. Many of the fields PM drew on, such as Business Management, were themselves regions and did not have long histories of theory to draw on. In Bernstein terms, this weakened the knowledge base of PM.

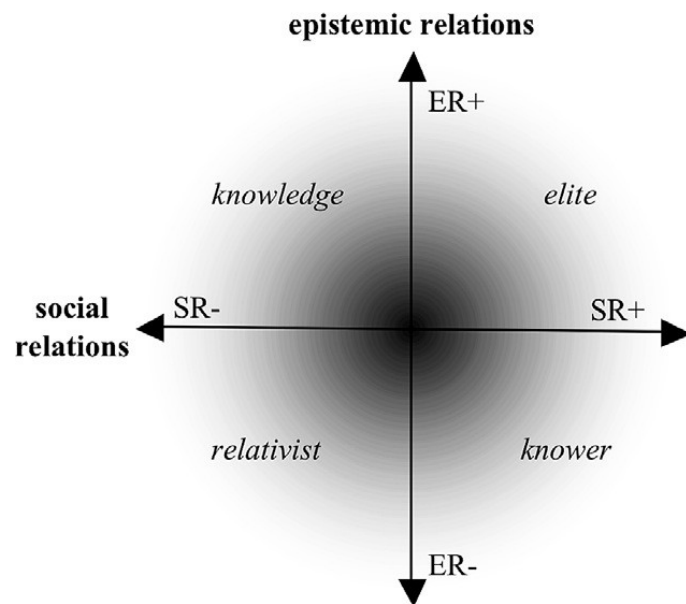
The fragmented nature of the PM field (Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011) was seen in the different emphases placed by different lecturers as to the key focus: “*To be able to manage resources you need mathematics. Ja, to be able to understand*”, “*Logistics is part of it...*”. (Interview: Sam); “*Make a difference, especially with problem solving techniques*” (Interview: Natasha); “*Public Service Delivery and how would you apply it in the public sector*” (Interview: Rebecca) and “*you need to manage yourself well in the work environment.*” (Interview: Akhona). The lack of clarity about the characteristics of the PM field as a whole, evident in the data in this study, was in keeping with Van Dijk and Thornhill's (2011) argument that the field lacked a specific language and theory. The interviews tended to show a strong concentration by

lecturers on localised practices pertinent to their own module rather than a holistic PM philosophy. Having shown in this section that PM was a region that looked to the world of practice and draws on many fields, I now turn to a discussion of the epistemic relations within the PM Diploma.

#### **5.4 Epistemic Relations in the Public Management Diploma**

My data discussion has thus far shown the significance of the workplace in the PM curriculum. I now need to consider the degree of epistemic relations (ER) in the PM Diploma. An emphasis on workplace learning and experience could be evidence of both ER and social relations (SR). As explained in Chapter Three/section 3.3.3.1, ER and SR are two dimensions of knowledge and practice that co-exist empirically but are distinct analytically (Maton, 2004). ER refers to the knowledge structures of disciplines and curricula and *what someone knows* (Maton, 2000, 2004, 2010, 2011). ER thus foregrounds knowledge or skills, principles and procedures. On the other hand, the focus of a knower structure is on SR, the relations between knowledge and its subject or author (Maton, 2010, 2011). The focus is on *who you are* (Maton, 2011), that is, the attributes, attitudes and dispositions that an individual needs to have (Bernstein, 1999; Maton, 2009). The focus is on a knower structure because “actors and discourses are not only positioned in both a structure of knowledge and in a structure of knowers, but also establish different forms of relations to these two structures” (Maton, 2007: 93).

The four modalities made up of combinations of stronger and weaker ER and SR are knowledge code (knowledge foregrounded), knower code (attributes and dispositions foregrounded); elite code (both knowledge and dispositions emphasised) and relativist code (neither knowledge nor knower important) (Maton 2010, 2011). The PM Diploma curricula may assume one or more of these modalities. The form of the PM curricula knowledge was analysed in order to see its modality, firstly and, secondly, to see the literacy practices students are expected to demonstrate and how these relate to the knowledge, which are discussed in section 5.7 of this chapter. Maton (2007) emphasises that the four modalities are not dichotomous but have relative strengths. They are illustrated in Figure 5.1 below:



Maton (2010)

Figure 5.1 Specialisation codes

#### 5.4.1 Lecturer Interviews

I asked lecturers in the interviews about the content covered in their modules. Strong evidence of ER+ was found in the following excerpt: “[*The Public Office Management module looks at*]... *an official in the front, front office duties, ventilation, how should the office be laid out, it's very practical.*” (Interview: Rebecca). This extract seemed at first glance to be ER- as she started off commenting on qualities of a secretary. However, as Rebecca unpacked these qualities, she listed a set of skills or procedures that involved office duties and office layout, which suggested ER+.

Natasha’s response to the questions of what students needed to know in the Public Decision-Making module was an example of ER+: “*the message we try and get across to them is that they need to know the fundamentals of decision-making, the rational process of decision-making as well as ... the dynamics of legislation issues*”. Natasha had conceptualised decision-making as a set of procedures which involved “*fundamentals*” and “*a process*” rather than as being related to the possession of a particular disposition, which would have indicated SR+.

Sam strongly foregrounded ER+ throughout his interview and indicated that the Public Resources Management module concerned: “*...conceptual explanation of the issues involved [like]... public resources, what are the arrangements of the market*

*practices, then the arrangements that we have in the government, the role of the constitution and the legislature because they have the authority to make laws for the utilisation of resources and they have control over it and now other concepts, like what is human resources, what is finance information?"* (Interview: Sam).

On the question of the knowledge students needed to learn in the Public Resources Management module, Sam commented on knowledge gaps in the module *"if it were to be restructured so that students have basics in mathematics and a little bit of business knowledge..."*. In addition, areas of knowledge that the module currently addressed included: *"Logistics ...[and] human resources management, we go into programme management, project management and things like that. So it is very necessary that you need certain basic knowledge obviously."* (Interview: Sam).

Rebecca's response to the question of content in the Public Service Delivery Module also underscored the prevalence of ER+ in her module: *"Value of community participation in building local democracy so I want them to discuss community participation, what its value is and then how does that apply to local democracies, and improving policies."* (Interview: Rebecca).

The knowledge in the Public Service Delivery Module, firstly, made propositions about communication participation, what it was and its value, 'the why' of improving policies and 'the who'. Secondly, it was also procedural, knowing how to apply community participation policies. It was not, however, discussed in terms of particular belief systems or ideological approaches, as would be expected if community participation were presented from a strong SR+ perspective.

Akhona downplayed theories, which was seemingly ER-, in the following response: *"I only go into detail with the theories at the third year level. However, ER+ was noticeable in his overview of the content of the Self-Management module: "I mean I get to organising one of the principles of public administration... to issues like internalisation ... the EBC training as well....to strategy and accountability, which is part of self management and then the possibility of enhancing effectiveness and efficiency. ... I explain what self management is about.... if they understand the concept and there are a lot of definitions you need to unpack and explain them:... we talk about conceptual understanding of these types of terms..."* (Interview: Akhona). Even though Akhona may not have been engaging with propositional knowledge, he still focused far more on knowledge (ER+) than on knowers (SR+)

but conceptualised knowledge in the Self-Management module in terms of procedural knowledge.

Natasha was unequivocal about the role of knowledge in the Public Decision-Making module: *"It's more theoretical... I mean you can't tell me green paper is the colour of the page. You know, they need to know exactly green paper is. The knowledge is important, yes absolutely... There's a lot of theory."* (Interview: Natasha). The term 'theory' was repeatedly used in the data in the everyday sense of 'facts' rather than in the scientific sense of a tested system of ideas used to explain a phenomenon. But this fairly simple conception of 'theory' nonetheless indicated a strong ER+ in the curriculum.

The following extracts show that the knowledge in the first-year PM Diploma was fairly low level and of an introductory nature but still ER+: *"At this level it's more conceptual....at the first year I don't expect them to be that critical but if you are, that's fine"* (Interview: Sam) and *"We move on to legislation and public policy documents and then right towards the end we look at the process of policy making because now they have the policies there, in place, what was the process that brought about this policy? So I don't go into too much detail because it's first year"* (Interview: Natasha).

Having shown that lecturers strongly foregrounded ER+ in the PM Diploma, I now discuss the strengths of ER in textbooks.

#### **5.4.2 Textbooks**

I asked lecturers about the nature of knowledge in the prescribed and recommended textbooks they used for their modules. Textbooks were characterised by ER+, as could be seen in responses such as: *"Ja, this is mostly theory so it's lots of complicated words and stuff like that for first years... But it covers the theory for it so you have to use it... It forms the basis of what they are going to do in their second and third year"* but as *"they need to know the basic stuff...."* she did *"go through the theories from basic"* (Interview: Rebecca). Natasha also observed that the prescribed textbook for the Public Decision-Making module had *"a lot of theory"* and so in her study guide she had *"adjusted the content"* by making *"specific reference in the course outline"* to sections students needed to consult. This helped students navigate the textbook *"so that they're not lost"* amidst all the theory (Interview:

Natasha). However, owing to the high levels of theory in the textbook for first years they were looking to change the textbook: *“Either we’re going to...swop”* (the recommended and prescribed textbooks) or *“we’re going to look at a completely different text because ...the students have actually said to me, that the prescribed textbook for PDM is very complicated.”* Natasha was making reference here to the Gildenhuys (2004) textbook.

As an aside to this discussion, it was interesting to note that this textbook had dense text and few graphics, and these factors could also play a role in student difficulty with reading and comprehending it. The textbook was mainly written in the third person *“Since public administrators may not regard....”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 329) and used passive voice *“What still makes planning so controversial ....are the two approaches to government planning...”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 219). It also drew on many research findings: *“According to San Luis (1994:191-192), every department...”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 306). This was in contrast with the recommended textbook which was characterised by different font size, icons and graphics and had a chatty conversational style, for example: *“In this chapter we will briefly look at...”* and *“Imagine this scenario: Your boss summons you to his office unexpectedly...”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 229). Despite the different styles in the textbooks and level of difficulty, they were both still ER+, as will be shown in the discussion that follows.

Public Resources Management prescribed the Gildenhuys (2004) textbook and used the du Toit et al (2002) textbook as recommended reading. For Public Resources Management, the du Toit et al (2002: 34) textbook provided propositional knowledge ER+ in definitions: *“Resources are all substance, primary and secondary”*; it discussed theories such as the open-systems theory to *‘explain the components of public management institutions and categorises resources into processed, unprocessed resources and live resources’* for example. The chapter was not only concerned with meaning but explained activities. It also outlined procedures of managing public human, financial, information and natural resources (du Toit et al, 2002).

The Gildenhuys (2004: 243) textbook started off very clearly with procedural knowledge as its study goal for the chapter on Public Resources Management: *“The purpose of studying this chapter is for the student to understand how to manage the resources available to the public sector such as finance, personnel, information,*

*inventory and accommodation...*” The chapter was replete with phrases such as *“mastering the knowledge and skills...”*, *“manage the resources...”*, *“executing the programme...”*, *“to realise its objectives...”*, *“to apply them as efficiently as possible...”* *“be utilised effectively...”*, and *“to optimise the satisfaction of the public’s needs”* which all spoke to activities, tasks and procedures (ER+) rather than to dispositions or attributes (SR+) (Gildenhuys, 2004). Definitions of concepts were provided, for example, *“Direct taxes can be defined as those taxes recovered directly from the taxpayer by the taxing authority ”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 246) and these were always in reference to a procedure: *“taxes should be distributed among taxpayer in relation to their financial capacity”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 250), rather than to the disposition of the knower.

Procedures were also emphasised for Public Service Delivery in the prescribed textbook, for example: *“Determining work procedures and methods is also essential so that there are guidelines in terms of which officials can carry out their respective functions”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 83). These entailed administrative and management processes. Propositional knowledge was present in definitions of the environment as external, natural, intellectual, social, economic, political and statutory (du Toit et al, 2002). For example, *“The external environment consists of a natural and an intellectual environment”* answers the question “what”. Propositional knowledge was linked to procedures or activities as could be seen in the following quotation *“Although the term external environment refers to what is outside the confines of public institutions, it can nevertheless influence the activities of public institutions”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 93).

The recommended textbook for Public Service Delivery used selected chapters from Gildenhuys (2004). Both propositional knowledge and procedures, ER+, were strongly evident in Chapter Five, Communication. For propositional knowledge, the ‘what’ of communication was seen in definitions *“In verbal communication, as is the case with negotiations, there is a greater possibility...”*(Gildenhuys, 2004: 208); the ‘who’ was given as *“formal internal communication within public organisations ...and with the public”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 209) and the ‘why’ of communication was given as *“One of the main propositions of this work is that the public service exists to serve the people and in particular the individual”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 209). Procedures were linked to propositional knowledge as was evident in *“Control can be defined as the process of monitoring the activities to determine where individual units and the*

*organisation itself ...where these are not being achieved, implementing corrective action in time...*" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 211). Chapter Eight dealt with Public Services and examined the *"nature of public services"* and functions: *"To execute their functions in order to realise their goals and objectives, governments (at all levels) are bound to supply and deliver public goods and services to their communities"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 350). Principles were also defined: *"The nature of collective services can be explained in terms of the following characteristics..."* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 351).

The chapter on Public Office Management in the recommended textbook for this module contained a focus on procedural knowledge as the chapter *"intend(s) to provide new entrants into the public service with knowledge about the types of duties they will be responsible for"* (du Toit et al, 2002: 295). The chapter began with brief definitions of management, office, office relationships but these were linked to the duties of an office administrator, rather than on negotiating these from a particular disposition. For example, the definition of an office was linked to tasks and duties: *"an office as a place where information is recorded, copied, stored, retrieved and passed on"* (du Toit et al, 2002: 296). Procedural knowledge was also very clearly foregrounded in the prescribed textbook for Public Office Management. For example, the following quotations showed the emphasis on functions and duties: *"Administration is also interwoven with the production and marketing functions"* (Badenhorst et al, 2005: 94) and *"When a customer enters the reception area, it is important that you give your full attention to the customer"* (Badenhorst et al, 2005: 159).

Knowledge was foregrounded under *"study goal"* in Chapter Two, in the prescribed textbook, which pertained to Self-Management, but understanding in order to satisfy needs was also emphasised. The chapter was devoted to explanation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This chapter was less clearly ER+ as it included discussion of particular ideological positions, though it did so in a fairly uncritical, factual manner. For example, with religious needs, arguments were made for religion as natural and intrinsic to humans: *"Religion was not tacked on to a primordially secular nature by manipulative kings and priests, but was natural to humanity"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 66). It also explained 'the what' of knowledge, as shown in the following example: *"Economics as a social science is concerned with the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 71).

Chapter Five, *"The Management function"*, concerned *"Organising"*, which fell under unit two of the Self-Management module. Once more, this chapter contained a mix of propositional and procedural knowledge, ER+, with the bulk of the chapter devoted to explanation of principles, for example: *"Organising principles"* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 198) as well as processes *"Process of structuring the organisation"* and *"The first step is to identify the broad policy and objectives of the organisation to be established"* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 199).

While most of the chapters in the du Toit et al (2002) textbook, on Public Service Delivery, Public Office Management and Public Resources Management were written in the third person and made reference to *"the public manager"* or *"the public administrator"*, there was a wealth of personal pronouns in the chapter on Self-Management: *"I"*, *"you"* and *"Your"*. This suggested a stronger SR+. But despite the use of these pronouns and the implications of its title, the Self-Management chapter in the recommended textbook also exhibited evidence of ER+. This took the form of a focus on procedural knowledge: *"Self-management will enable you to have the ability to manage your time, work and life."* Self-management was conceptualised as procedures of management of self-monitoring, delegation and communication amongst others (du Toit et al, 2002: 387). The development of self-management was linked to organising one's workspace and developing skills of time management (ER+), rather than on being a certain kind of person (SR+).

The prescribed textbook chapter on Public Decision-Making was characterised by procedural knowledge. Though *"students have to explain concepts in their own words"* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 173), such as decision-making, these concepts were linked to procedures. For example, the decision-making process outlined five steps to be taken as: *"Ascertaining the need for a decision, Developing alternative solutions, establishing decision criteria, evaluation of alternatives"* and *"Selecting the optimum alternative"* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 175). Like the prescribed textbook, the recommended textbook for Public Decision-Making mostly contained elements of procedural knowledge. This chapter on Public Decision-Making distinguished between decision-making and problem-solving, decision-making and policy-making with reference to the processes and procedures involved: *"Problem-solving involves the process of carefully and deliberately attempting to overcome the obstacles in the path towards a goal"* (du Toit et al, 2002: 337); *"Policy decisions are decisions that give direction and content to public policy action"* (du Toit et al, 2002: 338) and *"The*

*public manager has to follow certain steps to solve problems rationally and make sound decisions*" (du Toit et al, 2002: 342). It was plainly a skill, *"Decision-making is an important managerial skill needed in the public sector"* (du Toit et al, 2002: 339).

Having discussed strengths of ER in prescribed and recommended textbooks and finding stronger evidence for ER+, I now consider strengths of ER in the Diploma study guides.

### **5.4.3 Study Guides**

Two specified outcomes for the Public Service Delivery study guide were to: *"have knowledge on communication with internal and external clients according to appropriate principles of service delivery,"* and *"Have knowledge of government concepts, functions, public services, government organisation and legislative framework for service delivery"* (Public Service Delivery study guide). Propositional knowledge appeared to be present in *"Knowledge of government concepts"* and linked to procedural knowledge, *"Be sure to apply"*.

Once more in the Self-Management study guide, propositional and procedural knowledge characterised the module as students were required to *"explain what self-management means"* and *"training as a concept"* which was propositional knowledge. They were also asked to *"manage time more effectively"* and understand *"Principles of Organising"* the *"Organising Process"*, which were instances of procedural knowledge (Self-Management study guide).

So too in Public Decision-Making, students moved from propositional knowledge to procedural knowledge as was shown in these excerpts: from *"What is a decision?"*, *"The nature of decision-making"* and definitions of *"Policy"* and *"Policy Analysis"* to *"Steps in systematic decision-making"* and *"The policy making process"* (Public Decision-Making study guide). The movement was from explanations of knowing what constituted a decision towards procedures such as *"steps"* and *"process"* (Public Decision-Making study guide).

Public Office Management was largely procedural as it looked to *"Understand and apply the concept of self-motivation..."*, *"Critically understand the essence of effective time management"* and *"Have knowledge of setting up and implementing a records' management programmes and insight into managing the records..."* (Public Office Management study guide).

The Public Resources Management study guide indicated that: “*The purpose of this module is to provide students with knowledge of the concepts and the theoretical basis for the management of public resources*”. Procedural knowledge was the focus, for example: “*Explain the processes related to Public Resources Management*” (Public Resources Management study guide). I now discuss the strengths of ER in the curriculum materials.

#### 5.4.4 Curriculum Materials

The materials developed by the lecturers provided ample evidence of ER+ too. Procedural knowledge was visibly foregrounded in the following PowerPoint slide:

##### The functions, skills and techniques for public resources management.

- **Economic systems** – methods and arrangements devised by societies for the exchange of goods and services; to regulate the problems of production and scarcity of resources in order to promote the well-being of society.
- **traditional system** – a system of social organisation in which both production and distribution are determined by tradition – customs and beliefs. eg. barter system, skills passed on through hereditary chain;
- It may be found in less industrialised nations

#### Public Resources Management PowerPoint slide

The following PowerPoint slide clearly demonstrated the movement from principles to procedures:

**GOAL SETTING**

*What is a GOAL?*

- The focus of a person's actions.
- It is what a person attempts to accomplish (i.e. future-based).

*Why do we set goals?*

- Organise our lives
- To achieve success
- Gain direction in life – help steer efforts in a consistent direction (synonymous with a map) i.e. without goals in life, our efforts are scattered in all directions
- goals direct people's behavior
- goals are a powerful motivator - They provide you with the focus and motivation to make change.

**THEREFORE,** goal-setting is a way of life

#### Public Office Management PowerPoint slide

The following example of a class activity in the Public Decision-Making module showed evidence of procedural knowledge. Students needed to follow the steps to solve a problem in a class task:

#### Four main steps of PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. Definition of the problem
  - What is the problem?
2. Analysing the problem
  - Sorting out and examining the relevant facts and info from the available info
3. Solving problems
  - Using judgement as well as common sense
4. Implementing solutions
  - Involves planning as a key aspect

Public Decision-Making class task

#### 5.4.5 Epistemic Relations Conclusion

The movement from low-level forms of propositional knowledge (definitions and explanations of PM principles as drawn from its singulars/regions) to procedural knowledge (application of this knowledge) characterised data from the interviews, the textbooks, the study guides and PowerPoint slides. It was predominantly procedural knowledge characterised by skills, activities and processes. The content of the knowledge was of a fairly low level as there was not much focus on complex discipline specific theory. This may be because the data was from the first year of study or because of the regional nature of PM, which did not have many clearly-defined singulars with long histories of theory to call on. The propositional knowledge base was found to be weaker in the PM Diploma than the procedural knowledge basis. This is in keeping with Muller's argument that 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'" (2008:18). The abstraction of the epistemic relations in the data led me to conclude that the epistemic relations were indeed stronger in the PM Diploma data, I now move to a consideration of the strength of social relations.

