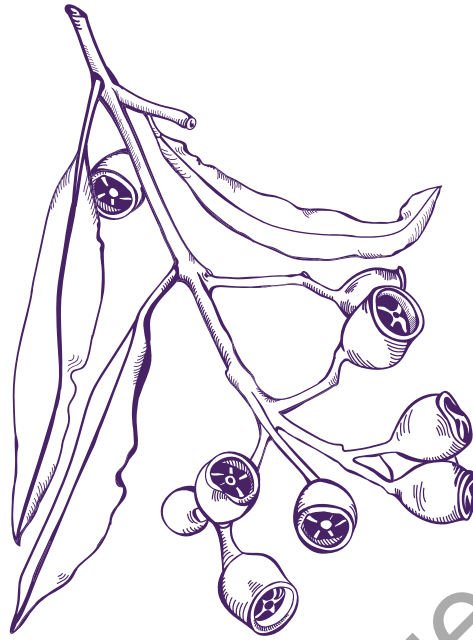


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Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

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CHAPTER 1



Exploring curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and the implications for classrooms

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- LO 1.1** identify the various meanings attached to 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', along with the stakeholders who influence them
- LO 1.2** develop an understanding of the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
- LO 1.3** develop personal definitions for the terms, 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', based on an evaluation of different approaches and the relationships you see between them.

The work of teachers is multifaceted. It is conducted inside and outside classrooms, and is concerned with young people of different ages, different abilities, different motivations and different learning agendas. Yet across all schools irrespective of location, status, sources of funding, and quality of teachers and leaders, there is a common set of processes that operate from the beginning to the end of the school day. Basil Bernstein (1975, p. 85), perhaps the most well-known sociologist of education of the 20th century, called these processes the 'message

AITSL Teacher Standards

This chapter is aligned to Standards 3 and 5 of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

systems' of schools and labelled them 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'evaluation'. He explained these terms in the following way:

Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught. (p. 85)

Later in this chapter, we shall examine more definitions and different terms than those used by Bernstein. For now, however, let's accept the way Bernstein has framed both the terms and the ideas. Why, then, does he call 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'evaluation' the 'message systems' of schooling? In an important sense, it has to do with decision making since there is not always agreed knowledge for the school curriculum, agreed pedagogies or just one way to evaluate students. School systems, schools and teachers make decisions about these areas and the decisions they make contain messages about what is valued: a certain knowledge, a particular way to teach, a certain form of assessment. An example can help to explain this point.

A teacher might explain to a class that 'Captain Cook discovered Australia'. In so doing, they select a piece of knowledge that assumes Australia was not inhabited prior to Cook's voyage to the east coast of the continent in the late 18th century. Of course, it was inhabited by a civilisation that had existed for more than sixty thousand years. This was recognised in 1992 when the High Court of Australia rejected the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* (the land had no owners) and argued that Indigenous peoples had a right to native title since they were the original inhabitants of the country. Thus, choosing the Captain Cook story to impart to students sends a message about which knowledge is considered important. It excludes legal interpretations of that knowledge and seeks to exclude Indigenous peoples from Australia's historical journey.

The same point can be made about the teaching strategies you choose or the evaluation and assessment strategies you select. If you decide that you will do all the talking in the classroom, then the role of students is simply to listen. Such an approach to classroom life suggests that student voice is not valued. In the same way, if you decide that students can be evaluated with a single end-of-year examination rather than a series of assessment tasks that will provide feedback throughout the year, you clearly signal how you think learning develops, including the role of feedback in the development of learning.

For this reason, Lingard (2013) called for 'the reshaping of the message systems of schooling' (p. 1) to ensure they served more positive purposes for students by helping them to achieve better outcomes and more satisfying school experiences. Decisions made about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment need to keep this objective in mind, especially given the influence of teachers on this message system. At the same time, as will be seen in what follows, there are other influences in society that also seek to influence the system, its functioning and its purpose, and teachers need to understand these influences.

DEFINING THE SPACE

LO 1.1

Identify the various meanings attached to 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', along with the stakeholders who influence them.

It is tempting to think of schools as closed systems encompassing students and teachers who engage with each other in different kinds of teaching and learning. Schools themselves are often physically closed off from the community, operating for only part of the day, closed for holiday periods and rarely opened for any other purposes than the usual classroom activities. Yet the closed nature of schools contrasts with the public nature of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The curriculum, for example, may start off as a document prepared by the local education system or the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) outlining what students should learn

in a particular school subject throughout the years of schooling. In this sense, the curriculum is a very public document involving professionals and also drawing on community consultations. Within a school, this document is likely to be translated into programs of study for different classes. Eventually, teachers will plan their teaching based on such a program and this will become the curriculum experienced by students.