## 5.5 Social Relations in the Public Management Diploma

This section discusses findings on the social relations (SR) in the data. I use findings from the interviews and curriculum documents to consider the strength of the SR relations in the PM Diploma.

### 5.5.1 Lecturer Interviews

Data from the lecturer interviews is assessed to show the degree to which SR was present in the PM Diploma.

The abundance of pronouns with reference to students, in the interviews, pointed to the emphasis on the kind of person that would be effective in PM practice, for example: “how *you* should handle *yourself*,” “*they*,” “*their* behaviour and the environment around *them*,” “how *they* should go about it”, “the qualities *you* should have....” and “Actually *they* need to imagine *them* in the work environment...”. These positionings spoke to evidence of an SR+ where the attributes of actors in the PM field were emphasised.

To gain a deeper understanding of the ideal knower in the PM Diploma (and the extent to which a particular kind of knower was called for), I asked lecturers directly if there were particular attributes needed for success in their specific modules and the wider PM field. It should be noted that this discussion of attributes did not simply emerge from a general conversation about the expectations of the PM Diploma. Nonetheless, clear and precise descriptions emerged of the dispositions (SR+) that PM Diploma modules trained students to acquire.

For example, for Natasha, the attributes her module on Public Decision-Making focused on were for students to be rational and ethical decision makers in the workplace: “*rational decision-making ...and... values and ethics and ethical behaviour and professional conduct*” (Interview: Natasha).

The focus in the Self-Management module was on students being a particular kind of employee who behaved in particular ways: “*how they should conduct themselves in the work environment where they are employed in future ... to understand themselves, their behaviour and the environment around them, how the environment around them affects them as individuals, how do they manage their time in their work environment...*” (Interview: Akhona). This was evidence of SR+, but the key to the

appropriate conduct for the workplace was seen to be the acquisition of procedures and skills (ER+) rather than taking on a particular disposition or way of being in the world.

Natasha's response was focused on the disposition of a person who was interested in current affairs: *"They must be avid readers in terms of newspapers, they must be up to date with current affairs because, you know, documents change, legislations change all the time.... anyone that has an interest in government issues So somebody who is politically inclined to make a difference..."* (Interview: Natasha). The person who wanted to make a difference and keep up-to-date with current affairs was evidence of SR+.

Even in response to the interview question about attributes (SR), there was evidence of ER+. For example, the Public Resources Management module taught students to have management skills and also knowledge of business, resource and project management as could be seen in the following excerpts: *"to manage resources", have "business knowledge" and "project management" abilities* (Interview: Sam).

Furthermore, Rebecca's module on Public Service Delivery taught students to be a particular kind of person, courteous and transparent, which was SR+, but these were described in terms of principles, which suggests SR-: *"the principles of how they should conduct themselves one day in terms of the principles, courtesy, transparency, value for money"* (Interview: Rebecca).

The Public Office Management module showed strengths of SR+. This was evident in the following extract: *"we look at...how you should handle yourself, the qualities you should have as a secretary"* (Interview: Rebecca). Dispositions needed for the workplace were significant in this module: *"Communication ... if somebody comes to you and they're rude so how would you handle them, which is you must be polite still..."* (Interview: Rebecca).

When questioned about student attributes for success in the PM field, Akhona's response indicated a weaker SR: *"they need to have good writing skills, they should be able also to read well because we talk about conceptual understanding of these types of terms, I mean they need to have good reading, understand and make sense of what they are reading."* Akhona was explaining about workplace processes and practices and not particular dispositions (Interview: Akhona).

If the PM Diploma had stronger social relations, then it would be unsurprising that

the issue of student selection would arise in the data, as the emphasis would be on a particular kind of knower. Sam responded to the question about student attributes by complaining that lecturers had no say in the kind of student that was being admitted: *“The admission criteria is out of our hands”* (Interview: Sam).

The admission of students into the PM Diploma course was taken up more strongly by Akhona. He commented on students being accepted into the PM Diploma, after having been refused entry into their course of choice. However, the concerns about who gets admitted were less about students’ inclination for PM, which would suggest stronger social relations, and more about their readiness and skills, which suggested stronger epistemic relations: *“I don’t have something specific in mind, to me with this module you don’t need a special kind as such but I think they need to have understood and to have a full matric exemption”* (Interview: Akhona).

Akhona expressed concerns about student preparedness and selection: *“most of the students are coming here no good pass rate in matric ... the admission requirements have been lowered and now they are struggling”* and *“Most students are failing this module, I must tell you that”* (Interview: Akhona). This extract showed the general concerns about whether students entering HE in SA have been properly prepared by the school system. These concerns were discussed in Chapters Two and Three of this study. The concerns of underpreparedness and underperformance are held by many academics across SA (Scott et al, 2013).

Having discussed the interviews and finding relatively strong SR+ through to relatively weak SR- in lecturer understandings of the qualities that PM practitioners needed to have, I now discuss findings of strengths of the SR in the textbooks.

### **5.5.2 Textbooks**

Chapter Two, Public Resources Management, in the du Toit et al (2002) textbook dealt primarily with the context of Public Resource Management and was almost entirely SR-. It contained definitions of resources, public resources and Public Resource Management: *“According to Schwella, et al. (1996: 6), Public Resource Management focuses on the relationship between public management, skills and techniques and the scarce resources used to achieve legitimate and legal policy goals and objectives”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 35). A list of the different categories of resources was given. No reference was made to any qualities the public manager

should have. Management of Resources dealt with principles: *“Political component – the way in which society is governed”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 37); decisions: *“For example, it would be unwise to make a decision about a particular situation without having knowledge about what cause the situation to develop”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 45) and functions: *“... government institutions have to perform a variety of functions...”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 50).

Differing strengths of SR were found in the Gildenhuis (2004) textbook chapter on Public Resources Management. Chapter Six, Public Resources Management, had as its main subsections: financial management; personnel management; information management; inventory management and management of accommodation. Personnel Management discussed ethics as *“a set of moral principles”*, which suggested that ethics comprises prescribed sets of behaviours that could be generically applied, rather than being a concern of social relations of power specific to PM. This suggests weaker SR-. Furthermore, Public Management was described in terms of compliance with a *“code of good conduct”* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 286). Discussions about professionalism in this chapter could be defined as both SR+ and SR-, as it referred to both qualities and skills as was seen in: *“the qualities or typical features of a profession or of professionals, especially its qualities of competence, skills and ethical conduct”* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 292). A further example of SR+ was seen in the definition of a professional as a person *“with integrity, who preserves high moral standards under any circumstances”* (Gildenhuis, 2004: 305). To conclude, Chapter Six in the Gildenhuis (2004) textbook exhibited both stronger and weaker social relations.

The prescribed textbook for Public Office Management module had a chapter entitled *“Personal Attributes and Self-awareness”* (Badenhorst et al, 2005). This clearly indicated an emphasis on social relations. Somewhat surprisingly then, the chapter had many elements of weaker SR. While it listed essential attributes for an office manager as *“drive and ambition, integrity and reliability, friendliness and sincerity, helpfulness and loyalty”* in order to get on with people (Badenhorst et al, 2005: 107), all indicative of SR+, the main focus of the chapter was on skills such as *“technical skills, conceptual skills and human skills which focused on job functions”* (Badenhorst et al, 2005: 106). Furthermore, the listed attributes were generic in nature and not based on any *“privileged insight”* (Maton 2000: 87) of the PM knower.

There was evidence of SR+ in Chapter Nine, entitled “*Public Office Management*” in the du Toit et al (2002) textbook: “*According to Silvis (1995: 32), this requires that office workers display: a positive attitude; initiative and good judgement; confidentiality; dependability; accuracy; punctuality; consideration; courtesy; tactfulness and teamwork*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 297). The aforementioned list referred to the qualities of office workers in order to minimise “*negative actions such as complaining and gossiping*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 297). Further evidence of a focus on social relations was seen in the section on client expectations: “*...clients in general share certain expectations from service providers. These expectations include being: dependable, efficient, prepared to take responsibility; helpful; accountable; professional; flexible; competent; trustworthy; pleasant; able to honour promises; able to do things right the first time and able to portray a positive attitude*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 309) and “*the following characteristics...are essential for good interpersonal skills...caring attitude; reliability; sincerity; co-operativeness; honesty and resourcefulness*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 309-310). These lists of attributes all indicated a valuing of a particular disposition, or set of social relations, but the discussion did not move beyond a listing of the attributes to an engagement.

du Toit et al’s (2002) chapter on Public Service Delivery exhibited both stronger and weaker SR. Firstly, examples of SR- could be seen in planning, organising, leading, co-ordinating and controlling which were conceptualised as skills and not as qualities. For example: “*Organising the activities of education institutions and setting up an infrastructure from which personnel can work to achieve the objectives they are appointed to achieve is important*” and “*Control is important to ensure that everyone works towards achieving the objectives*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 83). The focus was on “*actions to deliver services*” and “*functions that must be carried out*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 89) and not on qualities, and this was evidence of SR-. Ethics was defined in terms of compliance to principles rather than to a shared ownership of core values: “*Ethics in government institutions mean that public administration and management must comply with certain generally accepted principles*” and “*Section 33(1) of the Constitution determines that everyone has the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair; in other words, complying with a set of ethical principles*” (du Toit et al, 2002: 111).

Stronger social relations were evident, however, in the following definition of professionalism: “*professionalism can be defined as ‘the way in which public*

*managers and their subordinate officials behave*" (du Toit et al, 2002: 115). The concern here was with conduct in the workplace. This behaviour was "*evaluated according to standards unique to the activities of public managers*" (du Toit et al, 2002: 115). The qualities of professionalism that were judged were "*diplomacy, etiquette, manner, protocol*" and "*language*" (du Toit et al, 2002: 115-116). Diplomacy was defined as having tact, etiquette as obeying the conventional rules of society, manner as displaying good behaviour and protocol as observing the formalities of state occasions (du Toit et al, 2002). These all suggested a curriculum concerned with social relations.

Chapter Eight, Public Services, in the recommended Gildenhuys (2004) textbook for Public Service Delivery also presented different strengths of SR+ and SR-. It was clearly SR- as the discussion concerned the procedures: "*multitude of diverse functions*" to be performed by public authorities (Gildenhuys, 2004: 364). The focus was on the nature of public services and not the qualities of an administrator: "*...for any service to qualify as a public service such service should comply with the following requirements: it must be non-apportionable; it must be non-exclusive...*" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 353) and principles related to it: "*As is the case with most socialist policies, nationalisation usually leads to inefficient and ineffective management of nationalised enterprises, resulting in low productivity and substantial financial losses*" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 359). Here the focus was on the debate between nationalising versus privatising the delivery of services to the public but it was presented as a set of facts to be understood rather than as an ideological position to be debated or adopted.

The chapter on Public Decision-Making in the prescribed textbook could be characterised by SR+ as it listed personal qualities for decision-making: "*Knowledge and experience, Good judgement, Creativity and ingenuity, Logic and reasons*", however, the list also included the technical skill of "*Data-processing*" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 177). The rationale for the significance of personal qualities was because of influences of party politics and social values upon decision-making (Gildenhuys, 2004), which were seen to be problematic. But these were not understood as nuanced social relations of power but more as issues that could be simply set aside by the professional Public Administrator. There was also evidence of SR+ in the recommended textbook for Public Decision-Making as characteristics of effective decision makers were "*reason and logic*" (du Toit et al, 2002: 341). Characteristics of

individuals that would limit decision-making were *“attitudes, prejudices and personal views of decision makers”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 356). In both textbooks, there was no engagement in how such attributes might be developed or might be prevented, nor was there engagement in the relationship between such attributes and issues of power. Thus while the *topics* were strongly related to social relations, they were presented in ways which suggest the issues were neutral and straightforward. They were not discussed in ways that related to the development of specific ways of viewing the world, as would be expected to be the case if this was a course with stronger social relations.

Chapter Two on Public Needs in the prescribed textbook for Self-Management had weaker SR. This chapter outlined the principles of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as the basis of decisions made about public services to satisfy public needs. The public administrator had to *“understand the nature of public needs...to decide what services should be rendered by government”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 75). There was no discussion of qualities or dispositions that the administrator should have in the chapter on public needs. However, Chapter Five, which dealt with Organising, did make reference to listening skills: *“Public administrators can improve their ability as empathetic listeners”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 207). The chapter also has stronger SR in its comment that students could learn to take on the necessary traits: *“It has been a prevalent belief that all successful leaders had to be endowed with the necessary personal traits that come naturally. This may be true for political leaders, but it may be possible that chief executive officers can be educated and can learn by experience to become leading professional public administrators”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 223).

Stronger strengths for social relations were found in the recommended textbook for the Self-Management module: *“To effectively practise self-management, you have to understand your personality, behaviour and self-concept”* (du Toit et al, 2002: 381). Personal characteristics were stressed in this quotation. Students were directed to a questionnaire in Chapter Eleven that would assist them in determining their own self-concepts. Statements on the questionnaire spoke to feelings of success and satisfaction with work but also qualities of optimism, goal-orientedness, active listening skills, being balanced and responsible (du Toit et al, 2002).

The PM Diploma textbooks demonstrated differing strengths of SR. There was

evidence of both SR+ and SR-, though often discussions of topics related to social relations were not dealt with in ways that indicated that particular dispositions or attributes were valued as crucial to legitimation in the field of PM. I now discuss the degree of social relations in the study guides.

### 5.5.3 Study Guides

The Public Office Management study guide listed content to be covered as ten units of: *“The administrator’s duties; personal attributes and self-awareness; goal setting; self-motivation; stress management; the office and office administration; utilising time effectively; front office duties; meetings; records management; communication and clients/role of it”* The units had short bulleted phrases and as a result it was not immediately obvious whether units were stronger or weaker SR. Unit two, Personal attributes and self-awareness appeared to be SR+ as it self-identified itself as dealing with qualities. The other units seemed to be weaker SR as they covered activities, *“Categories of duties”* and *“The role of the administrator”* and processes such as *“Stages of stress”* (Public Office Management study guide).

The Public Service Delivery study guide had weaker SR as could be seen in the following outcome that focused on knowledge and principles: *“... to apply the principles of service delivery...”*(Public Service Delivery study guide). The study guide was thin on content and focused more on guidelines for assessments.

The Public Decision-Making study guide was also SR- with a focus on knowledge rather than attributes: *“Students must be able to understand the fundamentals of decision-making, importance of decision-making within organisations; factors influencing decision-making; dynamics of public policy issues; how government is organised to comply with all the collective needs and common values of the public; policy documents supporting public decision-making and policy-making process”*. The focus was on knowledge fundamentals, for example: *“Internal factors influencing decision-making”* and processes *“The decision-making process”* (Public Decision-Making study guide).

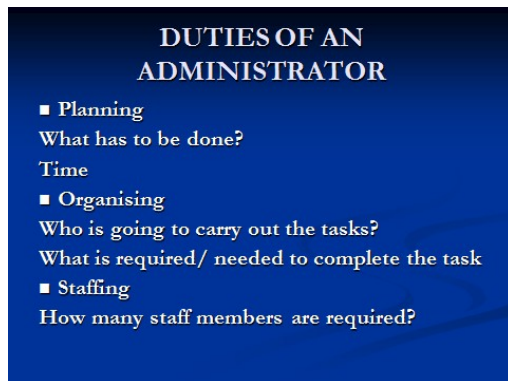
The Self-Management study guide was equally SR-. Attention was on explanation and description of principles, for example: *“Describe the fundamentals of time-management”*. *“Delegation, Control, Flexibility and coordination”* (Self-Management study guide) were listed as subsections in unit five and appeared to be

characteristics of an individual and I, therefore, initially coded them as SR+. Taken at face value, these appeared to be qualities but as they were preceded by the following phrase: *“Factors that are of primary importance for efficiency and effectiveness in organisations”* and as they were under a heading *“Principles of enhancing effectiveness and efficiency”* (Self-Management study guide), it became clear that they were not conceptualised as qualities in the study guide.

The Public Resources Management module outcomes were SR-: *“Learners will be able to: “Explain the concepts related to public resources; Describe and explain the importance of public resources in public service delivery...and...Explain public sector human resources”* (Public Resources Management study guide). There was no reference to any individual qualities and values. Having discussed the PM study guides and finding evidence of both weaker SR and, to a lesser extent, stronger SR, I now discuss the strengths of SR in the PowerPoint slides developed by the lecturers as course teaching material.

#### 5.5.4 Curriculum Materials

In the PowerPoint slide below, planning and organising were presented as being related to the activities of the office manager and not the qualities, making it SR-.



Public Office Management Power Point slide

Another example is the PowerPoint slide from a Public Resources Management lecture that defined individuals according to the tasks they fulfilled:

## Participants in the market

- **Private Business Sector**
- private ownership – entrepreneurship
- autonomous decisions on production
- fixing of prices –profit motive
- relative absence of social responsibility
- **The Government Sector** is characterised by the production of
  - :-
  - collective goods and services
  - particular goods and services
  - quasi-collective goods and services to improve the welfare of all citizens

Public Resources Management PowerPoint slide

### 5.5.5 Social Relations Conclusion

Abstraction of the social relations within the PM first-year Diploma indicated that while the lecturers were able to list important attributes that those working in PM should demonstrate, they did so in response to a direct question on this issue rather than within a broad characterisation of the field. The textbooks, study guides and course materials all provided some examples of stronger SR, but these were not foregrounded throughout.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter show that principles, skills and procedures were foregrounded in the PM Diploma and that this region, thus, exhibited stronger epistemic relations. Because PM was a region that focused on the world of work and draws on multiple disciplines, with many of them also being regions with their own fairly weak knowledge base, the curriculum in PM could be characterised as having a weaker base, with a lack of an accepted body of professional knowledge, and lack of a foundational disciplinary core (Muller, 2008). But these problems with the knowledge that PM drew on does not negate the strong relationship in the curriculum between “the pedagogic discourse and its object of study” (Maton 2000: 85), that is, its epistemic relations.

All courses had not only a knowledge structure but also a knower structure and it was not surprising that findings showed that the PM Diploma also indicated that there was a right kind of knower who had to possess the right kind of qualities and attitudes. The public manager, who had to deliver services, manage resources and an office, make decisions and self-manage, was linked to qualities of good

judgement, logic, reason, good attitude, diplomacy and tact, reliability, honesty and resourcefulness amongst others. But I would argue that as these attributes were presented in neutral ways and in terms of principles and procedures, the data indicated that the social relationship between “the pedagogic discourse and its author or subject” (Maton 2000: 85) was of secondary importance, that is, that there were weaker social relations.

Thus, as specialised knowledge, in the form of skills and procedures was the primary concern with the need to be a particular kind of knower being far less important, the PM region could be conceptualised as a knowledge code (ER+SR-). According to Maton the knowledge code “is predicated upon the rule that ‘What matters is what you know’” (2004: 3). The focus here was not on the possession of a particular gaze or lens on the world, but rather on the acquisition of a set of facts, skills, principles and procedures. This should make epistemological access easier for learners as they do not have to be particular kinds of people, but rather, they were legitimated “by reference to what is claimed to be specialised and unique knowledge of a discrete object of study” (Maton 2000: 86).

Bernstein distinguished between weaker and stronger grammars within horizontal knowledge structures as “those whose languages have an explicit conceptual syntax capable of ‘relatively’ precise empirical discussions and/or of generating formal modelling of empirical relations from those languages where these powers are much weaker” (1999: 164). Strong grammar was exhibited in the data findings for the presence of knowledge principles, procedures and processes and knower qualities within modules. However, there was weaker grammar in descriptions of the field as a whole and for propositional knowledge. A module like Public Resources Management also downplayed the attributes of actors despite the Gildenhuys (2004) textbook paying attention to these attributes. The implications for the PM Diploma of this would be that the field remained fragmented as it had no holistic philosophic framework. What has also emerged from the data was the underpreparedness of students in the PM Diploma, that they did not have the required ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991) for HE and it would be of interest to see how students were being inducted into PM knowledge via the literacy practices for which they were constructed as being underprepared.

The PM Diploma field was a horizontal knowledge structure with the specialised language of PM. However, the PM horizontal structure was itself constituted of many

specialised languages (singulars referred to in Section 5.2) that spoke to public management and the wide public administration field. This might have implications for the collection codes within the PM Diploma as the languages were no longer strongly classified as they had been subsumed with PM. Maton (2009) has noted that all horizontal structures may not fit Bernstein's model and it would seem that the strong ER identified here was coupled with relatively weak classification, though strong framing.

Abstraction of the epistemic relations and social relations identified the generative mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008, 2011) of the PM Diploma knowledge as ER+SR-. Literacy practices would be the events observed (Elder-Vass, 2010) as generated by the mechanisms of the PM Diploma. The discussion thus moves to the literacy practices to determine what they were and if they matched the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year PM Diploma.

### **5.7 Public Management Diploma Literacy Practices**

Having discussed the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year PM Diploma and having concluded that it is a knowledge code, I now turn to the literacy practices to see how they were associated with the knowledge-knower structures which first-year PM Diploma students needed to demonstrate. My focus here was to, firstly, discuss the localised literacy practices that emanated from the knowledge code and that which students were expected to demonstrate. I then discuss the opportunities students were given to engage in the literacy practices of the discipline. Lastly, I discuss what lecturers were valuing in the literacy practices. The discussion on the literacy practices allows me to conclude about the extent to which students were being included or excluded from PM knowledge and its related literacy practices. The aim would be to see if the literacy practices allowed access to procedural knowledge of the PM Diploma.