Nonetheless, the way teachers choose to teach can be the subject of community views and even disagreements. Assessments are often public, involving end-of-year examinations or nationwide tests subject to media speculation and often criticism of low teaching standards. While it is tempting to regard curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as processes that are the preserve of educators alone, nevertheless, there can often be related social, political or even economic activities that reflect much broader concerns than narrow educational objectives. In seeking to understand the school curriculum, pedagogies and assessment, therefore, we are also seeking to understand the complex forces and patterns that characterise the operation of society. Bernstein's (1975, p. 85) message system of schooling, as described in the introduction to this chapter, does not stand apart from the society that has created it but is firmly embedded within it.

Therefore, the remainder of this section will clarify the meaning of the terms 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment' within the broader contexts that influence them, and identify **stakeholders** who see themselves as having an interest in their form and function.

THE CURRICULUM AS VALIDATED KNOWLEDGE—BUT WHOSE KNOWLEDGE?

The first point to note about the term 'curriculum' is that different meanings are attached to it. Yet there is a lack of consensus about the nature and form of the curriculum that is important to understand. The following are typical comments:

It is a field that remains contentious in terms of definition and delineation. After perusing all the curriculum texts on our collective shelves, we rediscovered what we and others have known for some time. (Gehrke, Knapp & Sirotnik, 1992, p. 51)

A quick survey of a dozen curriculum books would be likely to reveal a dozen different images or characterizations of curriculum. It might even reveal more, because the same author may use the term in different ways. (Schubert, 1986, p. 26)

Table 1.1 sets out some views of the curriculum taken by academic writers. It represents only a selection of views, and you can find plenty of others, but notice the diversity of these views. They include

TABLE 1.1 Conflicting views of the school curriculum

<i>... an interrelated set of plans and experiences that a student undertakes under the guidance of the school.</i>	Marsh & Willis (1995, p. 10)
<i>Some claim that a curriculum is the content or objectives for which schools hold students accountable. Others claim that a curriculum is the set of instructional strategies teachers plan to use.</i>	Posner (1995, p. 5)
<i>A curriculum is an organised set of formal educational and/or training intentions.</i>	Pratt (1980, p. 4)
<i>The curriculum is always, in every society, a reflection of what the people think, feel, believe, and do.</i>	Smith, Stanley & Shores (1950, p. 3)
<i>Curriculum encompasses all learning opportunities provided by the school.</i>	Saylor & Alexander (1966, p. 5)
<i>... (curriculum) is what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generation ... (it) is intensely historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological and international. Curriculum becomes the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world.</i>	Pinar et al. (1995, pp. 847–8)

the pessimism of Pinar et al., (1995): ‘curriculum becomes the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world’ (pp. 847–48). The idea of Pinar and his colleagues is that there is a struggle over what should constitute the curriculum and that, over time, the struggle can become intergenerational. Why do young people need to study Shakespeare, of what use is trigonometry to anyone and why study ancient history? Different people will have different answers to these questions but what the questions suggest is that what ends up as part of the curriculum is simply a selection of possible knowledge. This approach to understanding the curriculum contrasts with the relatively simple statement that the curriculum is ‘an interrelated set of plans and experiences that a student undertakes under the guidance of the school’ (Marsh & Willis, 1995, p. 10).

The differences between the two, however, may not be as great as they seem. As teachers, you will develop ‘plans and experiences’ for students, either drawing directly on the Australian Curriculum or on your state/territory’s curriculum documents. Hence, the questions suggested by Pinar’s view expressed are not irrelevant in this context: Which knowledge has been selected? Why has it been selected? What values does it reflect? Would any groups or individuals feel excluded by using such knowledge? Is there alternative knowledge that could have been included? and so on. Therefore, the different definitions, when put together, can provide a more holistic view of the curriculum while, at the same time, critiques might be offered of the thinking behind different views. It is worthwhile to spend some time thinking about these views, adding others that you come across and determining your own view. This will help you develop the ways in which you wish to approach the school curriculum for your students.

This ambivalence among academics, however, is not reflected in one of the school curriculum’s most serious stakeholders, Australia’s governments. Governments in many parts of the world, including Australia, have taken an unprecedented interest in what they see as the school curriculum. This interest is predicated on the value that governments see in the school curriculum, not so much

as a set of educational experiences, but as an instrument of social and economic development. The view of Australian governments was outlined in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019):

... to be equitable, every student must develop strong literacy and numeracy skills in their earliest years of schooling, and go on to develop broad and deep knowledge across a range of curriculum areas. However, our education system must do more than this—it must also prepare young people to thrive in a time of rapid social and technological change, and complex environmental, social and economic challenges. Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. They need to deal with information abundance, and navigate questions of trust and authenticity. They need flexibility, resilience, creativity, and the ability and drive to keep on learning throughout their lives (p. 2).

Thus, Australian governments have high expectations of schools, and you might try to imagine the kind of curriculum that would be needed to achieve these expectations. Yet governments are not alone in seeking to shape the curriculum. For example, the Business Council of Australia developed a series of papers that clearly outlined business' expectations for graduates, whether they are from schools or elsewhere (Business Council of Australia, 2016). Under the general heading, 'Being work ready: A guide to what employers want', the papers outline specific work requirements, including an emphasis on values as a key outcome of education.

In addition, parents are committed to the education of their children and anxious to ensure that they do well. Parents are a constant reminder that the curriculum is inextricably linked with values, feelings, affection and love—it is not merely an abstraction for academic inquiry or government manipulation. Of course, there are also students—who are unfortunately seen largely as the recipients of the curriculum. But students are not the passive receivers they are so often made out to be. In 2019, it was estimated that 100,000 students went on strike over the need for a more aggressive approach to climate change (Climate Council, 2019). Young people are not ignorant about the future since it is their future. Student voices, therefore, should not be ignored when it comes to the curriculum because they clearly have personal views and insights that can be valuable for developing curriculum experiences.

What does all this mean? While the curriculum as it is written down in documents seems fixed and static, there is in reality a contest in society about what it should contain. Governments, groups in civil society, parents and students all have a view about what should be 'fixed and static'.

There are often consultations as curriculum is being developed to gather different community views. ACARA (2016) provided a portal where schools could design their own surveys for parents and/or students at the school level. State education authorities, such as those in Queensland and Victoria, also provide opportunities for school-level surveys on a voluntary basis and academics have focused on collecting student views of schooling which are publicly available (Groves & Welsh, 2010). These are all attempts to respond to the needs of different groups. Some, like the Business Council of Australia, have other ways to make their views known and, of course, governments have multiple ways to influence the form and function of the curriculum. In the end, as a teacher, you will decide what you teach. Yet that will be a decision based on the 'official knowledge' outlined in an endorsed curriculum document, taking into account community attitudes towards the importance and relevance of that knowledge. Meeting the needs of the multiple stakeholders is always a challenge for teachers.

PEDAGOGIES, VALUES AND STUDENTS: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

So far, the terms ‘teaching’ and ‘pedagogy’ have been used interchangeably and this is often the case. Yet it is useful to try and differentiate them, which may help in understanding why we chose ‘pedagogy’ in the title of this text. The Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (n.d.) defined pedagogy as ‘the method or “how” of teaching’. For the International Bureau of Education (IBE) (2022), pedagogy is ‘the art and science of teaching, as a professional practice and as a field of academic study. It encompasses not only the practical application of teaching but also curriculum issues and the body of theory relating to how and why learning takes place.’ For Loughran (2013), ‘pedagogy is about the teaching-learning relationship. Choosing to pursue deeper understandings of the teaching-learning relationship ... focuses attention on ways of thinking about teaching that are broad and informative rather than narrow and superficial’ (p. 135). These definitions suggest that there is not agreement on the meaning of pedagogy and Alexander’s (2008) cross-cultural studies of pedagogy certainly reinforced this point. It will be helpful, to explore further how pedagogy can be understood.

Tirri and Toom (2019) pointed out that ‘pedagogy is moral in nature, and the teacher’s main task is to reflect the values underlying her teaching and the purposes she wants to advance in her teaching’. This understanding of pedagogy, that is more European in origin than Australian, differentiates between the act of teaching and what that act means in terms of its purposes, processes and impact. Thinking this way, teaching is what you do in a classroom as a teacher; while pedagogy is about understanding why you are teaching, thinking about the best way to teach, considering what you want students to learn as a result of your teaching, identifying the resources you will use and developing ways to help you understand what your students have learnt. As the IBE (2022) definition indicated, this will also require some reflection on the content that you teach, suggesting that the curriculum and the way it is taught cannot be entirely separated. Pedagogy, therefore, helps to contextualise teaching so that it is meaningful and impactful. It is also a concept that is well used in both academic literature as well as practice. The following examples demonstrate this point.

Table 1.2 shows that educators have used the concept of pedagogy, both over time and currently, to signal their values and the values they want to see in classrooms. Different pedagogies highlight different values. Nevertheless, these pedagogies have three things in common: they are student-centred, they recognise the influence of social contexts on education and they all highlight the need for change. This reinforces Tirri & Toom’s (2019) view concerning the moral nature of pedagogy. For many scholars, student-centred approaches to teaching and learning are indeed a moral issue: for them, students ought to be at the centre of classroom activities; teaching should be developed around their needs, learning and aspirations; and their education should be aligned to the social needs of the broader society. Such a view might be referred to as a **progressive** or **critical** approach to education, and it is not uncontested. Just as shown previously with respect to the curriculum, there are different views within society about pedagogies and their role in schools.