As discussed in Chapter One, when students enter HE they encounter a form of disciplinary knowledge with its own ways of knowing and being (Bartlett and Holland, 2002, Gee 1990). These are what Gee (1990) conceptualised as Big D discourses, the acceptable ways of being and behaving in disciplines. Students need to acquire the ways of being and thinking of this disciplinary knowledge or discourse as well as the reading and writing practices, in order to succeed. These literacy practices are

the ways in which students can develop knowledge about a subject. Street in his argument against the ubiquitous autonomous model of literacy posits that literacy is “a social practice...that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (2003: 77). Reading and writing practices are thus always situated within specific discourses (Gee, 2000). These epistemological principles are those that students have to acquire. However, the reproduction of this knowledge after its acquisition is not unproblematic in an NLS view but involves epistemological issues (what is said to count as knowledge) as well as social issues of power, identity and Authority (Lea and Street, 2006). For NLS, “academic literacies is concerned with meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context” (Lea and Street, 2006: 2).

This study has also argued in Chapter Three/section 3.4 that NLS has not foregrounded disciplinary and curricula knowledge and has focused more on social issues of power, identity and authority. It is thus my intent to link the concerns raised by NLS to the preceding analysis of the first-year PM Diploma curriculum as a knowledge code.

### **5.7.1 Public Management Literacy Practices and Public Management Knowledge-Knower Structures**

The questions I seek to address in this section are as follows:

- What literacy practices are expected of students in the PM first-year Diploma?
- Do these literacy practices align with the knowledge-knower structure of PM?

To answer these questions, I, firstly, give an overview of the reading and writing requirements per module and the assessments required per module. I asked PM lecturers for their understandings of what constitutes reading and writing practices of their modules. I was attempting to understand what Lea and Street called “the cultural and contextual components of writing and reading practices” (1998: 158). I also analysed study guides to determine the reading and writing practices required of students.

For PM lecturers, first-year PM Diploma writing and reading practices were strongly tied to academic writing and reading and not workplace based practices. Workplace writing practices for the PM Diploma were listed as reports, memoranda, letters, emails, agenda and minutes (Public Office Management study guide). The formats of these forms of written communication were discussed in the Public Office Management module but students were not given opportunities to practise these forms of writing at this early stage of the Diploma.

Writing practices took the form of short paragraphs and essays. For tests answers were mostly concise paragraphs. This was shown in the following extracts: *“the tests I keep straight forward, straight and to the point. Either discuss in detail or define... ‘Discuss’; I expect a paragraph or two... I try keep it short, straight and to the point”* (Interview: Natasha); *“for 5 marks, they need to explain. I try to limit it... it’s 5 to 10 marks... I need them to write full statements instead of one word...”* (Interview: Akhona) and *“it’s not so much of discussion. Name, describe, explain and so forth... I ask them some long questions so the first part of the exam... with shorter type questions between 5 and 12 marks, and then the long questions in section b I give them 3 questions and they have to answer 2, ... 20 [marks]...”* (Interview: Rebecca).

Assignments requirements stipulated the inclusion of an introduction, main discussion and conclusion (Public Service Delivery and Public Office Management study guides). Essay conventions of introduction, body and conclusion were also evident in the following rubric: *“Introduction 10%, Format of text 10%, In text referencing 10%, Conclusion 10%, Content 50% and Bibliography 10%”* (Public Decision-Making assignment rubric).

Data from the interviews showed that writing practices emphasised understanding, defining, explaining, discussing and application of concepts. Critical evaluation of PM procedural knowledge was not needed in writing. However, students were expected to evaluate knowledge in readings for class discussions. When students demonstrated procedural knowledge they were not expected to make judgements about it, they were simply expected to state the procedural steps learnt in class.

For the Self-Management module understanding was linked to *“conceptual understanding of these types of terms”* (Interview: Akhona). Sam required *“short conceptual definitions and then descriptions and explanations”* for the Public

Resources Management assignment as the module centered on *“the conceptual understanding of resources and the management of resources”* and they were not expected to give argument *“At the first year I don’t expect them to be that critical but if you are, that’s fine”* (Interview: Sam).

Application of knowledge was only evident in class tasks and not in assessments. For the Public Service Delivery module, class tasks worksheets required students to define and apply. This was evident in the excerpt: *“What is public service delivery and how would you apply it in the public sector? So they can also apply their knowledge to it. I like asking questions like that where they can apply their knowledge so that they’re not just reading from the book”* (interview: Rebecca). However, when it came to tests and examinations, for Rebecca, questions were for students to *“identify, describe and explain, discuss”* but not apply, *“No, I don’t use apply”*. (Interview: Rebecca). This response was interesting given that Rebecca had indicated that her emphasis was on case studies in classroom practice. While classroom practices, according to the lecturer, provided space for critical engagement and application, this was not what was rewarded in formal tests and assignments.

Natasha expected students to discuss and define principles and processes in tests and exams: *“Either discuss in detail or define and at this point I don’t do much of critical analysis, I leave that for class because then they can have more interaction”* (Interview: Natasha). Students were guided to mark allocation for their discussion in order to keep their discussion and definitions *“short, straight and to the point”* (Interview: Natasha).

However, there was a sense that the straightforward identification, listing and definition expected in tests and assignments should not be directly from the textbook: *“... in your tests and exams, I don’t expect it straight from the book. I find that it just defeats the purpose of studying... “I move away from learning word for word and I say that to them in class. They must not learn word for word because if I wanted the work like that I would go to the textbook myself”* (Interview: Rebecca).

Rebecca went on to describe how she would insist on both application and paraphrasing of texts to ensure that students understood the content: *“Because you find that a lot of them, because they’re not English first speaking, they just repeat what’s been said in the book and they don’t know what it means but if you tell them*

to apply it then you can see whether they understand the concept or not, and also they remember the work when they understand it, they don't just learn word for word.”(Interview: Rebecca). In her view, if students wrote using their own words, they would be able to internalise the knowledge. Furthermore, she expected substantiation with examples: *“In the instructions I say substantiate your answers with examples so they must use examples, and also by giving examples to get an understanding of whether they understand the concept”* (Interview: Rebecca).

Paraphrasing was essential according to Akhona for his Self-Management module. This was shown in the extract: *“to paraphrase has become very key to me, to read with understanding”* (Interview: Akhona). Student showed understanding by paraphrasing in writing but what was required was a rewording of the text and not necessarily a critical evaluation of the knowledge. Natasha had similar views: *“I don't expect a quoted definition...they should be able to paraphrase”* (Interview: Natasha).

Writing practices expected students to ‘name, list, define, explain, describe’ and ‘discuss’ procedural knowledge using their own words to show understanding. Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of learning objectives for knowledge provides the following ranking system: knowledge (information is recalled); comprehension (information is discussed and understood); application (knowledge is applied); analysis (patterns of knowledge are identified and analysed); synthesis (old concepts are used to create new concepts) and evaluation (theories are assessed and ideas evaluated). Bloom (1956) argued that ideally all the learning objectives should be present in learning.

Table 5.2 illustrates a few key words used in questions for the different learning objectives:

| Learning objective | Key words in questions              |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Knowledge          | Who, what, when, define, list, name |
| Comprehension      | Describe, explain, summarise        |
| Application        | Solve, illustrate, apply, interpret |
| Analysis           | Discuss, distinguish, analyse       |
| Synthesis          | Design, hypothesise, report         |

|          |                                    |
|----------|------------------------------------|
| Evaluate | Estimate, judge, criticise, choose |
|----------|------------------------------------|

Writing objectives for Bloom's taxonomy (2013)

Table 5.2 Learning Objectives key words

'Naming' and 'listing' in writing practices for the PM Diploma modules would be a knowledge learning objective while 'explaining' would be a comprehensive learning objective and 'discussing' an analytical learning objective. In terms of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, only the most basic learning objectives were being met by the formal tests and exams in the PM Diploma. It should be recalled that this was the first year so perhaps it could be argued that the higher level learning objectives become relevant in year two and three of the Diploma.

In contrast to formal writing tasks, the emphasis in reading was on deep understanding and critical reading: *"also a critical reader"* (Interview: Natasha). Natasha felt that students *"must have their own opinions"* and read to *"find the deeper meaning of some things"* (Interview: Natasha). Students thus had to draw their own conclusions from their readings. Space was created for them to write about these meanings in writing but these were for class tasks, which were not evaluated or shared with other students. Critical discussion was for class discussion and not for formal assessments.

Natasha defined *"a proper reader"* as a student who read with understanding in the Public Decision-Making module (Interview: Natasha). Students were expected to read for understanding of principles but also to read extensively to keep up to date with current affairs and new legislation: *"They must be avid readers in terms of newspapers...because documents change, legislation change all the time"* (Interview: Natasha).

Besides the prescribed and recommended texts, students were also expected to engage with a range of additional texts including the constitution and various White Papers. However, no formal writing tasks called on this reading and students were also not tested on the acts and constitution in the Public Resources Management assessments, though the Acts and Constitution were used to explain the processes of the legislature:

Organisational Arrangements and Participants in  
Public Resources Management – (legislature –  
Parliament or Municipal Council)

**The Legislature – Parliament (Constitution, 1996, chap 4) and Municipal Council -Original authority for the imposition of taxes and the authorisation for the utilisation of public resources; Approval of annual budget**

- Financial oversight role: - One of the most important corner-stones of a democracy public accountability:
- **There must be (financial) control of the executive authority by the legislature;** *A legislature may delegate some of its financial functions, such as collecting, safeguarding and spending of public monies; but cannot abdicate its responsibility and accountability.*
- **functions of SCOPA - standing committee on public accounts**

### Public Resources Management PowerPoint slide

Lecturers did not indicate how they facilitated the reading of legislative texts. In NLS terms, it can be understood that students would require induction into this genre in order to interpret it in terms of how it is structured, how the different sections interrelate and in terms of the legal jargon used.

Having discussed the lecturers' comments about reading and writing, I now turn to my own analysis of the assessments. Table 5.3 illustrates the assessments per module:

| Module                      | Assessment                                                               |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public Resources Management | Three tests<br><br>One assignment<br>One presentation<br>One examination |
| Public Office Management    | Two tests<br><br>One assignment<br>One examination                       |
| Public Service Delivery     | Two tests<br><br>One assignment<br>One examination                       |
| Public Decision-Making      | Two tests<br><br>One assignment<br>One examination                       |

|                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Self-Management | Two tests<br>One examination |
|-----------------|------------------------------|

Table 5.3 PM Assessments

The assessments were well aligned to the knowledge-knower structures that have been identified in the interviews with academics and the curriculum documentation, in the form of study guides, textbooks and course materials. That is to say, they were almost entirely focused on the knowledge students were expected to demonstrate (ER+) rather than on their being able to demonstrate their membership of “a specific social group with a privileged and unique insight” (Maton, 2000: 88) or (SR+).

For example, the 2013 Public Office Management examination included questions such as:

- 1. Identify and briefly describe the categories of duties to be found in an administrative environment.* (9)
- 3. What are the characteristics of SMART goals?* (5)

Only one question in this exam related to issues of disposition or attributes, but this was in the form of students being able to list generic traits, rather than to demonstrate their own acquisition of a particular ‘gaze or set of lenses’:

- 2. Define an attribute and provide any two (2) traits that a job-seeker should have when attending an interview.* (3)

Likewise, in the Self-Management *June* 2012 examination students had to explain functions and processes, but were expected to do so in the form of uncritical, objective truths rather than in the form of personally held dispositions as shown in the following extract:

- 1.2 Describe in detail what you understand by the term ‘self concept’ and explain the two aspects that influence ‘self concept’.*

The June 2013 Public Resources Management examination similarly called for recall of key information:

- Question Two Explain the role of the legislature/parliament in the Management of Public Resources* (10)

*Question Three Describe and explain the goals and objectives of the government financial functions (10)*

While this exam called for longer written pieces, the questions still called for a fairly straightforward listing of information:

*Question Four Write an essay on personnel/human resources management functions in public sector paying particular attention to human resources/personnel utilisation (10)*

The Public Service Delivery June 2013 marking memorandum shows that explanation and description entailed clarification of regulators using objective language in paragraph form:

*Regulators have certain authority in terms of enforceable rules. Regulators mediate, control or regulate relationships between government institutions and their suppliers, consumers and competitors. Regulators are the formal internal environment of public institutions. Governments create these formal internal environments. Governments can manipulate formal internal environments of institutions in promoting democratic principles.*

Public Service Delivery June 2013 marking memorandum

An excerpt from the memorandum above showed that students were not expected to argue but merely to explain. Students were required to provide a list as answers. The marking memorandum for the 2013 Public Office Management test showed that the expected answers closely followed the Badenhorst et al (2005) prescribed textbook. For example, students were only expected to list items and not to provide clarity on what each function entailed:

*Reception*

- *First person whom a client makes contact with*
- *Listens to the enquiry, directs the client to the appropriate person/dept*
- *Telephonic enquiry – caller transferred to relevant person/dept*

*Secretarial*

- *typing duties, record-keeping, making appointments, planning meetings, looking after visitors*
- *Normally assigned to one manager or a few managers (Nursing Management office)*
- *Office alongside their manager*
- *Professional/Executive secretary (VC)*

This discussion of the PM Diploma tests and examinations thus far has shown that

the assessments are speaking back to the knowledge code of the PM Diploma. It has also shown that short paragraph and essay responses were required.

The assignments followed a similar pattern to the exams and tests in their focus on knowledge (ER+) and their backgrounding of social relations.

For example, the Public Office Management assignment topic asked students to choose between two topics: *“Describe the value of records management in government departments and explain the role that written communication plays in satisfying client expectation in the public sector”* and *“Discuss the role of Information Technology in regulating the Human Resources in the public administrative environment and explain its value in securing the information of external client in the public sector”* (Public Office Management study guide). The assignment focus linked back to PM procedural knowledge. Furthermore, the writing practices required that the student include an introduction, main discussion and conclusion. The introduction *“tells the reader what you intend discussing and the order of your discussion. Your introduction must be longer than one sentence”*, while the main discussion asked of students to *“illustrate the level of research you have engaged in and around your understanding of the topic”* and the conclusion was *“a synopsis of the argument pursued in your assignment. You indicate to the reader your intention to end the discussion and of the most important argument pursued in the discussion. Your conclusion must be longer than two (2) lines!”* (Public Office Management study guide).

A Public Resources Management assignment also focused on explanation of functions as could be seen in the topic: *“The role of the Municipal Council in the Management of Public Resources in South Africa”* (Public Resources Management study guide). An assessment rubric was provided and a length requirement stipulated of ten pages.

The other assignments all followed a similar pattern of requiring longer written pieces than those demanded by the tests or exams. The assignments were also focused primarily on the “telling” of knowledge (Bartholomae, 1985) as opposed to critically engaging with that knowledge but they did, arguably, allow for deeper grappling with the course content.

Students were expected to read widely for the assignments in two modules. Students had to consult one book, an Act, one newspaper article, one journal article

and one online article for the Public Office Management and Public Service Delivery assignments. The readings were mostly of an academic nature. However, the Self-Management module did not require an assignment. Furthermore, no mention was made of any sources that students had to consult for the assignment in the Public Resources Management study guide. The Public Resources Management lecturer did note in his interview that he referred students to many sources.

The assignments all spoke back to the focus on procedural knowledge of the PM Diploma. They did not address aspects of knower attributes. All the study guides provided rubrics. These were instances of regulative discourse (Bernstein, 1990) where evaluation instruments were made explicit to students. This would serve to weaken the framing strengths of the lecturers as these rubrics could open up the marking to contestation by students.

Students were also given opportunities to engage in writing practices via class tasks but these appear to be limited. The purpose of the class tasks was not necessarily to give students opportunities to access the knowledge and engage in reading and writing. One lecturer indicated that class tasks were seen as a way of monitoring student diligence: *"I tell them... you're going to do some homework. I'm not going to mark it, I'm going to put it in a file so if you come to me June exams and tell me 'Ma'am I'm 1% short of DP', I'm going to take out my file and say, 'Okay now what is your name? Okay, your name is A whatever, you had homework and you never submitted any of the work so now you tell me why I need to give you 1%'"* (Interview: Natasha). However, class tasks were also linked to understanding of knowledge: *"then I ask them questions or I'll give them homework where I'll give them a set of questions to go and answer and then they come back and we discuss it at the start of class"* (Interview: Rebecca).

I can conclude that the literacy practices students had to perform spoke back strongly to the knowledge code of ER+SR- identified in the curriculum documentation. Students were expected to provide short answers in a list or paragraphs, write essays with introductions, main discussion and conclusion, read textbooks, Constitutions, Acts and White Papers. The literacy practices asked of students to show their understanding of principles, procedures, duties and processes by naming, listing, describing, defining and discussing this procedural knowledge.

The literacy practices were almost exclusively of the 'retelling' form. Students were

expected to identify, list and define. The major concern with this approach to the knowledge in PM is that this “can lead to higher education students becoming 'reproducers of knowledge' engaged in 'knowledge telling discourse' rather than 'knowledge producers' engaged in 'knowledge generating discourse'” (Bartholomae 1985). Bartholomae suggests that this results in “imitation and parody... [and not] invention and discovery” (1985: 11).

The demand for recall of lists and definitions in objective ways is problematic as this could lead to students simply appropriating the language and paraphrasing facts without understanding, or ‘regurgitating’ knowledge rather than owning it. In a seminal 1985 text, Bartholomae states that “Much of the written work that students do is test-taking, report or summary, work that places them outside the official discourse of the academic community” (1985: 11). Students in the PM Diploma seemed to be expected to replicate the knowledge of others rather than to participate fully in the discursive community of PM within the academy or as it was enacted in the workplace. Bartholomae (1985) commented that students’ written work is often confined to test-taking, report or summary writing, so that they are expected to mimic the discipline’s discourses rather than participate in its construction. However, it should be acknowledged that the superficial engagement with knowledge demanded by the students’ written tasks could be because of the data coming from first year only.

It was clear from both interviews and the assessment rubrics and marking memoranda that lecturers valued technical aspects of writing such as bibliography, referencing and spelling: *“with all my first years I have the writing centre come in before the assignment is due, a month and a half before the time, she comes and we unpack the assignment in class and she then tells them by so and so a date I want a draft... I’m very strict on bibliography, even at first year already so I bring her in mostly to emphasise the importance of referencing because that’s also a very serious problem we have with referencing”* (Interview: Natasha). Her emphasis on technical features was shown in the assignment rubric with 30% of the mark allocated for this (Public Decision-Making assignment rubric).

Further concerns that lecturers had were with surface features of form such as spelling and not being able to make sense in writing: *“with the assignments; you find that a lot of them don’t spell properly at all. They make silly mistakes. I understand that their English isn’t perfect but some of the mistakes they make is just silly. They*

*can use spell check but they don't or they rush through it and then they make silly mistakes"* (Interview: Rebecca). Lea and Street (1998: 162) argue that "in practice, what makes a piece of student writing 'appropriate' has more to do with issues of epistemology than with the surface features of form to which staff often have recourse when describing their students' writing." Lecturers were identifying spelling and poor reading as generic skills that students had not acquired and were unaware of issues around disciplinary discourses and the acquisition thereof and how these might also have influenced student reading and writing practices.

Rebecca also valued the technical aspects of writing: *"I keep to the technical stuff so are they referencing, is their spelling correct because a lot of them don't go through spell check and they make silly mistakes. Like the contents page, some of them won't have a contents page or the bibliography they've sourced but the bibliography has nothing in it so I give them the instructions but they don't follow the instructions then you can see something isn't right"* (Interview: Rebecca).

The lecturers seemed to be calling on an assumption that "what students lack is tuition in the structures and vocabulary of English, the additional language that is the medium of instruction at many tertiary institutions" (Boughey, 2002: 296). The ideological approach to literacy discounts an autonomous approach, which understands literacy as simply a set of skills whereby script is decoded and encoded (Street, 1995 and Gee, 1990 cited in Boughey, 2002). The ideological approach instead proposes a social practices view to literacy that it only has meaning and effects in its particular cultural context (Gee, 2008).

The assignment guidelines for both Public Office Management and Public Service Delivery placed emphasis on argumentation, language style and referencing. This finding was interesting given that students were not given opportunities to engage in argument in other assessments (tests and examinations) except in class discussion. For tests and examinations, and for module outcomes, students merely had to discuss and describe principles and procedures. The following extracts showed the emphasis that shifted to argument for the assignment: *"Assignments must be investigative & argumentative: Have evidence/content –Research (library, newspaper, Internet, etc) must be used to justify your argument). Your argument must flow. Your point of view may be illustrated in your argument."* (Public Office Management and Public Service Delivery study guides). The Public Decision-Making

assignment guidelines placed emphasis on “*Understanding*” as they stipulated that students had to “*display their understanding of the subject matter...*” (Public Decision-Making study guide).