One way to highlight these different views is to contrast them with what might be called a ‘didactic pedagogy’. Alexander (2008) referred to didactic exposure as that which:

... informs the classic transmission model of teaching; it is heavily geared to the acquisition of facts, principles and rules, and presumes students are not knowledgeable until they have demonstrated they can recall and repeat the facts, principles and rules in question (p. 18).

TABLE 1.2 Different pedagogies and their meanings

Pedagogies	Meaning and purpose
Social pedagogy	A broad concept, European in origin, that refers not just to schools but a range of social institutions with responsibility for the care and nurturing of individuals. Its central idea is that 'learning, care, health, general wellbeing and development are viewed as totally inseparable, a holistic idea summed up in the pedagogical term "upbringing". The pedagogue, as practitioner, sees herself as a person in relationship with the child as a whole person, supporting the child's overall development' (Boddy et al., 2005, p. 3), quoted in Petrie & Moss (2019).
Critical pedagogy	'The educational movement guided by both passion and principle to help students develop a consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, empower the imagination, connect knowledge to truth and power, and to learn to read both the word and the world as part of a broader struggle for agency, justice, and democracy' (Giroux, 2010, p. 335).
Authentic pedagogy	'Require(s) the construction of knowledge about important issues; employs rigorous inquiry that emphasizes disciplinary concepts and practice; requires complex explanation and argumentation; feature(s) student work products with value beyond school' (Saye et al., 2018).
Inclusive pedagogy	'An approach to teaching and learning in which teachers respond to learners' individual differences, in order to avoid excluding certain students' (Florian, 2014, p. 289).
Feminist pedagogy	Based on 'a vision of the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects. Feminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning—engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change' (Shrewsbury, 1993, p. 8).

This description might seem to refer more to a mode of teaching—what is done in a classroom by both teachers and students—rather than a broad pedagogical framework similar to those in Table 1.2. The pedagogical intentions, however, are clear: learning is a one-way process dominated by what teachers do while students remain passive. This mode has a single social purpose: to ensure the status quo. Knowledge is viewed as static and unchanging, and this is why it ends up in the curriculum. Change is not on the agenda in any way. The role of schools in this context is to transmit society's values to the next generation and ensure commitment to them.

This mode of teaching will be viewed by many as quite a conservative pedagogy compared to those discussed earlier, but it is by no means uncommon and its importance to many people in the community should not be underestimated. It reflects the way many people themselves were educated; it can be readily identified in many schools (and universities!); and often there is strong public support offered for it. (For an Australian example, see Donnelley (2007) and for an example from the United Kingdom, see Peale (2014).)

The main point to understand is that, while a pedagogy provides a broad theoretical framework in which teaching can take place, it must also lead to classroom practice and action. As Alexander (2008)

pointed out, ‘pedagogic theory without practice is meaningless’ (p. 16). Teachers, however, are not confined to those pedagogies discussed here—they are simply exemplars. Instead, teachers can develop their own framework of values to guide their teaching. What happens in the classroom, however, is not immune from community scrutiny, as shown in the discussion on didactic pedagogy. Parents will certainly be aware of day-to-day classroom life and, just as with the school curriculum, may well have a view about it. Teachers draw on their creativity to create classroom environments for the diverse range of students in their classroom, but they can also expect parents and the community in general to take an interest in what happens. Classrooms, like the curriculum, are always in the public domain. Teachers and students are always on display. These are professional realities characterising an open and transparent society that nevertheless enables and values professional autonomy.

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING

The curriculum sets out expectations about what students are required to learn and pedagogy provides the broad framework of values in which learning processes are enacted. In contrast, assessment—or what Bernstein (1975) referred to earlier as ‘evaluation’—collects information that allows teachers, and others, to make judgments about what students have learnt. Assessment can be a classroom activity with the focus solely on teachers and students, questions asked and answered. It can also consist of a number of tasks that teachers design to gain feedback on what students have learnt, perhaps over a period of time. Finally, it can be an externally prepared standardised test designed simply to monitor and compare students’ learning or to rank students’ eligibility for such things as university entrance. These types of assessment differ in terms of their purpose, who is involved and the use of the results. Yet they have in common processes designed to collect information about what students know, can do and value. They are of prime interest to students but also their teachers, their parents, future employers, and education systems and institutions. Social, political and economic contexts help to shape assessment in different ways so, as with both the curriculum and pedagogy, it is important to understand not just the technical aspects of assessment but the social forces that shape them.