Student challenges with writing assignments emerged in the following extract: “*often the students, this is the problem I have, is a vocal student, in class when we have our discussions, this student would participate 200 %, whatever comes out of his mouth would make sense but the minute we have a test, that same student who was making so much sense in class, he can't get his ideas onto paper so what is the stumbling block there? What is the hurdle? You know, is it writing issues that he has?*” (Interview: Natasha). She was not able to determine what the issue is. Yet Natasha stressed that despite students often not making sense on paper, she did not have “*major literacy problems with PDM and because it's current issues, it's relevant, it's topical, they enjoy that. Students enjoy discussing things, different viewpoints*”. Her conclusions might be based on perceived student class discussion and enjoyment. Second language acquisition theorist Cummins (2000) distinguishes between BICS, basic interpersonal communication skills, and CALP, cognitive academic language proficiency. He postulates that students acquire BICS fairly quickly in contrast to the acquisition of CALP and that one should not assume that acquisition of BICS means a corresponding acquisition of CALP.

Student assignments showed that emphasis was placed on acknowledging sources but not necessarily on showing understanding of ideas by bringing in their own voice to argue these ideas. For a Public Office Management assignment where students had to “*Discuss the role of information technology in regulating Human Resources in the public administrative environment of external clients in the public sector*”, a student wrote the following paragraph:

*“In politics accountability and governmental information systems, Bruce Rochelle, discusses how central political issues are to maintain management and illustrates strategies that can be useful in dealing with political issues. Examples are given of how inattention to the political aspects of managing information systems can result in problems. Internally, information managers have to deal with such politically charged tasks as the structuring of information management, purchasing information system, managing personnel in this era of digital communication, and struggles over the sharing of information within organisations. External management issues include demands for online accountability, the development of websites, issues over access to information and inter organizational issues including disputes over turf. Garson (vii:2003) (Student assignment).*

The lecturer indicated that this paragraph was acceptable with a tick. It appeared that because the reference was given at the end of the paragraph, it was seen as acceptable. It seemed that the student had taken the three sentences word for word from the source, had not attempted to paraphrase it and argue his or her own point of view. This reinforced the earlier finding that superficial technical aspects were being valued.

For an assignment on “*Records Management and written communication in Public Office Management*”, a student appeared to have lifted his or her response entirely from sources. An example from this assignment could be seen in the following extract from the assignment:

*“2. What is records management? Records management is the systematic control of an organization’s records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements, and community expectation. Effective management of corporate information allows fast, accurate and reliable access to records, ensuring the timely destruction of redundant information and the identification and protection of vital and historically important records”* (Student assignment).

The rest of the assignment was written in a similar vein. Each page of the assignment had one comment on it: “*Source?*” The student was given 22 marks out of 40 for content, 7 marks out of ten for composition (It was not clear what this referred to) and 6 marks out of ten for referencing. The student passed the assignment with 55%. The student had answered the question but appeared to have plagiarised most of the content. The bibliography was also incomplete.

There also seemed to be somewhat of a mismatch in two modules between the module outcomes of showing understanding of principles, procedures through explanations versus giving argument. Students were given opportunities to give argument in the assignment and class discussion but not in other assessments like tests and examinations. An excerpt from student homework showed examples of student argument:

*“The question is what are those measure’s 2012-2013? We are still disappointed that Zuma did not elaborate more on plans. The president could have focused only on teachers, nurses and the police hence they are underpaid, because most of government employees are well paid...he is still unable to come up with place to improve the services...”* (Public Decision-Making class task) and *“there has been an improvement in safety and security. In the 2012 speech the president mentioned that there’s a 5% drop in number of cases...”* (Public Decision-Making class task).

These extracts show evidence of student opinions on political policy but students were not expected to show such arguments in test and examinations.

Reading was identified as a key element in why students fared poorly in assessments and exams. Sam commented that students did not have the needed reading competencies for the course, *"If you give them, let's say, readings before the exam... say one of the areas will be legislative role in public resource management, they come and ask you, 'but I didn't see the legislative role in the book, is it the same as what the parliament do? That to be a little bit strange. 'This term is not there so I don't know what it means and well, I may be wrong but I think their reading is not well developed for university'"* (Interview: Sam).

Rebecca also pointed out that reading was to blame for incorrect answering in assessment. She noted that: *"in one test that I was marking now that the question says explain but they're just listing them and they don't get the marks or there is sometimes when it says explain and not identify but they just identify. So I try to explain to them that they need to read the question properly and see what the question asks for"* (Interview: Rebecca). Similarly, Natasha attributed poor reading to be the reason for incorrect answers. This was shown in the following extract: *"Students don't read questions...if they see me asking them 'identify six fundamental principles of ethics' and they studied six of anything, they give you six of anything"* (Interview: Natasha). It was also evident in this excerpt: *"They just see what the end of the question says. If it says public service delivery or types of services then they just write whatever they can write, they don't see what the question asks for because sometimes you get questions where it's for two marks and they write a whole essay, and then you get an essay question and it's just five lines. They don't pay attention"* (Interview: Rebecca). Despite this emphasis on poor reading abilities, there was no evidence that lecturers facilitated induction into reading practices in the interviews.

Student difficulties with literacy practices were also attributed to factors external to the university such as social media and the internet. This is shown in: *"What I have realised is that they're often influenced by this social media language in their writing, and their reading and their research is also normally from the Internet.... they prefer to quote from the Internet and that tells you that they don't want to read. Reading is a problem for them"* (Interview: Sam).

Poor writing abilities as influenced by cellphone texting were emphasised by Akhona.

This could be seen in the excerpt: *“They use... smses... when they answer questions and they lose marks for that because now sometimes it says explain or discuss and they give one word... it’s a serious challenge”* (Interview: Akhona). Texting, the use of abbreviation for short messages on mobile phones, has been increasingly blamed worldwide for a deterioration in language especially spelling and is seen as an assault on formal writing (Vosloo, 2009). It is argued, however, that texting shows phonological awareness as young people would need to know how to sound the word to write the phonetic abbreviations texting requires (Wood and Joshi, 2009 cited in Vosloo, 2009). Crystal (2008) believes that students are not using texting or abbreviations excessively. Aziz, Shamim, Aziz and Avais (2013) concur that students are only occasionally using texting abbreviations and that if taught the different context appropriate writing forms, they will not do this. The focus on texting was further evidence of the value placed on technical features in the PM modules.

Despite the basic nature of the Public Office Management module, Rebecca noted the failure rate but she could not explain the reason for this failure rate beyond students not caring about their studies. This was shown in the following extract:

*“There’s some that just don’t care, they end up failing over and over again, and you wonder what is wrong with them because some modules are just basic.”*

Having discussed that which lecturers value in their students’ literacy practices, I could conclude that technical surface features and reading with understanding were valued. As “many academic staff claim students can no longer write” (Lea and Street, 1998: 157), lecturer responses here were in keeping with a skills based approach that focuses on surface features of writing such as grammar and spelling. According to Lea and Street (2009), writing is conceptualised here as technical and instrumental. Writing was not seen in the PM Diploma at the level of the epistemological. Writing was not concerned with meaning-making in the PM field but with skills or deficits.

Students understanding of concepts were not linked to epistemological issues in the modules and their challenges with literacy were ascribed to them being first-year students, lazy with English as an additional language impacting on their learning. While affective factors do play a role in student adapting to HE and disciplinary discourse and expression in English is challenging given that students lack proficiency in it (Alexander, 2013), students are also challenged by the discourse of

the disciplines, which are new ways of thinking and behaving for first year students (Hyland 2009, Gee 1990), into which they have to be enculturated.

This discussion might suggest that the lecturers were themselves uncaring about student inclusion or that they were willfully ignorant of the multiple literacy demands placed on students attempting to acquire the requisite knowledge-knower structures of the PM Diploma. This was certainly not the case; the lecturers all described various attempts to help students take on the required literacy practices.

Rebecca's strategy for helping students access knowledge in Public Service Delivery and, thereby, deal with challenges of reading and writing was to simplify terms: *"I try my best, especially with the first years, to simplify everything for them so that they do understand... I use basic words, I don't use big words unless it is part of what needs to be, and if it is something that needs to be explained to them in that particular term then I will explain the term to them"* (Interview: Rebecca).

Likewise to deal with student challenges of reading with understanding and writing clearly, Akhona used a strategy of simplification of textbooks. This was shown in this extract from his interview: *"I try to simplify the books"* but it does not help students because they still had problems with articulation when writing: *"They have a problem to articulate. Whatever they write, it does not make sense. They cannot express themselves in their writing. That's a serious challenge"* (Interview: Akhona). As a result he stated that he had conceded defeat, as shown in *"I tried in this department ...and I have given up"* and he felt strongly that *"the very fact they accept these students' poor matric results, it's an obligation that they provide support systems for the students."*

To help student with writing assignments, Rebecca devoted one lecture to giving them guidelines on it: *"...in the second lecture I go through what I require from them in terms of the assignment. So how are they suppose[d] to source, what I require from them in terms of how many books they must consult and newspapers, and not just the Internet..."* (Interview: Rebecca). She also provided feedback for students on assignments: *"I make comments in their assignment, I ask 'What does this mean?' or 'Why you saying this?' or 'You haven't referenced this'"* (Interview: Rebecca).

Students were also assisted to answer questions in tests and examination by reading and answering worksheet questions: *"I like to go through questions ...so that I know whether they understand the work because I don't like them being hanging*

*and when they get to a test or exam they don't know what's going on"* (Interview: Natasha).

Constraining the induction into the knowledge via literacy practices might be evident in student completion of group assignments or the complete omission of writing of assignments. Rebecca did assignments in groups for logistical reasons: *"... groups or else it becomes too much because it's a short space of time and it's two tests and an assignment so it becomes too much for me to take in drafts."* Though she did help individual students: *"If somebody comes to me with the assignment and says go through it, then I go through it and I pinpoint what is wrong and what they can change"* and *"If there's extra time during the class period then I ask them is there anything that is wrong with the assignments? Do they need any help? What don't they understand? Do they need some guidance?"* (Interview: Rebecca). Group assignments might not help individual students master the writing practices as they might not all be contributing equally or doing the sustained writing that might have been needed.

Akhona no longer prescribed assignments, firstly, because of huge class numbers: *"You know initially I've been using assignments and tests before but that class is currently 132 because of the huge numbers and the quality of the student that you have, the assignments are a nightmare. It's a nightmare to mark their assignments ...I don't have time; I've got other classes as well."* Secondly, assignments were no longer given because the quality of assignments he had received in the past: *"I'm refusing to give assignments for those units because they don't know where to begin. One student said to me, he came to my office and to be serious with you, "We do not know where to begin. We are just writing, we are just guess working, we don't know how to write an assignment" and "A high number of the class enter poor quality work. It's a daunting task to mark those assignments"*. (Interview: Akhona). Blame for poor reading and writing practices was laid at the door of previous schooling: *"...that kind of work to me they should basically get from high school"* (Interview: Akhona).

If students were denied the opportunity to engage fully in the reading and writing practices of the PM field, it could account for why Akhona said that his students were failing the module in large numbers. Simplification of terms would in LCT terms be constraining knowledge development if lecturers stayed at the level of examples and simplification, and did not move back to abstract principles. The assessments

showed that they were speaking back to the knowledge code and that in this way students were being included in the knowledge. However, simplification of content, group assignments or the omission of assignments constrained student induction into PM knowledge.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analysed lecturer interviews and curriculum documentation in order to describe the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year of the PM Diploma. Through abstraction, I concluded that this programme had stronger epistemic relations or “knowledge *of* something” and weaker social relations or concern with “someone who knows it” (Maton, 2000: 88). ER+SR- indicates that the PM Diploma was a knowledge code.

The knowledge was presented in a neutral manner and the concern was with being able to list and define key concepts, rather than to engage in argument and deliberation about these. The focus in the curriculum was very clearly on knowledge telling, rather than knowledge production.

I then looked at the literacy practices student were expected to demonstrate through formal and informal assessments. I found good alignment between the knowledge code of the curriculum and the literacy practices students had to demonstrate but there were few opportunities to move beyond memorisation and paraphrasing and there was a strong emphasis on surface issues of writing. I now turn to a discussion of the data findings for the PA Degree.

## Chapter Six

### Data Discussion: Degree in Public Administration

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses an analysis of Public Administration (PA) lecturer understandings of what constitutes knowledge in the first-year PA Degree curriculum and an analysis of a range of curriculum documentation from the same course at NMMU. The chapter tries to make visible the knowledge (Maton and Muller, 2007) of the first-year PA Degree that has been recontextualised from the field of production (Bernstein, 1999) into the PA curriculum. Furthermore, the relationship between PA Degree knowledge and its literacy practices are discussed to see how PA reading and writing practices are rooted within the evidenced conceptions of PA knowledge (Street, 2003)

Table 6.1 illustrates the four compulsory modules in the first year that were taught by three lecturers, and which are discussed in this chapter:

| Module                                                     | Lecturer |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Constitutional Framework for Public Administration SPA 102 | Yanga    |
| Administration for Development SPA 104                     | Lily     |
| Ethos of Public Administration SPA 101                     | Lily     |
| Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration SPA 103    | Sam      |

Table 6.1 PA modules and lecturers

To understand the particular form of knowledge that constitutes the first-year PA Degree curriculum, this chapter firstly discusses data findings using Biglan (1973a) and Becher's (1989) typologies (see Chapter Two/section 2.5.3 and Chapter Five/section 5.2 for concerns about the limitations of these typologies). Secondly, it discusses the regional nature of the Degree and thirdly, the strengths of the epistemic relations and social relations of the PA Degree. Lastly, it discusses the literacy practices that are associated with first-year PA Degree knowledge.

## 6.2 Biglan and Becher's Typologies and Public Administration

The first-year PA Degree can, firstly, be categorised as 'soft applied' in Biglan's (1973a) typology with a focus on the enhancement of workplace practice. Discussion on data findings for lecturer understandings of the PA workplace focus and interdisciplinary nature is given in more detail in section 6.3 but a brief indication of the data is given here. Responses to a question on module outcomes spoke to a workplace focus: *"a student who graduates in BAdmin or a BA Degree in Public Administration ... can be a practitioner"* (Interview: Lilly) and module concerns with application: *"[my module looks at]... what does the local government do in a state?"* (Interview: Sam).

Besides lecturer consensus for a PA paradigm that was determined by its workplace focus, there was, secondly, also consensus on the interdisciplinary nature of the PA Degree with fields such as Law and Political Science being drawn on: *"the executive cannot work without the legislative ...and of course the judiciary to interpret the laws that come from the parliament"* (Interview: Yanga) and *"[we use] the theory of government and political science philosophy"* (interview: Sam). This all suggested the strongly applied nature of the programme.

In terms of Becher's (1989) typology, the cultural style of first-year PA Degree could be characterised by "status anxiety, prey to intellectual fashions, power oriented, low publication rate, vulnerable to funding pressures" (Muller, 2008: 12). These concerns, discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.4.2, centered on PA scholar concern of the vulnerability of the field due to individual choices (in the curriculum); the lack of a coherent conceptual philosophy, research and balance between theory and practice in the PA field (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012; Kroukamp, 2011; Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). The concern about the PA field was also evident in lecturer interviews: *"the problem there was the locus of public administration, where it should be located... what will be the focus of public administration"* (Interview: Lily).

Furthermore, the cognitive nature of the first-year PA Degree could be characterised as functional and utilitarian and concerned with enhancement of practice (Becher and Trowler, 2001): *"[My module is about]...how public officials should behave"* (Interview: Lily) and *"parliament ...they must account. If you take for instance the*

*Gupta*<sup>26</sup> example, strong parliamentarians [are needed] who say to the president, “how did this happen?” (Interview: Yanga).

It was argued in Chapter Two/section 2.5.4 that absolute disciplinary binaries are no longer realities in HE with a caveat by Becher (1989) that his typologies were relative. These typologies also do not investigate the structuring principles of knowledge as does the LCT framework. Section 6.4 attends to these concerns and looks to the data to see what it revealed about the nature of the knowledge of the PA Degree.

### **6.3 Regional Nature of Public Administration**

The conclusion that I was able to draw about the nature of knowledge of the PA Degree was that it, like the PA Diploma, could be characterised as a region (Bernstein, 2000). The characteristics of regions were discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.5.1 and Chapter Five/section 5.3. I, firstly, consider how national documentation has positioned the Bachelor’s Degree generally. Next, this section draws on data findings of this study on the PA Degree and how these showed that the PA Degree could be aligned to notions of regions.

#### **6.3.1 The Bachelor’s Degree**

Degree knowledge is categorised in the National Qualifications Framework as having the following purpose and characteristics:

This qualification has as the primary purpose of providing a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines, and enables them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Principles and theory are emphasised as a basis for entry into the labour market, professional training, postgraduate studies, or professional practice in a wide range of careers (DOE, 2007: 23).

The DOE (2007) categorisation of degree knowledge and skills as focused on the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines but also professional practice has remained much the same in the new HESQF (DHET, 2012: 28-29) and this qualification was described as having:

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<sup>26</sup> The lecturer is making reference to a 2013 incident that caused an outcry in SA when a plane carrying the Indian Gupta family landed at Waterkloof Air Force Base, a strategic military base, allegedly with permission of the SA President.

The primary purpose of both the general and the professional Bachelor's Degree is to provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and fields of study, and to enable them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Both the 360 and 480-credit Bachelor's degrees may require students to undertake research in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study in order to prepare them for postgraduate study.

An addition to the definition was that the degree facilitated the undertaking of research in future postgraduate studies. The undergraduate degree is thus meant to focus on both theory and professional practice; this speaks to the appeal made in the literature for a balanced approach between theory and practice in PMA programmes (van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011). In Chapter Five, I used the National Qualifications Framework to indicate that most diplomas would be regional in nature, given the way they have been characterised as focusing on a world of work. However, there is no such suggestion in the Framework as to the characteristics of the degree. It is clear that while diplomas were likely to be regional, degree programmes could comprise regions or collections of singulars.

The two main facets of a region are a focus on both the knowledge valued within the academy and the world of work, and the drawing together of multiple singulars into one knowledge area (Muller, 2008; Bernstein, 2000). I now turn to the study data to analyse the extent to which the PA Degree can be characterised as a region.

### **6.3.2 The Public Administration Degree and the Working World**

I firstly draw on the data from the interviews and then from curriculum documentation to show the relationship between the PA Degree and PA workplace practice.

#### **6.3.2.1 Lecturer Interviews**

During the interviews, I asked PA Degree lecturers to tell me about the content of their modules. Their descriptions demonstrated the extent to which the PA Degree faced outwards towards the external world of practice. Sam started off his description of the Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration module by commenting that: *"The Degree is aimed at training senior managers"* (Interview: Sam), and *"They are going to do the actual public administration"* (Interview: Lily).

Yanga commented that the rationale behind the Degree course was the focus on practice: *"Why we talk about public administration, there are those who practice it every day, the practitioners: the president, the ministers, the managers..."* (Interview: Yanga). Interestingly Lily also indicated that: *"...with the degrees, my understanding is that we are preparing them to be scholars of public administration...(and)... practitioners"*. This suggested a facing inward to the academy alongside the focus on the world of work. This was to be expected in a region, but was never explicitly stated in the Degree programme.

Despite the emphasis on practice in the external world, experiential training was not a prerequisite for the Degree. This may be because students from various degrees could do modules as extra credits and would, therefore, not necessarily want to practice PA: *"some will just come and fill in the form because they have this number of courses..."* (Interview: Yanga). However, to compensate for this practice, practitioners were invited to give talks to students: *"For instance, one year... I had to organise somebody from government and ... he had to explain, they asked questions ... So yes, you've got to find a way of pushing them to be interested"* (Interview: Yanga).

A further reason for bringing practitioners into the classroom was to show students the kind of work they could be engaging with post their studies: *"Sometimes you discover that they've just registered for the course but they don't know what it entails and one asked me 'what will I become if I get my Degree BAdmin, where can I work?'"* (Interview: Yanga). As a result, students who might be taking a PA module as an extra credit needed to be encouraged to see the opportunities in practice: *"... your role now is to make them like it... you try to build some excitement... I was saying if you combine your political science course and your public administration you could be the spokesperson for the president... or you become what they call the chief of staff"* (interview: Yanga).

Despite the fact that experiential learning was not a requirement, arrangements could be made for students who expressed the wish to go out on training in their third year: *"It [experiential learning] was not required ...but they can go on experiential training because ... there is a practical side of public administration..."* (Interview: Lily). The emphasis on the world of work was thus clearly evident in the Degree programme but was less explicitly curriculated than in the Diploma

programme.

In keeping with degree requirement for a focus on theory, the Degree modules were focused on the PA knowledge base and theory: *“there is that conceptual side of Public Administration in my course”* (Interview: Lily). The PA Degree is *“more philosophical”* (Interview: Sam) in order to explain how government structures came about. However, the philosophical basis underpinned PA practice and explanations of government service delivery: *“delivered service to the proverbial person in the street”* (Interview: Sam). The data from the interviews showed that the main concern in PA Degree was training of public administrative professionals to carry out administrative goals. There was also some acknowledgement that the PA Degree could be preparing for students for positions other than that of public administrator. For example, Lily indicated that even though PM Diploma students *“are going to do the actual public administration... [PA students]... can choose to be academics or to be practitioners”* (Interview: Lily).

### 6.3.2.2 Textbooks

The prescribed and recommended textbooks<sup>27</sup> foregrounded PA practice. The prescribed textbook for the Ethos of Public Administration<sup>28</sup> was explicit in its focus on the external world of practice in its concern with: *“Public Administration as an activity”* and *“Government Services and functions”* (du Toit and Van der Walddt, 2006: 69). du Toit and Van der Walddt (2006) indicated on the cover page that the audience for their textbook was not only students of PA and PM but practitioners in the field too: *“It is a guide, not only for students of Public Administration and Public Management, but also for practitioners who are interested in providing excellent service”*. The description of PA as an activity was given as: *“The work done by administrative officials with a specific purpose, namely to meet the needs by providing outputs (products and services)”* (du Toit and Van der Walddt, 2006: 10) with such activities being carried out in a specific context such as: *“... in 28*

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<sup>27</sup> The Administration for Development module did not prescribe any textbooks.

<sup>28</sup> The prescribed textbook for the Ethos of Public Administration module was *“Public Administration and Management: The Grassroots”* by du Toit and van der Walddt (2006).

government departments...[and]...at three levels of government (namely central, provincial and local levels)” (du Toit and Van der Walddt, 2006: 11). This textbook designated the most important attribute of PA to be its place in a political system and external practice.

The external world of practice was a central issue in the prescribed textbook for Regional, Metropolitan and Local Government<sup>29</sup>. This approach was highlighted in the first two sentences of the foreword to the textbook: “*The academic teaching of Public Administration and Management, and Political Science is aimed at developing capable future public managers. Therefore, the purpose of this book is to supply the student with the knowledge of the philosophical principles and normative theories on how governments should be organised for the sake of good governance*” (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2006: ix). Similarly, the introduction to the textbook indicated that the purpose was to introduce “*the organisation of government institution and...their macro-organisations*” (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2006: x). Furthermore, the authors described government structures as the force that shapes and drives PA and the textbook chapters derived its form from this approach. In a similar vein to the du Toit and van der Walddt textbook, the Gildenhuys and Knipe textbook gave considerable attention to the functions and services of government: “*...the nature and types of government function, as well as the nature of public services to be executed for the realization of the goals and objectives of government*” (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2006: 48).

The recommended textbook for Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration<sup>30</sup> discussed municipal boundaries, establishment and wards in terms of procedures and processes in the world of PA practice: “*The Demarcation Board is a juristic person, that is, a “person” created by law which has a legal personality, is independent, must be impartial and performs its functions without fear, favour or prejudice*” (Craythorne, 2003: 38). The crucial role played by PA practice was also evident. For example, “*Making Local Government work*” is an explicit look at the processes needed to ensure an effective and efficient local government (Craythorne, 2003: 250) as the municipality and all its processes is the workplace that was focused

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<sup>29</sup> The prescribed textbook for the Regional, Metropolitan and Local government module was “*The Organisation of government An Introduction*” by Gildenhuys and Knipe (2006).

<sup>30</sup> The recommended textbook for Regional, Metropolitan and Local government was “*Municipal Administration The Handbook*” by Craythorne (2003).

on in this textbook. The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration<sup>31</sup> had an extensive list of textbooks. Most of them were dated pre-1994 and as the purpose of this module was stated as an examination of the *“role and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial institutions with specific reference to South Africa”* (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide) based on the 1996 constitution, I chose only one textbook, dated 1996, for discussion in this chapter. The textbook was focused on an accountable government within the constitutional framework and discussed this concept in relation to public institutions: *“Every public institution is subject to accountability. This means that the institution must account for (give an explanation or a reckoning of) the manner in which it performed every specific function for which it has been made responsible”* (Cloete, 1996: 18). The accountability of public institutions was discussed in relation to their functions: *“Every legislature is merely an instrument for the performance of specified functions...”* (Cloete, 1996: 57). The external world of practice was a vital component in this textbook as it emphasised how public institutions should be and could be held accountable.

### 6.3.2.3 Study Guides

PA study guides for all four compulsory modules described the significance of the workplace in module outcomes and descriptions of units. For example, the Ethos of Public Administration module rationale was stated as: *“This module will prepare students to understand the history, nature and characteristics, guidelines of and environment of Public administration”*. The description of Unit 1 of public administration in this module gave further workplace focus: *“Institutions in society that meet needs...Understanding public administration as an activity.... Government administration institutions...Products and services provided by government institutions....Generic processes of administration...Practice of public management”* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide).

The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide set out as its rationale understanding of principles within a real world context: *“The module is essential to provide the learner with an understanding of the constitutional framework within which Public Administration and public officials operate”* (Constitutional

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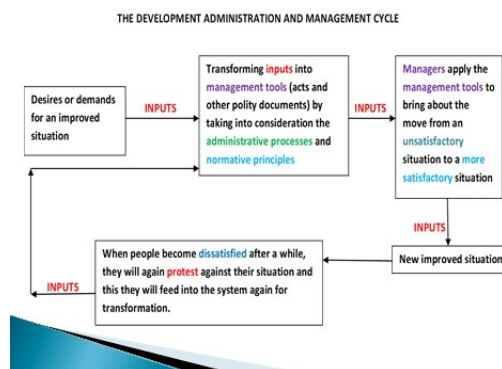
<sup>31</sup> A recommended textbook for the Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module was *“Central Regional and Local Government Institutions of South Africa”* by Cloete (1996).

Framework for Public Administration study guide). Students needed an understanding of the legislative, executive and judicial institutions and their functions, in the external world of practice. PA was seen to be largely determined by its prevailing environment: *“The learner will be able to describe and explain the role and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial institutions with specific reference to South Africa”* (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide).

An outcome of the Administration for Development module spoke to the delivery of: *“organisational service excellence”* (Administration for Development study guide). This showed the essential role of practice on this module as the module was not focused on administration in isolation but as tied to the workplace. The core purpose of the Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration module was given as providing students with knowledge of theory but also functions of state authorities: *“theory and functions of sub-national authorities...”* (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide). Learning outcomes made reference to an external context, be it the state or municipalities: *“Knowledge and understanding of the constitutional categories of municipalities in South Africa”* (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide).

#### 6.3.2.4 Curriculum Materials

The following PowerPoint slide is an example of the significance of the workplace in its focus on the development administration and management cycle:



Administration for Development PowerPoint slide

The slide demonstrated the guidelines for public managers to deal with public dissatisfaction.

So too, the next slide showed the emphasis on procedures within institutions:

**1. Organising is**

- Establishment of work-units, communication channels and behavioural relationships, allocation of functions and delegation of authority
- Organisational structure consists of work units
- Organising have
  - An enabling and utilising character
  - A human factor and a structure factor
  - An element of work division between work units



Administration for Development PowerPoint slide

The lecture notes all showed a similar emphasis on the external world, including the legislature and executive authority.

### **6.3.2.5 Assessments**

Planned assessments also foregrounded the workplace context as affected by principles and frameworks: “*Describe the differences between administration in government institutions and private organisations*” (Ethos of Public Administration test) and “*Explain and discuss the composition, role and function of the Judiciary*” (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration examination). The questions focused on the legalities that governed how government officials should behave as well as the functions and description of the judiciary. A group assignment in Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration required students to examine the functions of a PA practitioner: “*The role of the Municipal Manager in local government and administration*” (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration assignment).

### **6.3.2.6 Conclusion**

The interviews, textbooks, study guides and curriculum materials revealed the PA Degree’s concern with workplace practices. Though there was a conceptual basis to this focus with a concern for higher level theory, this served to reinforce a depth of understanding of practice.

### 6.3.3 The Interdisciplinary Nature of the Public Administration Degree

Having shown that the PA Degree fulfills the first quality of a region, that is the outward look to practice, I now discuss the second quality of a region, the singulars the PA Degree drew on.

#### 6.3.3.1 Lecturer Interviews

In response to a question on the content of her module, Lilly was explicit about the fields PA drew on through her comments on the debates within PA. She noted that earlier debates concerned commonalities between public administration and politics but that current debates were characterised by the relationship between PA and management: *“now where we have the Public Administration Management debate... that Public Administration should be a stand-alone discipline but the problem with Public Administration is ...that we don’t have our own theories for Public Administration.... We draw theories from Sociology [and]... from Business Management”* (Interview: Lily). Lily raised the issue of PA being hampered in its quest to claim its own knowledge space by this reliance on other disciplines.

Other lecturers were more implicit in their discussions about the fields PA drew on and these were still evident in their comments. For example, PA drew on the discipline of Political Science to explain how government was structured: *“... the subdivisions of the government...”* (Interview: Sam). The lecturer understandings of PA indicated that their modules drew on a number of singulars such as Political Science, Law, Sociology, Business Management and History.

#### 6.3.3.2 Textbooks

The Gildenhuis and Knipe textbook did not explicitly make any connections between other disciplines and the PA field. However, the chapter on government system noticeably drew on Law in its focus on constitutional law: *“...A written constitution generally comprises a document or constitutional law compiled and approved at a particular time...”* (Gildenhuis and Knipe, 2006: 2). It could be argued that this textbook drew on the discipline of Political Science as this discipline was focused on the dynamics and functions of government systems.

The du Toit and Van der Waldt textbook was more explicit about the relationship between PA and other disciplines, indicating that PA practitioners had to deal with

officials from a wide range of disciplines and that they needed to gain knowledge about these disciplines in order to provide effective services. PA was seen to have a relationship with Political Science because of the commonality of a focus on government; with Economics because of the influence of economic development on rendering of services; with Psychology in order to understand human behaviour; with History because of the origins of PA; with the legal sciences because of legislation that bound PA practitioners and, lastly, with the Natural Sciences in order to deliberate on realities raised by the Natural Sciences (du Toit and van der Waldt, 2006).

The Craythorne textbook had a focus on the constitutional framework and no explicit reference was made to any specific singulars. However, the relationship with Law could be seen in the many Acts referred to throughout the text.

The Cloete textbook also drew on the field of Law in its focus on legislature and the means by which they could be held accountable. The Constitution was central to this discussion: “*Section 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993 (Act 200 of 1993), provides as follows...*” (Cloete, 1996: 52). The foreword to the book, written by Nelson Mandela, noted that when the book was written, South African political parties were engaged in writing their final constitution. Thus, the references in this textbook were to the 1993 version of the Constitution. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the constitution was a clear identification with the field of Law.

#### **6.3.3.3 Study Guides**

The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module outcomes were: “*to explain the constitutional framework...constitution and constitutional arrangements in a state*” and “*In South Africa the Constitution, 1996, is seen as the supreme law of the Republic...*” (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide). These extracts were evidence of the Constitutional Framework for Public Administration looking towards the field of Law. It also drew on the field of Political Science in its discussion of the various state forms: “*A political confederation is an association in which various states co-operate ...*” (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide).

The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide looked primarily to the field of Political Science: “*Explain the constitutional spheres of government in*

*South Africa. Knowledge and understanding of the constitutional categories of municipalities in South Africa. Discuss public participation in local government and administration”* (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide).

The module entitled “Administration for Development” clearly showed that it drew on Development Studies and recontextualised the theories and content from Development Studies into a PA context. An example of a specific outcome was: “*A coherent understanding of public administration and development*” (Administration for Development study guide).

Ethos of Public Administration drew primarily on the field of Business Management as the module focused on: “*Products and services provided by government institutions, Generic processes of administration, Practice of Public Management, Administration and management in government institutions and private organisations...*” (Ethos of Public Administration study guide). It also drew on Political Science as unit sections focused on, for example: “*The government, Absolutist state, Democratic state, Interventionist state and Government institutions*” (Ethos of Public Administration study guide). It also drew on the field of Law in its focus on: “*Principles emanating from the Constitution, the Constitution as the supreme law...*” (Ethos of Public Administration study guide).

#### **6.3.3.4 Conclusion**

The PA Degree had characteristics of a region as external practice was intrinsically bound to the knowledge of the PA Degree. External practice was defined by national, provincial and local government structures and their functions for which students were being prepared. PA was concerned with what its focus should be as was seen in lecturer extracts and while there was a call for a more conceptual basis instead of a more contextual skills based one (Kroukamp, 2011; van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011), the PA Degree continued to be characterised more by the world of practice (van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011).

There are discordant voices within the PA field. Some feel that the field has no holistic conceptual basis and largely privileges skills (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2012; Masemurule, 2005) while there is another school of thought that PA does have its own philosophy: “the philosophy of the public administrators and politicians running the affairs of government” (Gildenhuys, 2004: 8). This school suggests that to think

of PA as purely “descriptive” would not “do justice to our doctorate degrees” (Gildenhuis, 2004: 17). Ironically, the Gildenhuis textbook itself predominantly focuses on the descriptive functions and processes of government, as is shown in the discussion on the epistemic relations of the PA Degree in section 6.4.

The PA field draws on most singulars within social sciences such as Law, Economics, Political Science, Management, Sociology, Business Management, History, Sociology and Psychology amongst others. Many of the fields being drawn on are regions themselves which could point to the reason for a weaker knowledge base in the PA Degree that scholars have acknowledged. Having discussed the regional nature of the PA Degree, I now turn to Specialisation Codes to analyse the degree to which the relations making up these codes were present in the PA Degree curriculum.

## **6.4 Epistemic Relations in the Public Administration Degree**

Specialisation codes of legitimation were discussed in Chapter Three/section 3.3.3.1 and Chapter Five/section 5.4. This section discusses findings on abstraction of the epistemic relations (ER) in the data for the first-year PA Degree.

If the data showed that the PA Degree exhibited relatively stronger ER, the focus could be on procedural knowledge such as skills, processes and functions or on propositional knowledge such as theoretical explanations. Van Dijk and Thornhill (2011: 9) argued that PA differed from PM as the former included “the cognitive ability to theorise” while the latter ensured that “a particular set of skills is taught”. PA was understood as being on the higher end of a theoretical continuum with more philosophical and abstract knowledge (Hodgkinson 1978 cited in Van Dijk and Thornhill, 2011).

This would suggest that PA could be characterised by ER+ with a stronger focus on propositional knowledge in contrast to the focus on procedural knowledge, which characterised the PM Diploma (see Chapter Five). It also could mean that the theoretical underpinnings of the PA discipline became significant in its teachings.

### **6.4.1 Lecturer Interviews**

I asked PA lecturers in the interviews about the content covered in the PA Degree modules. Evidence of ER+ was found: “*Regional, Metropolitan and Local*

*Administration, you look at local government as a unit of government and here we are looking at the structure of the state and how it functions, how it is divided*" (Interview: Sam). This was a conceptualisation of Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration as a focus on functions and structures and thereby a strong emphasis on procedural knowledge. However, elements of propositional knowledge were also present: *"... this is more philosophical in theory... how did it [government] come about?"* (Interview: Sam). The module had an emphasis on theoretical underpinnings of government which called on both propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge in how the government was structured and how it delivered services but procedural knowledge was accented.

In the Ethos of Public Administration module students were *"being prepared to be scholars because they are taught theories and how to think critically"* (Interview: Lily). Lily was clear about the strong knowledge focus (ER+) of the module but she bemoaned the fact that the practical aspect of the course that could have involved case studies was missing due to time constraints. Both propositional (the evolution of PA) and procedural knowledge (the practice of PA) were highlighted in the Ethos of Public Administration module. Lily first taught: *"the practice of public administration... You spell the practice of public administration with a small letter "p" and a small letter "a"... and then I change it to the discipline of public administration, which is spelt with capital letters "P" and "A"* (Interview: Lily). Her argument for the inclusion of propositional knowledge was that this was missing from the syllabus and that one could not be a scholar without knowing the discipline's evolution.

Lily also commented that students had complained about the abstract nature of the module to a fellow lecturer who had been teaching students about local government policies such as Asgisa<sup>32</sup>. She told the lecturer that: *"I teach what is happening in Public Administration in general because we have international students... Asgisa is an intervention of the government. I cannot teach it....it doesn't make sense to the international students"* (Interview: Lily). Lily commented that the different approaches

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<sup>32</sup> Asgisa was discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.3.5.2.

between her and the lecturer students had spoken to was as a result of their training as he had initially completed a diploma while she had completed a degree. She understood the diploma as being a more practical skills-based nature and the degree being more theoretical in nature.

However, for the Administration for Development module Lily foregrounded the procedural knowledge that students would have to learn such as functions and procedures: *“Students have to know developmental functions, and the aims of development...”* (Interview: Lily).

A focus on propositional knowledge for the Constitutional Framework for Public Administration came through in the interview with Yanga. The module content entailed explanation of government structures and different types of constitutions: *“... it’s about the structures in government that are utilised in realising the end results of Public Administration... you explain the types of constitutions...”* (Interview: Yanga). The module also had procedural knowledge as the roles of officials in government were explained: *“So in terms of unit three, that’s where you explain the roles and functions of the executives.”* (Interview: Yanga). The propositional knowledge which served as basis for procedural knowledge contained simple facts about the nature and types of constitutions.

The data from the interviews indicated stronger epistemic relations. It was characterised by both propositional knowledge that concerned PA structures and procedural knowledge that concerned PA functions. Propositional knowledge ranged from fairly high level philosophical discussion of the field’s evolution to low level facts about structures. However, procedural knowledge was more evident in modules.

#### **6.4.2 Textbooks**

Evidence for ER+ was found in the PA textbooks. The prescribed book for Regional, Metropolitan and Local Government by Gildenhuys and Knipe (2006) showed evidence of propositional knowledge as its focus was to explain how government institutions were shaped by the constitution: *“the student should understand the constitution as the ultimate law organising the government institutions and the common affairs of a nation”* (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2006: 1). However, this propositional knowledge underpinned procedural knowledge of functions of these institutions as it showed how the constitution determined *“the authority and functions*

of the government” (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2006: 5). The textbook’s main purpose was to highlight PA activities and services and not a lengthy engagement with propositional knowledge.

The title of the Craythorne (2003) textbook, *Municipal Administration*, and its contents clearly showed that procedural knowledge and ER+ were stressed: “A councillor must perform the functions of office in good faith, honestly and in a transparent manner; and at all times act in the best interest of the municipality and in such a way that the credibility and integrity of the municipality are not compromised” (Craythorne, 2003: 101). Qualities of good faith and honesty were not developed as personal dispositions (SR+) but were linked to workplace procedures or services.

The Cloete (1996) textbook also displayed evidence of procedural knowledge and ER+. The functional nature of PA in meeting needs was the focus: “*The purpose of every legislature should thus in its prescribed functional field be to: Ascertain and prioritise the real needs and the justifiable expectations of the people about their general welfare. Determine the resources available to meet the ascertained needs and justified expectations...*” (Cloete, 1996: 57).

The prescribed textbook for Ethos of Public Administration by du Toit and Van der Waldt (2006) strongly accented procedural knowledge or ER+. This was shown in Chapter One entitled “*Public Administration as an activity*” which listed study objectives as “*you should be able to: describe Public Administration as an activity, state in one sentence where Public Administration is carried out,... describe the two types of functions of modern governments and explain the primary goal and criterion of government services ...*” (du Toit and van der Waldt, 2006: 7). Services and functions were to be highlighted in this chapter. Propositional knowledge was also apparent: “*Public Administration as a Discipline*” which gave some of its study objectives as “*you should be able to describe administration as a general system that is found in any institutions/organisation and that results in products and services*” (du Toit and van der Waldt, 2006: 39) and to “*describe the relationship between Public Administration and other disciplines*” (du Toit and van der Waldt, 2006: 39). Furthermore, the textbook described the various paradigms that had been dominant in PA over the years and the impact that these paradigms have had (du Toit and van der Waldt, 2006). The knowledge was low level as it entailed a description of facts. Procedural knowledge was also strongly evident as the textbook

included discussion on products, services and function performed by a government.

The Gildenhuys (2004) textbook showed evidence of propositional knowledge in their discussion of the origins and nature of justice. It was a fairly philosophical discussion: *“Those who argue for “positive” law or the law and justice created by man have not totally denied the basic religious or normative values of their societies, but rather the mechanism through which such rules are discovered”* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 123). Simple facts were also given about the different types of institutions. Procedural knowledge of the functions and services of the judicial authority, legislature, executive authority, public administration were also given.

The textbooks had elements of propositional knowledge as concerned with phases in the PA field but mostly discussed facts and there was more evidence for procedural knowledge in the textbooks.

#### **6.4.3 Study Guides**

The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module exhibited evidence of ER+ in its focus on constitutions and the module intended to: *“... provide the learner with an understanding of the constitutional framework within which Public Administration and public officials operate”* through reference to the *“role of the elected political office bearers and the appointed officials...”*. (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide). Further evidence of procedural knowledge could be seen in discussion about how different constitutions functioned. There was, however, limited evidence of propositional knowledge in explanation about types of constitutions and states.

The Ethos of Public Administration study guide showed evidence for strong procedural knowledge but also contained elements of propositional knowledge. Here the origins and theoretical underpinnings of the PA field and its relationships to other disciplines were discussed. Procedural knowledge focused on government functions: *“two types of functions of modern governments”* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide).

The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide appeared to contain both procedural and propositional knowledge ER+: *“The overall purpose of this model is to provide students with the required knowledge of the theory on the right of existence and the functions of sub-national authorities in a state from a South*

*African perspective*” (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide). Facts concerning the nature of sub-national authorities served as basis for a description of their functions: *Discuss the right of existence and the functions of sub-national authorities in the contemporary state...*” (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide). The textbook mainly dealt with the processes of authorities.