Assessment is not only the province of professionals; it is also an everyday activity. We make judgments about the quality of service we receive, the food we eat and the books we read. The criteria for these judgments are not always explicit and often vary from person to person but, in the course of a day, we make many such judgments. For teachers, however, assessment activities are more restricted. They are directly related to the school curriculum, to teaching and to what students learn. Such activities might be informal and take place in the classroom; for example, questions and answers, observations or judgments made about particular work samples. They might be more formal and include the marking of essays, teacher-devised tests or assessment of a portfolio of completed work. They might be very formal and include standardised tests, high-stakes examinations (e.g. the Higher School Certificate) or international surveys of student knowledge (e.g. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). As shown in Table 1.3, there are different types of assessment and these different types signal some technical ways to think about assessment and its processes. They are designed to make sure that multiple stakeholders can depend on the assessment to provide valid and reliable approximations of what students know, are able to do and value.

The different types and approaches of assessment outlined in Table 1.3 highlight two key issues: first, assessment takes many different forms, and second, irrespective of the forms it takes, it needs to be reliable and valid. For teachers, classroom assessments such as tests, quizzes, essays, etc., all seek to understand the learning progress students are making on specific topics. They are a way of ‘measuring’ or ‘describing’ progress students are making—often against a set of learning outcomes or

TABLE 1.3 Types and processes of assessment

Type	Process
Norm-referenced assessment	Rank-orders the performance of individual students. This displays the range of performance and enables comparison of different levels of performance. The process can also involve comparing the performance of groups with similar or different characteristics (e.g. in terms of age, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status).
Criterion-referenced assessment	Shows how an individual student's performance compares with some predefined criterion or goal. Its function is to demonstrate what students know and are able to do; it does not seek to compare students.
Standards-based assessment	Uses criterion-referencing to show a student's performance in relation to expected levels of achievement at a specific grade level or stage of schooling. These levels are often shown explicitly in curriculum documents.
Standardised test	A test that is developed, administered, scored and interpreted according to a common set of procedures. It is often used with large samples of students and may involve successive administrations over time. The results from different samples can be reliably compared. Such tests can be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced.
Traditional assessment	Involves the use of paper-and-pencil tests that ask students to choose responses from alternative answers (e.g. multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, fill-in-the-blanks, matching exercises).
Alternative assessment	Students demonstrate their level of achievement by creating a response or a product (e.g., essay, painting, oral presentation, open-ended question, group projects).
Performance-based assessment	An alternative form of assessment that engages students in tasks and activities (e.g. role-play, debate, playing a musical instrument, contributing to group work, dramatic performance). Judgments are made through direct observation of performance.
Authentic assessment	Refers to the quality of assessment tasks and requires students to be engaged in 'real world' activities such as those they are likely to encounter as part of daily living. The focus is on the context of the task.
Portfolio assessment	An alternative form of assessment based on a collection of student work samples or products collected over time to demonstrate progress in learning. For such assessment, the purposes need to be clearly stated, the criteria for including work samples need to be articulated, and the criteria or standards for judging performance need to be agreed.
Formative assessment	Provides feedback to students about the progress they are making in learning new concepts, skills or attitudes. It can take place during the teaching/learning process or as structured feedback on work samples submitted by students. Such feedback can assist students to improve their learning and can also help teachers to develop new and more effective ways of teaching.
Summative assessment	Takes place at the end of a unit of work, a subject or a course, and indicates the extent to which expected learning outcomes have been achieved.

(continues)

TABLE 1.3 Types and processes of assessment (*continued*)

Type	Process
Reliability	Refers to the assessment's consistency and stability. The assessment result should be the same irrespective of when, where and how the assessment was taken, who marked it and when it was marked. The reliability of assessment can be enhanced when possible sources of error are minimised. Multiple assessment tasks, agreed assessment criteria, and the use of moderation procedures all help to ensure that assessment is consistent and therefore reliable.
Validity	The extent to which an assessment task accurately reflects the knowledge, skills and values being assessed. Tasks linked to curriculum objectives and outcome statements should have a high degree of validity. Such tasks, however, must also be fair to all students so that the content of the task does not favour one group of students over another.

objectives. Teachers need this kind of information so that they can monitor their teaching; students need it so that they can identify their areas of strength and weakness and then plan what to do about these; and parents need it because they are always concerned about what their children are learning and the progress they are making. Teachers, parents and students have a common objective: they all want to ensure that students learn to their maximum capacity. To this end, teachers will provide feedback directly to students to help them improve. At times teachers might also provide feedback to parents when there are opportunities for them to help their children; for example, by reading with them, regularly checking homework or providing time for extra tuition. Classroom assessments must be reliable and valid because they are designed to provide authentic results about students' learning progress; and they must provide feedback so that students know what they need to do to progress and others—such as teachers and parents—know how to help them.