Outcomes in the Administration for Development study guide exhibited procedural knowledge: *“Knowledge of the omnipresent of developmental functions and the uniqueness of these functions in Public Administration”* and *“A concrete understanding of the enabling functions for organisational service excellence”* (Administration for Development study guide). Understanding of PA appeared to be propositional knowledge but as it was functions that needed to be understood and skills that needed to be acquired to perform these functions, this was procedural knowledge.

#### 6.4.4 Curriculum Materials

Curriculum materials showed evidence of ER+.

The module outcomes in the Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide were echoed by the following slide which focused on propositional knowledge (the right of existence of authorities) as basis for procedural knowledge (its functions):

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PURPOSE                    | The overall purpose of this module is to provide students with the required knowledge of the theory on the right of existence and the functions of sub-national authorities in a state from a South African perspective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES | Describe the basic concepts of the division of government authority in the state;<br>Discuss the right of existence and the functions of sub-national authorities in the contemporary state;<br>Explain the constitutional spheres of government in South Africa;<br>Knowledge and understanding of the constitutional categories of municipalities in South Africa;<br>Discuss public participation in local government and administration. |
| CORE CONTENT               | Regionalism in Perspective; Provincial sphere of government in South Africa.<br>Constitutional Local sphere of government<br>Metropolitan Municipality<br>District Municipality<br>Local municipality<br>Municipal councillors and municipal officials<br>Inhabitants' participation in municipal government and administration<br>Ward committees for public participation in local government                                              |
| ASSESSMENT                 | 1 X 3 hour semester examination during November examination period; 50% class mark + 50% examination mark.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| MODERATION                 | Internal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| PREREQUISITE               | NONE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration PowerPoint slide

There was evidence of procedural knowledge in a focus on the functions of legislative institutions. Low level facts were also given about legislative institutions:

## **1. Legislative Institutions**

These are multiple of bodies created to facilitate legislation e.g. the legislative and the Head of the State, the President, the King, the Queen, or the Tsar depending on the state concern etc.

### **a. Political Head of the State**

- The political Head of State is usually called the President or the Prime Minister as in Britain
- The President or political Head of the State appoints Cabinet Ministers and deputy-ministers to their respective portfolio's (departments)

Constitutional Framework for Public Administration lecture notes

## **6.4.5 Epistemic Relations Conclusion**

Abstraction of data from the interviews, textbooks and study guides allowed me to identify relatively strong epistemic relations. It was also evident that the PA Degree had a strong focus on procedural knowledge as the modules focused on functions and processes in public administration. There was also evidence of propositional knowledge ranging from discussion about the discipline's philosophy and principles and concepts were explained. However, the emphasis on procedural knowledge was greater. The focus on cognitive theorising was not present to the extent which PA scholars have argued it would be. I could thus concur with van Dijk and Thornhill (2011) that although PA had more of a conceptual basis, the main concern with PA was with an understanding of the practice and not the theory.

## **6.5 Social Relations in the Public Administration Degree**

Notions of social relations (SR) were discussed in Chapter Three/section 3.3.3.1 and Chapter Five/section 5.4. SR was linked to a knower structure with the focus on the attributes, attitudes and dispositions that an individual needs need to have (Maton, 2009). I now discuss data from the interviews, textbooks and study guides to determine the extent to which the first-year PA Degree exhibited a knower structure and the strengths of the SR. If the data showed relatively strong evidence of SR+, the PA Degree emphasis would be more on demeanour and attributes. It would also suggest that PA as a field had a common ideological philosophy which necessitated certain attributes.

### 6.5.1 Lecturer Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of the ideal knower in the PA Degree (and the extent to which a particular kind of knower is called for), I asked lecturers if there were particular attributes needed for success in their specific modules and the wider PA field.

The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module only showed evidence of SR-: *"You explain the types of constitutions... what kind of a constitution do we have locally, in South Africa... and ...how is the judiciary different from the executive and from the legislative institutions..."* (Interview: Yanga). The focus was on student understanding of government institutions as per the constitution and not workplace behaviour and dispositions. The only evidence of attributes was in relation to the kind of scholar the PA Degree required: *"...if you are doing Public Administration you've got to be curious ... So we challenge the students to read..."* (Interview: Yanga). The attribute of curiosity was defined in terms of the student who needed to keep up-to-date with current affairs.

SR- and SR+ were evident in both Ethos of Public Administration and Administration for Development modules. Though students could choose between being a scholar of PA or a practitioner, Lily foregrounded the idea that students were prepared to be scholars. The knowledge of PA needed by a scholar was SR- as the Ethos of Public Administration module: *"... just differentiate[s] between the practice of Public Administration and Public Administration as a discipline"* (Interview: Lily). The focus on the discipline of PA was SR-: *"we are trying to trace where the discipline comes from ..."* (Interview: Lily). The focus here was on knowledge of the origins of the discipline and not any workplace attributes needed for the discipline. However, the practice of PA covered guidelines for public official behaviour in the public sector which were SR+ as the focus was on workplace behaviour: *"...we have guidelines which emanate from society, the values of society, like transparency, balance decision, honesty, trust, and all those ones, respect, reasonableness ..."* (Interview: Lily). This was evidence of SR+. The guidelines for behaviour were weaker social relations though as they emanated generally from society rather than from specialisation of the field.

The Administration for Development module exhibited strengths of SR- as the module was concerned with effective procedures and standards to achieve goals

and improve practice. It also involved knowledge of “...*participants who exercised control at central government level...*” (Interview: Lily). It also appeared to show strengths of SR+ as the practitioner needed to conduct themselves in ways that exhibited: “...*accountability and accuracy in carrying out procedures...*”(Interview: Lily) but these were linked to procedures, which was SR-. The qualities that the PA student should have were: “...*communicative skills... and they should be able to analyse and ...to think critically...*”(Interview: Lily). The analytical and critical dispositions were, however, not related to workplace dispositions but to how students should answer questions in examinations.

The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration module showed strengths of SR- with the focus on structures and functions: “... *the subdivisions of the government: what does a national government do, what does a provisional government do and what does the local government do in a state...*” (Interview: Sam). Sam noted that attributes were not significant except a “...*passion for government*” (Interview: Sam), an attribute that was not necessarily present as many students took the course as an extra credit for their degrees. Another attribute that students should have was the ability to be successful at their studies.

### **6.5.2 Textbooks**

The prescribed textbook for the Ethos of Public Administration module showed strengths of SR- through to SR+. It was SR- in the focus on principles, the nature and extent of services and functions as well as the discipline of PA as were outlined on the cover page: “*The aim of this publication is to equip public managers with insight into functioning of Public Management and Administration within the dynamic southern African context*” (du Toit and van der Waladt, 2006) The environment of PA was paramount with a focus on “*Interaction between environments and public administration*” (Du Toit and van der Waladt, 2006: 1). Workplace conduct included “*reasonableness, balance, truth, humaneness and thoroughness*” (Du Toit and van der Waladt, 2006: 104-106). However, as these qualities were linked to compliance of generic principles they were, thus, not indicative of shared core values of PA. Therefore, the social relations would be weaker.

SR- was shown in the emphasis on knowledge and functions in the recommended textbook for Ethos of Public Administration: “*A theoretical knowledge of the macro*

*organisation of government and its fundamental philosophies is basic to the study of public administration*" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 121) and *"In order to satisfy the public's needs, government functions are usually classified as line functions and staff functions"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 342). The textbook described the nature of these line functions in detail. Dispositions for the workplace were also evident: *"...they are all supposed to serve the individual in society and respect the values [of] all individuals"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 122) and *"The only way to command the respect of the public is for the legislature to be constituted of representatives with integrity and dignity"* (Gildenhuys, 2004: 139). There was, however, no discussion of how these qualities of respect, integrity and dignity could be developed. There seemed to be some engagement with aspects of power relations between individuals being served and elected political representatives and shared core values of serving people and satisfying their needs. However, as the attributes were linked to procedures of effective governance, they were weaker social relations.

The prescribed textbook for the Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration module focused on constitutional types and functions, regional and local government functions and thus, strengths of SR-: *"... most civilised and established states have constitutions that expound the general principles for ruling the people of the country"* (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2011: 5) and *"Local governments have ... power/authority to carry out public activities..."* (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2011: 247). There were instances of SR+ such as a leader of a consociative democracy (a state characterised by many cultures) showing sensitivity to difference but this was one of only a few isolated examples.

The chapter entitled, *"Making Local Government work"* focused on morality and ethics. It defined morality as conforming to moral principles: *"the degree of conformity of an idea, a practice to moral principles"* (Craythorne, 2003: 260). Public officials needed to have *"responsibility and accountability"* to avoid corruption and maladministration (Craythorne, 2003: 260). Despite the topic, the social relations were weaker because there was no discussion beyond a listing of them as a set of values.

The Cloete textbook also showed evidence of SR+ and made reference to dispositions and behaviour of public officials: *"To be accountable every legislative, governmental, administrative and judicial public institution and office-bearer in the*

*RSA must respect the prescribed rights*" (Cloete, 1996: 24). Public officials were urged not to engage in any corrupt action and, furthermore, public officials were to be responsive and productive in their conduct in practice.

The textbooks show differing strengths of SR but the social relations in the attributes described were mostly linked to procedures and principles and not discussed in ways that they were essential and specific to the field.

### **6.5.3 Study Guides**

The study guides were concise documents that indicated a weaker concern with SR. The Ethos of Public Administration study guide gave as specific outcomes: *"Understanding of the ethos of Public Administration" and "Knowledge of the environment within which Public Administration takes place"* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide). This appeared to be SR- with the focus on the nature and context of PA. SR+ appeared to be evident in the unit on: *"Value of society"* which listed qualities such as: *"Reasonableness and fairness, Balance, Truth, Justice, Thoroughness and Efficiency"* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide). Even though the guide did not expound on what constituted this section, as it was based on the prescribed du Toit and van der Walddt, 2006 textbook discussed above, it could be assumed that the study guide was also speaking to the dispositions of the public official.

The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration and Administration for Development study guides appeared to be SR-: *"Goals and Objectives of Government; Organisation of Government; Vertical Division of Governmental functions....; ... Powers and functions of municipal councillors and municipal officials..."* (Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide) and *"Knowledge of developmental outcomes"* (Administration for Development study guide). The study guides provided concise descriptions of content and there was no reference to discussion of any attributes.

The Constitutional framework for Public Administration study guide showed SR- in its listing of contents as: *"Constitution and Constitutional arrangements; role and functions of legislative institutions...' role and functions of the executive authority..."* and *"role and functions of the judicial authority"* (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide). The focus was on knowledge public officials needed had

to perform their work satisfactorily, which was SR-. The unit on the roles and functions of the legislative institutions described norms and values that guided conduct but these were related to all citizens generally and were thus SR-: “...before people are able to regulate conduct, a government must formally accept specific norms and values, and make them enforceable on all members of society...” (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide).

#### 6.5.4 Curriculum Materials

The following curriculum materials showed evidence of weaker social relations.

##### **Batho Pele principles**

Developed to

- ▶ Promote and maintain high standards of professional ethics
- ▶ Provide services
  - impartially,
  - fairly,
  - equitably and without bias



Administration for Development PowerPoint slide

The PowerPoint slide illustrates that qualities such as ethics, impartiality, fairness as well as equitable and unbiased behaviour were linked to Batho Pele<sup>33</sup> principles. There was, thus, some sporadic evidence of a concern with a professional disposition, but these were always given at the level of a fairly superficial list and in a generic form. No particular PA lens or gaze (Maton, 2010) was thus necessary for specialisation.

As a further example, the following lecture notes appeared to be SR+ as attributes of good judgement and conduct were described. However, the qualities were not specifically linked to any common values in these lecture notes and they were listed neutrally without any specifics related to PA mentioned. The social relations were, thus, weaker.

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<sup>33</sup> Batho Pele is a SeSotho word meaning ‘people first’ and eight principles were developed as framework for effective public service delivery in SA.

## **2. Values Explained**

- Before people are able to regulate conduct, a government must formally accept specific norms and values and make them enforceable on all members of society
- **A value** – is your perception of what is good, bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, desirable or undesirable etcetera

Constitutional Framework for Public Administration lecture notes.

### **6.5.5 Social Relations Conclusion**

Abstraction of data from the interviews and curriculum documentation has shown some evidence for SR+ but generally the social relations in the data were relatively weak. Lecturers and study guides mostly did not list any attributes linked to common PA values but spoke to procedures and academic attributes. Textbooks placed more emphasis on social relations but as these were not developed and not linked to an ideological position or to relations of power, the social relations were weaker. I would conclude that the first-year PA Degree showed weaker strengths of SR in its modules.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The focus in the first-year PA curriculum was primarily on epistemic relations, with a great concern on the knowledge to be acquired by the students. This knowledge was primarily in the form of procedural knowledge in its focus on roles and functions. There was also evidence of propositional knowledge in explanation of types of institutions and theories underpinning the PA field as would be expected of a degree and in keeping with scholarly theorisation about the field. However, a knowledge basis was not evident to the extent to which PA scholars have conceptualised it to be, there was more evidence of a focus on workplace skills, procedures and processes. Despite this, stronger epistemic relations and 'what you know' (Maton, 2004, 2010) distinguished the knowledge structure of PA. This brings me to the conclusion that after considering data on the relations within (Bernstein, 1990), the PA Degree, it could be conceptualised as having a knowledge code of ER+SR-.

As PA is a region and concerned with the workplace of government institutions, certain qualities and workplace behaviours to ensure effective procedures would also be of significance. The discussion has shown that this was the case and that qualities were needed for effective governance. These qualities were good judgement,

respect, fairness, honesty, accountability and responsibility. These qualities were described generically in the data, however, and not in terms of a coherent PA philosophy. The ideological positioning of PA was not seen in much detail in the data and this might speak to the lack of a conceptual underpinning of the field. Lecturers were able to describe attributes as per academic demands and not necessarily for the field.

As the field boundaries were so permeable to regions who themselves had weak knowledge bases, it led to a weak knowledge base in the PA curriculum. The fragmented nature of the field was also evident in differing lecturer understandings of whether skills or knowledge should be foregrounded. The differing understandings of needed attributes, with most lecturers speaking to academic attributes, also pointed to the fragmented nature of the PA field.

Furthermore, I could conclude that the PA field was a horizontal knowledge structure with the specialised language of Public Administration. The focus in the PA horizontal knowledge structure was not on a knower that had its own specialised mode of acting and being (Maton, 2007) but rather on the knowledge itself. PA constituted many specialised languages which co-existed in a way that created tension within the field. The languages within the PA field all had weaker powers as their grammars were not explicit or conceptualised with precise empirical descriptions and relations that could be modeled (Bernstein, 1999). The ER of PA could be seen as having weaker classification (Bernstein, 1971, 1973b) but stronger framing. It was weakly classified because the boundaries between the specialised languages of the region were no longer strongly insulated. The languages had been subsumed within PA not into one form as with hierarchical knowledge structures (Bernstein, 1990) but as an accumulation of knowledges (Maton, 2009) within PA. Furthermore, these languages that had been subsumed within PA could be based on “different, often opposed assumptions, making it less clear when one is speaking or writing” (Maton and Muller, 2006: 20). This has implications for the literacy practices of the field. Now that the generative mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008, 2011) of the PA Degree have been identified as ER+SR-, these literacy practices as events generated by these mechanisms, will now be discussed.

## 6.7 Public Administration Degree Literacy Practices

Having discussed the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year PA Degree and having concluded that it was a knowledge code, I now discuss the literacy practices that first-year PA Degree students needed to demonstrate in order to succeed and consider whether they were aligned to this knowledge code.

### 6.7.1 Public Administration Literacy Practices and Public Administration Knowledge-knower Structures

The questions I seek to address in this section are as follows:

- What literacy practices are expected of students in the PA first-year Degree?
- Do these literacy practices align with the knowledge-knower structure of PA?

NLS conceptualisations of literacy as a social practice were discussed in Chapter one/section 1.3, Chapter Three/section 3.4 and Chapter Five/section 5.7. It is also my intent to link the concerns about a knowledge blind-spot in NLS to the preceding analysis of the first-year PA Degree curriculum as a knowledge code.

PA lecturers expected students to write short paragraphs and essays for assessments at first-year level. The concern was not with the writing genres of PA in practice though lecturers did point to reading and writing needs of PA practice. Sam foregrounded the significance of writing in PA practice: *“You don’t manage the public sector by word of mouth so you need to be able to write reports...”* (Interview: Sam). The forms of writing needed in practice were: *“...specifically writing memos, emails, reports, and things like that...”* (Interview: Sam). Even though students were not taught these genres at the first-year level, Sam noted that he told students of their importance.

Students were expected to write essay questions and paragraphs in tests and examinations: *“We’ve got some essay questions but we prepare them...”* (Interview: Yanga); *“It’s only long questions...”* (Interview: Sam) and *“it’s three paragraph questions...and... an essay...”* (Interview: Lily). However, short answers were also required: *“...then we’ve got other short questions so you might have marks for 10 and 5. Say, define a constitution for 5 marks...”* (Interview: Yanga). It appeared that students were assisted with the essay question in assessments as Yanga indicated that essay questions were prepared. Students needed to structure essay answers in

tests and examinations using conventions of the genre: *"I expect them to have an introduction and a conclusion..."* (Interview: Lily).

Although, verbatim regurgitation of knowledge was not encouraged in writing, students needed to paraphrase much of the knowledge provided to them. Students were expected to define, describe, explain and differentiate PA knowledge: *"You've just got to describe how they are..."* and *"Define, explain, differentiate between this and that..."* (Interview: Yanga). Students were not required to give critical accounts in their answers for tests and examinations: *"They just write about it..."* (Interview: Lily). On Bloom's (1956) taxonomy 'define' would be on a knowledge level, 'explain' on comprehension level, 'discuss' and 'differentiate' would be on the analytical level. The learning objectives in the PA assessments thus ranged from lower order to middle order of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy but do not include higher order levels. This is perhaps to be expected in a first-year course, particularly for 'high stakes' events of summative tests and exams. It seemed that assignments were used as the assessment space in which to introduce students to the higher levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Assignments were more likely to be of a critical nature: *"In their assignments they are required to... say critically look at the constitutional regime in South Africa ..."* (Interview: Yanga).

Reading in the PA field was essential to keep up-to-date with current legislation so that comparisons could be made between what was happening locally and internationally: *"We compare Public Administration in South Africa with Public Administration in America... so it is necessary for the senior public official to be able to read, to read journal articles, to read the Acts that are being passed..."* (Interview: Sam). Although students needed to do much reading, opportunities were limited in an eight week module. There was also no evidence in the data for students being assisted to negotiate the reading of legislative and academic texts.

Students were encouraged to read extensively in order to complete assignments: *"You give them some references ... that talks about the constitution [and]... the judiciary ..."* (Interview: Yanga) and *"Usually I say they should use more than 5 sources and if they are going to use an Internet source it should be 1 source, otherwise all those sources include e-journals, legislation on the Internet..."* (Interview: Lily).

The Ethos of Public Administration study guide listed the prescribed textbook and

seven other textbooks as additional reading. The Administration for Development study guide indicated the following as reading requirements: “*The student should obtain more information by reading the prescribed textbook, journal articles, relevant legislation and other relevant books*” (Administration for Development study guide). Yet no prescribed textbook was currently being used for the module. For the assignment students were required to consult five sources that included: “...*books, academic journal articles, legislation and newspaper articles. The use of the internet is limited to only one document*” (Administration for Development study guide). The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide listed the prescribed textbook and legislation such as White Papers and the South African constitution among its readings. For the Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module, general guidelines for assignments were given without reference to the number or nature of the sources. Yanga did, however, state that some references were given for the assignment.

This discussion leads me to conclude that the reading and writing requirements in the first-year PA Degree were of an academic nature, and not focused on the workplace, and that there was an expectation in most courses that students needed to engage with these texts to succeed in the course. Students were expected to write short paragraph answers and essays in tests and examinations. Lecturers expected students to show understanding of PA knowledge largely through paraphrasing, though there were opportunities for more critical engagement in the assignments. Students were expected to read textbooks, legislation and journal articles for assignments and additional reading for the modules. Having discussed the lecturers’ comments about reading and writing, I now turn to an analysis of the assessments (see Table 6.2):

|                                |                                               |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Ethos of Public Administration | One test<br>One assignment<br>One examination |
| Administration for Development | One test<br>One assignment<br>One examination |

|                                                    |                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration    | One test<br>One group assignment<br>One examination |
| Constitutional Framework for Public Administration | One test<br>One assignment<br>One examination       |

Table 6.2 PA module assessments

The assessments were well aligned to the knower code that had been identified in the interviews with academics and the curriculum documentation. They were entirely focused on the knowledge that students were expected to demonstrate (ER+), that is what was foregrounded was “the social relation between knowledge and its proclaimed object of study” rather than on “the social relation between knowledge and its author, the subject making the claim to knowledge” (Maton, 2004: 3).

For example, the Administration for Development 2013 November examination required that students discuss, explain and describe knowledge:

*Question 2*  
*Discuss and explain any five (5) measures for the utilisation of the fields of recruitment.* (10)

*Question 3*  
*Briefly discuss the requirements for effective procedures* (10)

The focus throughout the assessments was far less on who the “author or subject” was (Maton 2000: 152) and was far more on the “proclaimed object of study” (Maton 2000: 154).

Discussing, explaining and describing of knowledge speak back to the forms of questions identified in this chapter. It would be characterised as knowledge, comprehension and analysis learning objectives on Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy.