Assessment is also used for purposes other than directly supporting student learning and often there are disagreements in the community about this. These contexts that influence assessment will be discussed at length later in the text.

RESEARCH AND REFLECTION

1. This chapter started by referencing the work of Basil Bernstein (1975), who described curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation as the 'message systems' of schooling. Bernstein's work is well known today, even though he was writing in the last quarter of the 20th century. Find out more about his work—both what he wrote and what others have written about him—and discuss your findings with your classmates: How important, or not, do you think his work is for teachers in the 21st century?
2. Based on your understanding of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and your wider reading, what are your own thoughts on these topics? Jot down your ideas and identify issues on which you would like to know more. Discuss these with your classmates and lecturer.

CLASSROOMS AS SITES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

LO 1.2

Develop an understanding of the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

The previous section discussed ‘curriculum’, ‘pedagogy’ and ‘assessment’ as though they were separate and distinct processes. This served the purpose of developing an understanding of the terms and the main ideas underlying them. Yet in the real world of the classroom, what you teach (curriculum) is related to how you teach it, for what purposes (pedagogy) and how you know what, or if, students have learnt (assessment). Nevertheless, Alexander (2008, pp. 12–13) asked: Which of these is the most important? He opted for pedagogy as the overarching construct:

‘Pedagogy’ contains both teaching . . . and its contingent discourses about the character of culture, the purposes of education, the nature of childhood and the learning and structure of knowledge. (It) allows us to understand how it is not just curriculum . . . but every other aspect of what goes on in schools and classrooms as well . . . we are constantly reminded that the real power of pedagogy resides in what happens between teachers and pupils. (p. 13)

Alexander’s (2008) preference is very much a reflection of his attachment to European views of the curriculum. These views are characterised by their focus on the translation of the curriculum as written text by teachers, and subsequently in the understanding of students. This is most likely not the view of the **Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Agency (ACARA)**, which has sole responsibility for the development of the Australian Curriculum but leaves its implementation up to the states/territories and independent schools. It is also likely not the view of the state/territory education authorities, some of which repackage the Australian Curriculum as locally produced curriculum (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia) while others use the Australian Curriculum in its original form (Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and the Northern Territory). However, in both cases it is the curriculum that has pride of place rather than pedagogies that facilitate its implementation. If Alexander’s view can be described as European in origin, then this focus on the curriculum as a text or as an object is more North American in origin. Of course, the different definitions of curriculum, as shown in Table 1.1, make the specification of curriculum difficult, or at least problematic. Yet the state-driven nature of curriculum in Australia, along with the influence of different stakeholders, has given it a preeminent status in terms of both government interest and community expectations.

In addition to support for pedagogy and curriculum as the key constructions in this educational discussion, there are also assessment advocates who highlight its importance as part of this trio—curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Napper (2012) referred to ‘the alignment of teaching, learning and assessment’ as:

. . . a process where each of the critical elements (learning objectives, assessment of learning, and anticipated knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions) of instruction interact and support learning outcomes. It is also a process of taking instructional ideas from a personal mental model and transforming those ideas through an instructional design process into a functional unit for teaching and learning. (p. 200)

Biggs (1996), with particular reference to higher education, talked about ‘constructive alignment’ (p. 347) meaning that learning objectives needed to be at a sufficiently challenging level to engage students in their own learning, and then teaching methods and assessment need to be determined in

relation to those objectives. Biggs' challenge for university teachers was to move away from transmission modes of knowledge creation (referred to earlier in this chapter as didactic pedagogy) to those which would engage students in developing higher-level capabilities. It is likely that this kind of transformation in universities would require new teaching strategies and new forms of assessment. The 'message systems' not only had to be aligned, as argued by Napper (2012), they had to be such as to require more demanding kinds of learning rather than low-level learning that Biggs saw as characterising what largely happens in universities. While his focus was not on schools and their students, his rationale for demanding high-quality learning certainly applies to expectations relating to the modern classroom.

Yet high-quality learning on its own was not enough in the latter years of the 20th century. At the beginning of the century, assessment was either taken for granted or not considered important. It was quite limited in its form and served largely social purposes. We have seen that, even as late as the 1970s, Bernstein (1975) was still using the term 'evaluation'. For most of the 20th century, 'assessment' was assumed to be an examination of some kind, and even currently, end-of-school examinations are conducted in most states and territories to determine who will gain a place in a university. Tests of different kinds were used in both primary and secondary schools to determine grade placement and progression. Yet, as the school population increased throughout the century, there was a greater need to be aware of the achievement of an increasingly diverse student population. Towards the end of the century, there emerged an understanding that some forms of assessment were good for some students but not all. In addition, it also became clear that teachers themselves in their daily classroom activities could accurately and helpfully assess students' learning. Later chapters will deal with these issues in greater depth. However, what these issues demonstrated, was an increasing interest in assessment to verify or authenticate learning for a diverse range of students in mass systems of education.

Complementing this assessment turn in schools, there has also been an emphasis on different kinds of assessments than the formal examinations that had dominated the early part of the century. National testing program, such as the **National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)**, and international program, such as the **Program on International Student Assessment (PISA)**, added to heightened interest in assessment, although with differing levels of support within the community. Governments see value in these programmes as a means to monitor schools and students. Unfortunately, such programs have little influence on supporting student learning even though they highlight an important role for assessment.

Given that 'curriculum', 'assessment' or 'pedagogy' might equally claim the importance of educators, the issue for classroom practice is: How can they be integrated to support teaching and learning in classrooms? It is difficult to provide an answer to this question without seeming to suggest a mechanistic approach that has a number of steps which must be completed one after another. For this kind of approach see Gagné et al., (2007). Yet the process of integration may not be the same for every teacher, every subject and every classroom—individuals think differently. All teachers will eventually think about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, but when they do so will depend on the individual. A long line of research on teacher thinking supports what might seem a somewhat *ad hoc* process. Yet it is possible to identify a range of questions a teacher might address in bringing the trio together and these are shown in Table 1.4.

These questions, and more, can help to guide teachers in their planning of lessons and programs—the plans for classrooms. Early career teachers may take more time over this planning while for more experienced teachers such planning may become automatic. Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment will be intertwined in this thinking as teachers seek to encourage student learning at all levels of the schooling system and for all students.

TABLE 1.4 Integrating curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

Question(s)	Type	Purpose
Who are my students?	Pedagogical	If teachers understand their students' backgrounds (family, friends), their level of understanding, aspirations, interests and out-of-class activities, they will have a sound basis for planning their learning.
Follow-up		Is there anything special about the experiences my students have already had as part of their schooling? Does the school have any records that could help me to understand their needs better? What do I really want my students to achieve?
What do I want my students to learn?	Curriculum	The official grade-level curriculum is the first thing to establish, however and wherever this is expressed in the school. It will be expressed in broad terms and the teacher's role is to link it to what students already know, what they need to know and how it can be made relevant.
Follow-up		How can the official curriculum be linked to what students are likely to know and understand in the real world? How can the curriculum be linked to the world of students? What do I want students to know in addition to what is required in the official curriculum?
How will I know what students have learnt?	Assessment	Teachers need to think of multiple ways of assessing student learning. How teachers can provide feedback: during teaching, on tasks set specifically to monitor the progress of learning as a unit of work progresses, and on final assignments.
Follow-up		Assessment can be formal or informal and these types of assessment will be used in different ways for different levels of schooling. But irrespective of the type of assessment, it is feedback that is the essential element which helps students learn. Learning to incorporate feedback into teaching is important, just as it is on every other form of assessment.

RESEARCH AND REFLECTION

1. Reference is made in this section to European and Anglo-American views of the curriculum. These different views often have implications for pedagogy and assessment. Find out more about these curriculum traditions and what they mean for understanding different ideas about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The following article by Zongyi Deng (2021) may be a useful resource: Powerful knowledge, transformations and Didaktik/curriculum thinking. *British Educational Research Journal*, 1652–74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3748>
2. Where do you think is the best place to start when you have to plan for your students to learn something? Is it more important to know what is in the curriculum or to know your students?

ORIENTATIONS TO CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

LO 1.3

Develop personal definitions for the terms, 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', based on an evaluation of different approaches and the relationships you see between them.

There is a significant range of academic literature relating to 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', some of which has been referred to earlier in this chapter. However, in the end, teachers need to develop their own personal philosophy of education. This involves a consideration of macro issues, such as the social, political and cultural contexts of education, as well as micro issues, such as attitudes to and understanding of students, schools and approaches to teaching and learning. The challenge for developing a personal philosophy is understanding how all of these interact—leading to distinctive views of both social and educational issues.

Table 1.5 sets out multiple orientations that might be taken towards schools and schooling, and thus towards the 'message systems' of schooling that have been discussed in this chapter. No matter what your personal philosophy is, it will be in some ways bound by and influenced by these broader perspectives.

TABLE 1.5 Orientations and functions of schools

Orientations	Functions
Critical	Question existing power structures and advocate for social justice
Cultural	Ensure the foundations of society are transmitted to the next generation
Personal	Provide for the intrinsic needs of individuals and groups
Vocational	Ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to participate actively in the world of work
Social	Enable society to function in a harmonious way for the benefit of all
Economic	Ensure that the productive capacity of individuals and the nation as a whole is taken into consideration

You will find that the orientations set out in Table 1.5 are well reflected in the community. What this means is that there are conflicting views about what schools are meant to be doing and, therefore, how teachers should shape the learning environment in their classrooms. Pressures may be exerted from outside the school to follow one kind of orientation or another and these same pressures can influence what is taught, how it is taught and how it is assessed. Developing a personal philosophy in this context will always be challenging.