While the questions in the assignment were all ER+, SR-, they were also primarily, though not exclusively valuing propositional knowledge rather than procedural knowledge. Furthermore, both propositional and procedural knowledge were at the level of recall of facts rather than the application of theory. For example, the memorandum for Question two required students to give a listing of the measures

without any discussion: *“Newspapers and periodicals. Distribute various forms such as brochures, pamphlets. Details of possible candidates should be readily obtainable. Visit education institutions. Regular contact with employment officers. Compile career guides”* (Administration for Development 2013 examination memorandum). A 20 mark question also required a listing of the various participants concerned with exercising control on central government level and their roles.

There were questions where higher level theoretical considerations were required in propositional knowledge questions. For example, an Ethos of Public Administration test asked of students to discuss the relationship between PA and other disciplines:

*Question 2*

*Briefly discuss the relationship between Public Administration and the following disciplines:*

*2.1. Political Science* (5)

*2.2 Economics* (5)

*Question 3*

*“One of the more modern views on the type of services that should be rendered by governments to society, and one which should receive more attention than liberalism or conservatism, is the idea of a welfare state” (Du Toit and Van der Waldt 2006:32).* (10)

*In view of the above statement describe and explain a welfare state.*

The memorandum showed that for Question 3, the welfare state was defined in terms of propositional knowledge, that is the functions it fulfilled: *“1.5.2.1 Welfare state: Is a combination of different views. It is a reaction to poor economic circumstances. In practice a welfare state means the government must: Accept responsibility, Give the necessary aid, Determine the reason for poverty & combat it, Play an active role in the life of society...”* (Ethos of Public Administration test memorandum).

The Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration November 2013 examination required students to write short notes, discuss, describe and explain but also to *“write a comprehensive essay...”* and was focused on procedural knowledge of functions and roles:

*Question 1*

*Write short notes on each of the following:*

- a) Functions of the provincial legislature (5)*
- b) The role of a municipal councilor (5)*

*Question 2*

*Discuss the powers and functions of the Premier and the executive authority of a Province (10)*

*Question 5*

*Write a comprehensive essay on metropolitan municipalities and the challenges faced by such municipalities (20)*

Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration November 2013 examination

The memorandum shows that the essay (Question 5) did not conform to conventions of introduction, body and conclusion:

*Question 5*

*Powers and Functions of a Municipal Manager:*

*The municipal manager must call the first meeting of a newly elected council to take measures to prevent corruption, to give members of the community full and accurate information about the level and standard of service they are entitled to receive and about the (persons in charge of) municipal management. The municipal manager must see to the implementation of these principles in his or her administration..."*

Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration November 2013 examination memorandum

Students had to define, explain and discuss procedural knowledge such as roles and functions, and propositional knowledge such as rules and principles, in the Constitutional Framework for Public Administration 2013 examination:

*Question 1*

*Define a constitution and explain written and unwritten constitutions, as well as rigid and flexible constitutions. (10)*

*Question 9*

*Explain and discuss the composition, role and function of the judiciary. (20)*

Constitutional Framework for Public Administration 2013 examination

An example of propositional knowledge of simple facts could be seen in this extract from the memorandum: *“Constitution – fundamental rules which regulate the distribution of power and authority...rules and principles according to which a government exercises the authority entrusted to it...”* (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration 2013 examination memorandum).

This discussion of the PA Degree tests and exams thus far has shown that the examinations were speaking back to the knowledge code of the PA Degree, with a strong focus on the knowledge rather than being a particular kind of knower.

The assignments followed a similar pattern to the exams and tests in their foregrounding of knowledge (ER+). For example, the Ethos of Public Administration assignment topic: *“Discuss the role of communication in public administration and management”* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide), focused on the role communication processes played and thus was in keeping with the procedural knowledge of the PA Degree. The Administration for Development assignment topic: *“Discuss the importance of control in Public Administration”* also made reference to procedural knowledge as control involved processes such as *“reporting, inspections, auditing...”* (Administration for Development memorandum). The other assignments showed a similar pattern of retelling of procedural knowledge. The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration assignment topic: *“Critically discuss the constitutional framework of South Africa”* (Interview: Yanga) focused on the nature of the constitution and the processes that it enables. Thus, it would be both propositional knowledge of the principles and procedural knowledge of the processes.

To conclude this section, the first-year PA Degree reading and writing practices were linked to academic practices not the practice of the PA workplace. Students need to write short lists or paragraphs for examinations and tests and essay formats for assignments. Students were expected to consult secondary sources for their assignments. Legislative documents were also required readings for lectures but there is no evidence of how the reading of legal documents was facilitated.

The questions in tests were mainly on the knowledge, comprehension and analysis levels of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy. Higher order levels such as evaluation and synthesis were not present in the assessments. While there was little evidence of higher order knowledge questions of either a procedural or propositional nature,

there was a greater depth of engagement on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy than was evidenced in the Diploma programme. Furthermore, it should be remembered that this is the first year of the programme.

Nonetheless, as this is a degree course, there is also an expectation of higher order knowledge and related literacy practices as stated in the National Qualifications Framework. A focus on the reproduction of knowledge (Bartholomae, 1985) could serve to exclude students from full participation in HE. However, there was some evidence of higher order critical engagement with assignments. The discussion below on marked student assessments will show the extent to which a critical engagement is valued by lecturers.

Above all, lecturers seemed to value correct language usage in assignments: *"Their problem is also the way they express themselves... the challenges is the language... the construction of the sentences... they don't have a full stop... they want to have a sentence as like a paragraph"* (Interview: Yanga). Yanga demonstrated how he valued correct language usage by making comments about it on assignments: *"I say keep your sentences brief because they have long sentences and sometimes they mix up issues"* (Interview Yanga).

The requirements of correct language were also highlighted in the following PowerPoint slide.

#### Assignment – style of writing

- it is recommended that the student uses simple, clear and concise language;
- ❑ avoid cliches and words such as utterly, very, tremendously, 'at the end of the day' etc;
- ❑ avoid personal pronouns such as *I, we, them, you*;
- ❑ process information and material collected in own words not simply rewriting everything from the source;
- ❑ use full sentences to express oneself;
- ❑ edit your work to avoid unnecessary spelling errors;
- ❑ use one language style eg. South African English and not mix with United States English.

Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration PowerPoint slide

Furthermore, it was also evident from data of lecturer interviews, assessment rubrics and marked student assessments that lecturers valued technical aspects such as referencing: *“My focus at this level is the technical requirements of the assignment. That is the first thing that I look at and then the second thing I look at is the content but if the technical requirements are not there, I don’t even read...”* (Interview: Lily). For this lecturer, the technical issues were paramount and content or disciplinary discourse was subservient to it. By technical requirements she meant: *“The referencing technique... And the layout of the assignment”* and *“the typing requirements... some of them... don’t know how to type...”* (Interview: Lily).

The study guide devoted much space to providing students with the requirements for technical details. The bulk of the assignment mark was also allocated to technical care: *“Technical care (50%). Marks will be allocated for the correct title page, table of contents, quotations, reference to sources, list of references and general neatness...”* (Ethos of Public Administration study guide). Students were also provided with a lengthy guide on Harvard referencing style. Furthermore, the guide indicated that students were expected to show critical analysis. Critical analysis and argument were, however, not unpacked in the study guide.

The assignment rubric in the Administration for Development study guide showed that technical requirements were highly valued as 40% was allocated to it. The rubric in the Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration study guide indicated the value placed on technical requirements by allocating 30% of the total mark to this.

The following PowerPoint slide from a lecture on the assignment showed the focus on technical aspects:

#### Assignment- technical care

- Assignments must be typed; submitted in A4 format and should be stapled together;
- 12 font, times new roman or arial is recommended;
- Typing should be 1 ½ spacing or double spacing; be fully justified;
- Students are encouraged to use the Harvard style of referencing;
- Avoid use capital letters throughout.

Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration PowerPoint slide

There was also some evidence within curriculum documentation that lecturers valued a critical engagement in assignments: *“You would ask them for instance, to say critically look at the constitutional regime in South Africa and explain whether they really are helping the citizens”* (Interview: Yanga). This concern was also evident in the following PowerPoint slide:

#### Main Discussion – body of assignment

- Review of literature – depends on the topic
- Proof of critical engagement with the literature;
- Demonstration of understanding / insight;
- Covering the field relating to the topic;
- Discussion of research findings -

#### Regional, Metropolitan and Local Administration PowerPoint slide

The Constitutional Framework for Public Administration module appeared to value both retelling of content and argument in assignments: *“The assignment should be of a high standard with logical and lucid arguments for or against the matters being discussed; any opinion expressed should be supported by cogent arguments which have been acknowledged by means of footnotes. Beware of remarks which cannot be substantiated”* (Constitutional Framework for Public Administration study guide). However, the rubric showed that 60% of the mark was allocated to technical requirements.

One student assignment on the topic: “Communication in Public Administration and Management” scored 38%. The following paragraph was written:

*“More recent writers have assigned communication as equal if not more important role. They consider such organisational ingredients as solidarity, and support, along with command and control, to be closely tied in with organizational communication. Some even view organizations as essentially systems of communication and regard all or nearly all organizational problems as communication problems. Such an approach may well go too far, but it can sometimes prove helpful”.*(George 1984:217) (Student assignment).

The lecturer circled the “z” in “*organizations*” and the full stop after the quotation mark. The student tended to write long paragraphs with quotation marks given at the start of the paragraph and at the end of the paragraph followed by an in- text reference. These quotation marks were circled throughout the assignment. Furthermore, spelling/typos were circled, for example: “*betwwn, disturtances, Lnaguage*”. No other comments were made on the assignment.

For the following assignment incorrect in-text references were underlined:

*“Techniques of communication, competently used, are some of the best instruments of control which an executive can employ. By means of them the executive is able to define the objectives of the enterprise to colleagues and subordinates. An executive is able to explain the lines along which the organising is to reach those objectives, and that can train members of staff with whom an executive has direct contact. For managers, administrators and supervisors a primary task is that of making clear to others the policies, plans of action and underlying ideas of the undertaking” ( Deverell.C.S, 21) (Student Assignment).*

The lecturer underlined the initials in the in- text reference. Comment was not made on coherency of expression and content. The sole comment in the assignment was “*Don’t personalise*” for the sentence: “*We have obviously discovered that communication is quite a broad thing...*” (Student assignment).

The following comments were made on an assignment that scored 40%: “*You should underline topic of a book or source; no need of bullet point in list of reference; use Harvard system; assignment is scientific research so please avoid using lecture slides – Use books and other sources; the use of the internet is limited to only one document; the length of the assignment should be 2 pages excluding the list of reference; font face should be the same; Please visit the writing centre*”. The student appeared to have taken quotes word for word from PowerPoint slides with comments made by the lecturer as follows: “*This [is] not [a] PowerPoint presentation*” and “*Source?*” Comments were not made on what appeared to be plagiarised sentences. In a number of cases whole paragraphs were awarded a tick, despite being entirely copied from the textbook, not having quotation marks and there being no attempt by the student to show understanding.

An assignment that scored 82% had subheadings, numbering system and a reference list using the correct Harvard style with five sources, all books and no internet articles. There was an attempt at in-text referencing but these were limited to

the end of pages. Students appeared to be almost entirely rewarded for correct in-text referencing and technical proficiency.

Despite lecturer comments in the interviews that argument and content were also valued, evidence showed that there was a higher value placed on technical requirements by the PA Degree modules. This demonstrated the emphasis on skills versus acquisition of the PA discourse. Lea and Street (1998: 159) refer to this approach as a “study skills approach” that emphasises surface features of spelling and grammar which “conceptualises student writing as technical and instrumental”. This is in contrast to an approach that sees student writing at the level of the epistemological and identity and is concerned with meaning making processes and the contestations around these meanings as students have to switch practices in different contexts (Lea and Street, 1998). NLS has argued that “reading, writing, and meaning are always situated within specific social practices within specific discourses” (Gee, 1999: 6). Furthermore, even though argument was said to be valued in assignments, students appeared to be citing sources verbatim without showing understanding. The concern with surface technical features in writing moves me to a discussion of how students were being inducted into PA knowledge.

Even though the assessments show that PA Degree knowledge that was being valued was largely at a lower level and might constrain induction into HE generally, PA lecturers were concerned about student inclusion into the knowledge code of PA via various interventions to help students take on the required literacy practices. These interventions, however, had their constraints and the academics admitted that they had had limited success. For example, to induct students into PA knowledge and to develop reading practices, lecturers made a variety of books available. Despite the fact that students were referred to an extensive list of reading texts, lecturer perceptions were that students did not read these: “....but ... they don't even go there...” (Interview: Lily) and “... I realise that with the first years, they want to rely on notes, what you say in class and what is in the book but they don't want to go the extra mile of saying, “Let me go and check what the officer so-and-so says about this topic...” (Interview: Yanga). A further constraint on induction into reading practices was lecturer perceptions that students found textbooks difficult to read and resorted to the internet for ease of access: “...obviously books is harder to go to the library and physically get the books, whereas you can just Google and search and get information on the internet... the material in books are

*very difficult, you have to process it, whereas on the Internet ... they get two paragraphs there...*" (Interview: Sam).

Most lecturers in this study had offered modules to diploma students and their perceptions of degree student writing abilities were that they were of a slightly higher level than the diploma students: *"The difference is not that much but you see people here sometimes are slightly better than the first year with writing than with the diploma...because of... higher entrance requirements..."* (Interview: Sam). Academics pointed out that the writing centre was an institutional structure used to assist students with academic writing: *"They also face writing and reading difficulties so we send them to the writing centre"* (Interview: Sam). The use of the writing centre which had helped student writing was later seen as a constraint on the lecturer and the assignment drafting process required by the writing centre necessitated more input from the lecturers: *" [The students] come and discuss and then they have to pre-write it for me to mark and then they write like a final... at that time it helped with their writing but the demand on my time didn't make it feasible"* (Interview: Sam), so this process was dropped: *"so what we tell them now is to go with their assignment to the writing centre"* (Interview: Sam). To help students write assignments, topic choice was significant: *"I will take a subject/topic where I know they will not have problems getting information from the library. Like communication..."* (Interview: Lily).

Providing guidelines was one way of induction into student writing: *"I give them the whole rundown. There must be a cover page, there must be table of contents...."* (Interview: Sam). It should be noted that the guidelines spoke to the technical aspects of the assignment rather than to the discursive norms students were expected to demonstrate.

The lecturers indicated that one factor constraining induction into PA knowledge was the lecture mode of delivery as it inhibited student participation: *"Here you just come into the lecture hall and you tell them whatever you want to tell them, and you conceptualise and theorise ... and they will just keep quiet and look at you."* (Interview: Lily) and *"... you get one or two people interacting, that's all... I don't think it is an effective way of lecturing..."* (Interview: Sam). The lecturers suggested that tutorials would be a way of assisting students but these were not happening in the module.

A further challenge to student induction into PA knowledge was the theory itself. Students were able to do well in examinations and tests but not assignments because they can: *“get prepared for the examination and the test...but the problem is with writing the assignment”* (Interview: Lily). Even though the lecturer indicated that *“I don’t want them to memorise”* (Interview: Lily), students memorised theory...*“they memorise them in fact...”* (Interview: Lily). As has been shown, the assignments were more likely to demand higher levels of knowledge engagement, whereas the tests and exams valued ‘retelling of knowledge’ (Bartholomae 1985).

Another strategy for induction into PA knowledge indicated in the lecturer interviews was simplification of content: *“You have to simplify ... [as] sometimes they don’t understand.”* (Interview: Yanga). This could also be seen in the assignment topic of *“Communication”*, despite the lecturer emphasising the importance of theory, she set a low level knowledge question, with a procedural focus, as the assignment topic as she indicated that students struggled with the theory. Time was devoted in lectures to help students with theory but this was seen to be only partly successful.

Further strategies were making links between module units: *“there are links because if you look at unit one, it’s the constitution, there you are trying to prepare the ground, to say the following units which will deal with these arms of government, your judiciary, your legislative and your executive...”* (Interview: Yanga). Encouragement of class participation and using supplementary instruction were further strategies PA lecturers called on.

One aspect potentially constraining knowledge induction was the lack of lecturer response in assignments to issues of discourse and plagiarism despite their showing an awareness of the issue: *“They take the information as it is in the text and drop it in the assignment even though you tell them this is how you should use other people’s views in your assignment...”* (Interview: Lily). Despite this awareness, lecturers valued technical requirements more: *“I give them not more than 20% for technical requirements for the entire assignment because my thinking is that if I give them 52 or 50% then they will think they know how to write an assignment...”* (Interview: Lily). If guidance was not given to students, it might constrain their writing of assignments and it seemed that students were unlikely to take up offers for further assistance: *“I just give the topic and then if they want to ask then they can ask...and [I] say that if there’s anything you want to know then feel free to contact me”*

(Interview: Yanga).

There was evidence of lecturer concern with student induction into PA knowledge and literacy practices in the various strategies they employed. However, simplification of content, a lack of engagement with the reading strategies for textbooks and legislation, a focus on technical surface features of writing all had the potential to constrain induction into PA knowledge. Students resorted to plagiarising from the internet and did not consult the recommended readings and this was evidence that they needed induction into the reading practices of PA.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have, through abstraction, analysed lecturer interviews and curriculum documentation in order to describe the knowledge-knower structures of the first-year of the PA Degree. I concluded that this programme had stronger epistemic relations and weaker social relations. It foregrounded knowledge, procedures and principles as the basis of achievement and downplay attributes of knowers (Maton, 2011). ER+ SR- indicated that the PA Degree was a knowledge code. Literature findings discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.4.2 were that the PA Degree had a more conceptual theoretical base than the PM Diploma. This was found to be so in this case study but significantly more lower level procedural knowledge was evident in the PA Degree with only some propositional knowledge. The propositional knowledge was largely in terms of lists of facts rather than theoretical conceptualisation. Social relations were backgrounded in the Degree and, thus, it can be concluded that the demonstration of a particular workplace demeanour and dispositions were not essential for success in this Degree, even though it faced the workplace in the selection of knowledge.

Knowledge was largely presented in a neutral and uncontentious manner and the concern was with being able to define and discuss key concepts, rather than to engage in argument and deliberation about these. The focus in the curriculum was very clearly on knowledge telling, rather than knowledge production (Bartholomae 1985), albeit at a higher level of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy than was evident in the case of the Diploma.

I then looked at the literacy practices student were expected to demonstrate through formal and informal assessments. I found good alignment between the knowledge

code of the curriculum (its procedural knowledge as characterised by functions, roles, processes and procedures with some elements of propositional knowledge in its focus on PA philosophy) and the literacy practices students had to demonstrate. But there were few opportunities to move beyond memorisation and paraphrasing of both theory and procedures. Argument was encouraged for assignments but disregarded in actual marking thereof. Technical requirements in writing were held as paramount and this was what was most valued in the focus of academic feedback and the allocation of marks.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter Seven is the conclusion to this study. It looks at the significance of this study and provides a summary of the key findings of this study. Furthermore, it considers the implications of this study for PM and PA knowledge and academic literacies; for inclusion and exclusion of students to PM and PA knowledge; for HE knowledge generally and for the identity of the comprehensive university. This Chapter also discusses further research possibilities.

#### **7.2 Significance of Thesis**

This thesis is significant because it locates knowledge in both a social realist understanding of how knowledge is constituted and a social practices approach to literacy practices. The NLS approach has paid attention to relations to such as identity, being, institutional relationships and interactions with diverse student academic literacy practices (Lea and Street, 1998, Street, 2003). NLS has opposed a skills based approach that focuses on teaching of surface formal features of language and understood literacy as an approach that speaks to social practices. Through its social practices approach knowledge of academic contexts is foregrounded but there are limitations in NLS research on these relations within knowledge. It has not engaged with how knowledge can be constituted within disciplines to see how literacy practices are rooted within knowledge.

#### **7.3 Key findings of study**

The main aim of this study had been to use the lens of LCT's Specialisation Code to abstract the form of knowledge in the first-year PMA programmes and the literacy practices that were linked to this knowledge. The study argued that students had to acquire the cultural capital of disciplinary discourse or knowledge and demonstrate this through its literacy practices. This is especially in the very important first year when they are first exposed to these new ways of learning. If they fail to acquire this, it can result in the lack of full participation Scott et al (2013)

has shown to be prevalent at SA HE institutions. The challenge has been with making the 'relations within' knowledge (Maton, 2004) explicit as this has been a 'blindspot' in research (Maton, 2010). Using tools to make this knowledge explicit will serve to enhance the epistemological access spoken of by Morrow (1993). We will then be engaging with questions of 'what knowledge' and 'whose knowledge' (Maton and Muller, 2007) to further advance our study of knowledge and to be able to produce powerful forms of knowledge (Young, 2011, 2012). This study linked social realist conceptions of knowledge to NLS conceptions of literacy. It was attempting to consider how knowledge and literacy practices are inextricably bound (Street, 2003).

To interrogate "the knowledge claims and practices ... made by actors" (Maton, 2010: 37) about the PMA programmes, the study asked: What are the knowledge-knower structures of the PMA first-year Diploma and Degree programmes and what literacy practices emanate from these? The primary findings of the study were that both of the first-year PMA programmes were regions, had horizontal knowledge structures and were knowledge codes. The knowledge codes involved a focus on facts and skills (ER) and were not focused on any attributes that would be needed if specialisation was on the basis of ideologies particular to the field (SR). While the focus on knowledge was evident in both programmes, it took a slightly different form in the Diploma and in the Degree. The literacy practices of the PMA programmes aligned very well to the knowledge codes as students were expected to demonstrate facility with the knowledge content of the programme with less concern with particular lenses or gazes on the world. While the literacy practices spoke to the valued knowledge code, they were found to primarily involved retelling of knowledge, rather than deep engagement or personal construction of such knowledge.

### **7.3.1 PM Diploma findings**

The study found firstly, that the PM Diploma had characteristics of a region. The PM Diploma faced not only to the values of the HE institution but also outward towards the external world of PM practice. It also drew on many social sciences fields such as Psychology, Development Studies, Business Management, Human Resources Management, Marketing, Law, Logistics, Economics and Financial Information Studies. The implications of being a region are many, and especially for newer regions that are "designed to support a domain of professional practice"

(Muller, 2008: 17). For in such cases, as in the field of PM, there are no clear disciplinary histories on which to draw and academics often do not have a strong social base of organisation of the profession that determines what should count as knowledge in the field. There is also no “robust professional habitus and identity” (Muller, 2008: 18) in the practitioners that can inform the curriculum.

The study found evidence for stronger epistemic relations and weaker strengths of social relations and concluded that the PM Diploma exhibits an ER+SR- code. This means that specialised knowledge, “the known” (Maton, 2010: 37) and not attributes, the “knower” (Maton, 2010:37), are what is foregrounded in the first-year PM Diploma. The form that this specialised knowledge took was primarily low-level procedural knowledge of skills, processes and functions as evidenced in lecturer interviews and curriculum documentation. There was very little evidence of higher order conceptual and theoretical knowledge being valued.

Data showed that workplace demeanour, dispositions and behaviour of PM were also significant. The public manager, who had to deliver services, manage resources and an office, make decisions and self-manage, was linked to qualities of good judgement, logic, reason, good attitude, diplomacy and tact, reliability, honesty and resourcefulness amongst others. However, as these attributes were listed in a neutral manner without any expansion on how they were developed and how they linked to a shared philosophy within the PM field, the social relations were concluded to be weaker.

Analysis of assessments and lecturer interviews showed that the literacy practices expected of PM students were aligned to this PM knowledge code. Workplace reading and writing practices were not visible in the PM Diploma even though there was a strong emphasis on the workplace in this Diploma. Reading and writing practices may be more extensively included in the latter years of the Diploma. First-year PM Diploma students were expected to write short answers, paragraphs and essays, read textbooks, articles and legislation. Students were expected to show understanding of knowledge through paraphrasing and retelling but were not expected to give argument in tests and examinations. Lecturers maintained that students were expected to give argument in assignments but evidence from marked student assessments showed that mastery of technical features, rather than argumentation, was the focus and students were not penalised for instances of

plagiarism. Opportunities given to students to engage in literacy practices included two tests and one examination, class tasks and one assignment. Students had to define, describe, explain and discuss knowledge in tests and examinations.

Lecturers showed awareness of student struggles with literacy and they attempted to induct students into PM Diploma knowledge via reading and writing practices by providing guidelines and rubrics for assignments, utilisation of the writing centre and by providing extensive reading lists. Lecturers also simplified knowledge as a strategy to include students.

The skills based approach of the PM Diploma spoke back to the literature conceptualisations of the field as contextual and characterised by a paucity of theory (Masemurule, 2005; Gildenhuis, 2004). Furthermore, the quest to make the PM field one which has its own philosophy is hampered by the numerous fields that the PM Diploma draws on. As these singulars are relatively young and as many are regions themselves, the study's finding was that the PM Diploma had a weak knowledge base as a result. Even though the PM Diploma has a horizontal knowledge structure comprising the specialised language of Public Management, the epistemic relations are weakly classified. PM is not insulated from other specialised languages. The study revealed stronger framing or "an adequate grasp of which serves as the basis of professional identity within the field" (Maton, 2010: 47).

Maton (2009) has raised the question of whether all knowledge structures are the same or if there are shifts between them. The PM Diploma comprises many specialised languages which accumulate within it. For example, the languages of Logistics, Finance and Human Resources Management accumulate within the Public Resources Management module. Though this study considered the first year of the programme only, it was possible from the interview and syllabus data to tentatively conclude that the languages do not integrate as knowledge is not integrated from lower levels to increasing abstract levels as in a hierarchical knowledge structure. It can be understood as a series of specialised languages that exist within the knowledge-knower structure of the first-year PM Diploma.

If these languages have different assumptions (Maton and Muller, 2006), this could further hamper PM's search for a holistic philosophy. There are also implications for the teaching of PM as students would need induction into each of these specialised languages and a great deal of support in seeing how the languages relate to each

other. If lecturers are themselves not specialists in these fields they then would need to have knowledge of the disciplinary discourse and that which students have to know. Also contributing to the fragmentation of the PM field was lecturer understandings that were localised module specific and not of a holistic view of what constitutes the PM field. Knowledge shifts could also occur based on lecturer preference due to this lack of conceptual underpinning and due to the permeability of the field.

Constraining induction of students into the PM Diploma knowledge-knower structure were the few opportunities to write and the small number of assignments. Where there were assignments, they were often undertaken as group work. Findings show that lecturers valued the technical aspects of writing such as referencing, grammar and spelling. Attention was not paid to instances of plagiarism in marked student assessments or to the development of their own voice. Student challenges with literacy were attributed to the use of social media and cellphone texting and to studying in a language that was not their home language. These findings were all found to be in keeping an understanding of literacy as an autonomous skill that could be transferred from one context to another.

An autonomous approach to literacy (Street, 1984) has the dangerous potential to exclude students from the knowledge-knower structure of the PM programme. Literacy in HE is more than just the ability to read and write and it includes reading and writing practices which vary according to the social and cultural practices of disciplines (Gee, 1999; Street, 1994; Heath, 1983; Barton, 1994). Lecturers maintained that students did not have the required reading competencies but student induction into reading strategies for legislative documents and academic texts was not evident in the interviews and curriculum documentation. Lecturers perceived student ability and preparedness for HE as a factor impeding student achievement in the PM Diploma as students did not have the required 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1991).

The textbook prescribed and recommended by most PM Diploma modules gives the following advice to lecturers, "In the first year we must come down to a level where high school graduates (Grade 12 learners) can understand the message we want to convey to them. Then we must, in the years that follow, gradually pull them up to a higher standard of language proficiency" (Gildenhuys, 2004: 2). This understanding appears to be held by the PM Diploma lecturers who expected a retelling of

knowledge and used simplification as a way of increasing students' chances of success in the first-year PM. But the retelling of knowledge hampers full participation in HE as knowledge is not engaged with in a way that ensures personal understanding (Boughey, 2007).

Lecturer constructions of student underpreparedness for HE as limiting student achievement speaks to Boughey's (2010) argument that the underlying assumption is that students lack skills and have gaps in their conceptual knowledge. It locates the problem within students and not within social factors such as the structural inequalities in SA society (Boughey, 2010). It also does not account for the academy's own constructions of its teaching and learning. If PM Diploma students are not given the opportunity to engage in arguments wherein which knowledge claims are contested, they will not be inducted into HE knowledge. Further implications are that PM practitioners may be unable to deal critically with a challenging and changing public environment.

Lower levels of knowledge in the PM Diploma also serve to reinforce a lack of conceptual underpinning in the PM field as these students are then less likely to later become active members of the field of production (Bernstein, 1999) where the discipline is developed and strengthened. The lower contextual knowledge provided at the level of the first-year PM Diploma could have ramifications for articulation aims at later postgraduate levels. At NMMU the BTech in PM (which follows on from the Diploma) articulates into the MPA and DPhil (See Chapter Two/section 2.4.3) in undergraduate programmes. There would need to be more equivalence of knowledge at undergraduate levels, for example, higher levels of contextual knowledge at the level of the Diploma in order to meet the needs of postgraduate study. Having discussed the main findings and implications of the first-year PM Diploma, I will now discuss the key findings and implications thereof of the first-year PA Degree.

### **7.3.2 PA Degree findings**

My findings for the first-year PA Degree were that, like the Diploma, it was a region shaped by external practice and singulars. Strong evidence emerged for the PA external world of practice and this was constituted of government national, provincial and local structures as shaped by SA constitution. Concerns were evident in lecturer interviews about the contestations around the focus of the PA field. Despite these

debates, PA was firmly entrenched within the political system with government activities driving PA.

PA drew on many singulars and in this way, fulfilled the second quality of a region. The contestations around a disciplinary home were more overt in the interviews with the Degree lecturers. The interviews revealed the quest for PA to be a standalone discipline but that this remained an ideal as PA drew its theories from its singulars such as Law, Economics, Business Management, Sociology and Political Science. Many of the findings for singulars were not explicit in lecturer interviews but became apparent as they spoke of their module content.

The implications of being a 'new' region have been discussed in the previous section but it does well to consider further here what it means for a curriculum to be based on a "diffuse, fluid and less organised" field (Muller, 2008: 17). Unlike more stable professions, such as Law, Medicine and Accounting, new regions have to attend to ambiguous and contradictory signals as to what the profession requires. The curriculum has to deal with the fact that the "core knowledge base has not yet shaken down into a stable, generally accepted, incremental body of knowledge" (Muller, 2008: 18).

Even though there was evidence of some philosophical and principled underpinnings to the Degree, the Degree was characterised mostly by low-level procedural knowledge of functions and processes. The conceptual knowledge of the PA Degree served as basis to the understanding of functions but this was comprised mostly of facts about government structures. The data indicated that the first year of the PA Degree has relatively strong epistemic relations, the "basis of privileged knowledge" is vital rather than the "basis of being a privileged knower" (Maton, 2008: 4-5). The data showed that propositional knowledge was used as a starting point in many instances to explain the functions of government activities but it was concluded that the elements of procedural dominated the knowledge form of the PA field. This is a similar finding to that of the PM Diploma. In both the cases of the procedural and propositional knowledge, the level was fairly low in terms of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, albeit there being a stronger conceptual base to the Degree than that found in the Diploma.

There was evidence of student dissatisfaction with the extent of theory in one module. This does not necessarily mean that students placed a higher value on

procedural knowledge but that it was easier to learn it. Some of the propositional knowledge that characterised the PA Degree appeared to be of a relatively high conceptual level, for example the discipline's philosophical evolution, while the procedural knowledge appeared to be of lower levels concerning functions and processes of government structures.

The emphasis in the PA Degree was workplace demeanour and behaviour but this had weaker social relations. Students were informed, via all of the course material, that the public official has to be reasonable, balanced, honest, respectful, accountable, accurate and passionate. Guidelines for the behaviour of public officials were linked to functions and processes rather than particular dispositions and were presented in a fairly generic manner. An ideological position of the PA was not evident in the data given the lack of conceptual underpinning in the field and thus the attributes were merely a list of behaviours needed for effective administration.

Literacy practices expected of students in the first-year of the PA Degree were aligned well with the knowledge code. The literacy practices spoke to both procedural knowledge of functions and processes and propositional knowledge of rules and principles, with a greater stress on procedural knowledge. Although there was an awareness of the reading and writing practices of PA practice, these were not the focus areas for literacy practices in the course. Students were expected to write short paragraphs and essays for literacy practices. Literacy practices involved defining, explaining, discussing and describing. Tests and examinations revealed that students had to provide lists of information without examining the nature of the claims made. Argument was not expected in tests and examinations but it was indicated to be a requirement for assignments. Reading of legislative and academic texts was necessary as legal texts underpinned much of the knowledge code of PA.

Academic articles and textbooks were also indicated to be necessary for assignments. There was no evidence of any student induction into reading practices required by legal and academic texts and academics indicated that students did not read as much as they believed was necessary.

Lecturers placed high value on technical requirements of student writing despite foregrounding a critical engagement with content in assignment guidelines. Marked student assessments revealed the extent to which lecturers valued technical

requirement. They attended to incorrect referencing and spelling and ignored instances of plagiarism. Rubrics also showed the high value placed on technical requirements with a substantial percentage being allocated to it.

Lecturer concerns with student literacy challenges have led them to employ several strategies. Lecturers were aware of the reading difficulties experienced by students. Thus, they provide extensive reading lists but lecturers indicated that students were not reading these. Secondly, the writing centre was used to improve writing but this became a constraint because of the marking of drafts and the time expended on consultation with the writing centre. A further constraint was memorisation of knowledge and this led to students doing well in the tests and examinations but not in the assignments. However, as I have shown above, the reasons students were not doing well in the assignments were for technical reasons and not for reasons of argument as this was not what was being valued in terms of lecturer feedback or mark allocation.

The dominance of low level procedural knowledge and the foregrounding of practice in the first-year of the PA Degree shifts the focus to a more contextual one and minimises conceptual knowledge (Muller, 2008).

#### **7.4 Commonalities between PM Diploma and PA Degree**

There were a number of commonalities between the two PMA programmes. Both the PM Diploma and the PA Degree were found to be regions influenced by a composite of regions and shaped by workplace practice. Both have a knowledge code with a strong emphasis on low level procedural knowledge. The social relations of both are relatively weak. The emphasis on conceptual knowledge in the PA Degree is only marginally more than the PM Diploma. This questions the National Qualifications Framework conceptualisation that the degree has a significantly stronger conceptual basis.

This study found good alignment between the literacy practices expected of students and the knowledge code of both programmes. Significantly, though, this study has found that both programmes are characterised by lower levels of literacy practices, retelling and simplification of knowledge than would be required to induct students into the knowledge-knower structures and knowledge required by HE. Furthermore, both programmes place high values on technical requirements rather than on the

ways of knowing or discourses (Bartlett and Holland, 2002, Lea and Street, 1998, Gee, 1990) of the field. Though there are interventions to help students, these do not speak to student induction into the PA discourses and broader HE knowledge. Though this study is positioned at first year, and it could be argued that such issues are attended to in later years of the two programmes, Scott et al (2013) identified the first year as a crucial year as it was the one where the articulation gap between school and HE manifested itself. It was the year of highest attrition (33%) and was also the year they identified for intervention strategies. PMA lecturers are aware of the challenges faced by students in reading and writing but generally locate these within the students and within language.

## **7.5 Implications of findings for Higher Education**

This study was rooted in a concern for social inclusion in HE. After the presentation of my data findings and the discussion thereof, the question now is how do my findings inform the ongoing transformation challenges in SA HE generally (see Chapter Two/section 2.3.5). The relevance for the comprehensive university is also significant as this is where my study was located.

Improving student participation in SA HE is undoubtedly a complex undertaking. However, I argue that using critical lenses such as CR and SR to examine knowledge construction in the academy, could be one critical response to this issue. Such lenses will address social inclusion in HE by seeing curricula knowledge and literacy practices as sites of ongoing interrogation of whether or not they constitute powerful knowledge. Gaining such an understanding of knowledge, how it links to literacy practices and what opportunities are given to students will help in finding ways of giving students genuine access to knowledge. Students are included in knowledge of disciplines if the literacy practices are aligned to them but even then, they can be excluded from academic discourses, if the required knowledges are at lower levels and involve retelling and if surface technical features are valued, such as my study has found.

Bourdieu's theorising of habitus and cultural capital (see Chapter Three/section 3.3.1) also has implications for transformation of SA HE (see Chapter Two/section 2.3). The habituses of many SA first-year students have been structured by social inequalities in their home communities and schools. If HE is serious about social inclusion, the duty

of HE is to help transform these habituses into structurings of powerful knowledge by enabling student acquisition of HE cultural capital.

Furthermore, using CR and SR to abstract knowledge can help the comprehensive university make sense of its identity. Chapter Two/section 2.4.1 has shown the deep unease felt by academics about what being a comprehensive means for programmes and students. The comprehensive university has to negotiate its identity by considering many questions. For example: What does the term comprehensive mean nationally and internationally? Which region is being served? Which courses are offered? Should the courses be defined by the balance of contextual and conceptual, as espoused by the NPHE (2001)? and What is the university's mission and vision? This shows that there are, of course, more criteria than knowledge in the development of the comprehensive's mission.

However, considerations of knowledge are a significant aspect that could provide direction for the comprehensive. Questions here could be: What are the generative mechanisms that give rise to curricula knowledge in the comprehensive? Are they still valid? and Is the knowledge of the comprehensive knowledge of the powerful? (see Chapter Two/section 2.2.3). As argued in this study, universities are more than just responders to market forces. These deeper questions of generative mechanisms, events and experiences (Bhaskar, 2008, 2001) are among crucial criteria to judge the nature of the the comprehensive. It will assist the comprehensive to see exactly what is happening in the curricula and so analyse if these suit the purpose of the comprehensive. Comprehensives could use the analysis to see if students are being prepared for the workplace without conceptual concerns of critical thinking,

Lastly, this study on knowledge has implications for regions such as PMA. The study has shown that the PMA field is a site of struggle between competing regions. Intensive abstraction can reveal the mechanisms at play that inform the fragmented nature of the field. Scholars use it as point of departure to negotiate new ways of being and acting and a common philosophy in PMA.

Student participation in HE is the most significant factor that speaks to social inclusion and one way of achieving this is consideration of knowledge constructions.

## **7.6 Implementation**

The question now that I raise at the conclusion of this thesis is how the PMA programmes could respond to these findings. To facilitate this discussion on the

multiple disciplines that PA draws on, lecturers would have to show awareness of them in their teaching, there is evidence of only one lecturer doing this explicitly in her class, to begin the discussion about how PA could develop a holistic theoretical frame. There needs to be ongoing interrogation of the influence of disciplines on the field to enhance the quest towards a philosophical underpinning of the field. It needs to be noted that this is not a concern peculiar to the site of this study. The literature, discussed in Chapter Two/section 2.4.2, showed that there is a general concern about the lack of depth and coherence in the field of PMA study.

There is also an indication of the need for moves towards students in both the PM Diploma and PA Degree becoming producers of knowledge with higher levels of questions that question knowledge claims and moves away from memorisation. This would necessitate shifts in the learning material, the textbooks, and the kinds of assessment and feedback on such assessment. To increase epistemological access to 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2011, 2012, Wheelahan, 2013), there would need to be the inclusion of more conceptual knowledge at both Diploma and Degree levels.

The study indicates a need for a shift in the assessment practices of both programmes but this was not the specific focus of this study so only tentative suggestions can be mooted here. There seems to be the need for more attention to be paid to the acquisition of academic discourse, both in terms of mark allocation and in terms of the focus of lecturer feedback on student work. This could entail shifts between simple concrete and abstract knowledge to induct students into the academic discourse and explicit induction into the genres of legal and academic texts. Incorporation of reading tasks as compulsory class tasks to help improve reading may also help with student avoidance of readings.

The implementation possibilities for language practitioners would be to work with the PM and PA academics using a tool such as the Specialisation codes of LCT to unpack the underlying principles of knowledge in order to see the knowledge being privileged and the literacy practices associated with it. This would give outsiders to the discipline an insider view and illustrate the relationship between knowledge and literacy practices in a more nuanced way. It would help in the consideration of ways in which literacy practices include or exclude students.

## 7.7 Further research

This study was based in the field of recontextualisation, or the selection of knowledge to create an educational curriculum. It also included some consideration of the field of reproduction (pedagogy) through a brief look at the feedback given by academics to student work. Further research that could be pursued could include the field of production to examine where the PMA field's knowledge comes from and whose knowledge it is. This could help advance the fight for a more holistic philosophy of PMA. Research on the field of reproduction (pedagogy) would illuminate ways in which the curriculum is enacted and this will provide more evidence of the forms of knowledge, the literacy practices expected of students and ways in which students are being inducted into the PMA discourse and HE knowledge. It would also reveal strengths of framing.

Further study needs to be done on student assessments to see how students are negotiating PA knowledge and literacy practices. It would also be most worthwhile to take this study further and look at the second and third years of study in the PM Diploma and PA Degree to see the form knowledge takes there and whether there is significant incremental learning and higher-level conceptual knowledge.

Furthermore, a collaborative study between language practitioners and specialist PMA lecturers could research strategies of induction into academic discourses and literacy practices. Lastly, studies using LCT legitimisation codes and NLS factors of identity, power and knowledge could bridge the gap between relations to knowledge and relations within knowledge in NLS research.

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## Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

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**Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee (Human)**

Tel: +27 (0)41 504-2235

**Ref: [H13-ADM-EXT-004/Approval]**

**RECH Secretariat: Mrs U Spies**

22 March 2013

Ms J Lück

NMMU

Department of Applied Language Studies

Dear Ms Lück

### **KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWING IN THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMMES AT A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY**

PRP: Ms J Lück

PI: Ms J Lück

Your above-entitled application for ethics approval served at the Research Ethics Committee (Human).

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee.

The ethics clearance reference number is **H13-ADM-EXT-004**, and is valid for three years. Please inform the REC-H, via your faculty representative, if any changes (particularly in the methodology) occur during this time. An annual affirmation to the effect that the protocols in use are still those for which approval was granted, will be required from you. You will be reminded timeously of this responsibility, and will receive the necessary documentation well in advance of any deadline.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

**Prof CB Cilliers**



**Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee (Human)**

cc: Department of Research Capacity Development

Faculty Officer: Arts