The orientations shown in Table 1.5 are usually considered in isolation—for instance, there will be supporters of a cultural approach, a critical approach or a social approach. Very often academics will line up behind one of these orientations to explain its importance or its impact. Yet there are other ways to regard these orientations as you seek to develop your own philosophy. For example, can schools serve both economic and social purposes? Are these purposes necessarily mutually exclusive, even if different groups may want to focus on one rather than the other? Overall, these orientations cover a full range of attitudes and values to schools and, while they can be considered independently of one another, they do not have to be. It is possible to see how some work together or at least complement one another. This can help to build a broad personal philosophy.

Another way to consider these orientations is from the perspective of the level of schooling in which teachers are involved. Early years teachers, for example, will obviously focus on the personal orientation to nurture their young students through socialisation processes and gentle introduction. It is quite unlikely these teachers would have little interest in the vocational aspects of school. On the other hand, if the teacher's responsibility is for the final years of schooling, they may take an interest in the vocational aspects of education. This may not necessarily take the form of specific curriculum content but rather in the provision of out-of-class support for students as they negotiate the transition from school to work or additional education. Teachers view the needs of their students in different ways and through different lenses meaning that multiple orientations are likely to be most useful in developing a personal philosophy.

There are also ways in which aspects of the orientations can be adopted and melded with others. For example, social justice is identified in Table 1.5 with a critical perspective on schools, but other orientations could also incorporate social justice as a perspective. Indeed, every other perspective could do this without adopting the more radical nature of the critical orientation. In the same way, the teaching of history might be seen as reflecting the cultural orientation, the passing on of traditions and values. Yet it is also possible to teach history from a critical perspective, exposing oppressions and highlighting injustices as part of social and political development. The orientations are not static or deterministic and can be used in multiple ways in developing a personal philosophy.

RESEARCH AND REFLECTION

1. Given the orientations to schooling outlined in this section, select one of them and research it further. Who are its main advocates, what influence has it had over time, and to what extent is it relevant in today's contexts? Share and discuss your work with others who have chosen different orientations to study.
2. Based on your reading of this chapter, and any additional reading you select, develop your own view of 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment' that helps you understand your role as a teacher. Share your views with one or two classmates and see what similarities and differences there are, and whether you want to change your original ideas. Keep a statement of your philosophy and come back to it from time to time as you read the remaining chapters.

SUMMARY

LO 1.1 Identify the various meanings attached to 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', along with the stakeholders who influence them.

An understanding of 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment' helps teachers to plan and develop classroom experiences and activities for students. Each has a distinct contribution to make: curriculum guides what should be taught; pedagogy provides a framework of values about teaching along with specific teaching strategies; and assessment provides information about what students have learnt.

While teachers make these decisions regarding schools and classrooms, there are also stakeholders in the community who have an interest in these processes. Community influences on schools are noticeable through pressure applied in the media and through governments, but it is difficult to be exact about how these influences work in practice and on a daily basis.

LO 1.2 Develop an understanding of the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

While it is possible to talk about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment separately, in reality they come together in the classroom. Teachers need to understand how to use these processes in an integrated manner and a range of questions have been suggested about ways to do this.

LO 1.3 Develop personal definitions for the terms, 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', based on an evaluation of different approaches and the relationships you see between them.

Developing a personal philosophy of education can help teachers make decisions about curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. This can draw on particular orientations to schooling but need not be dominated by any specific one.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand are the key differences between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment?
2. Why are members of the community outside schools interested in these processes?
3. Why is it important to develop a personal philosophy of education?
4. What do you think is most important—curriculum, assessment or pedagogy—and why?
5. Explain, as you would to your school Principal, what you see as your pedagogical principles.
6. What do you think is the importance of assessment as part of the teaching–learning process?
7. Which of the orientations to schooling shown in Table 1.5 reflect your own views and why?
8. How does the level of schooling where you spend most of your time as a teacher affect the way you think about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment?
9. Explain how it might be possible to choose a number of orientations shown in Table 1.5 to reflect your personal philosophy of education.

CASE STUDY



This case is based on a response to the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014).

What the Review noticed was that, as teachers implemented the content of the Australian Curriculum Phase One, they selected the content on which they wanted to focus. This is a reflection of the fact that teachers select content to meet the needs of specific groups of students. Time alone does not allow every piece of content to be taught to every student across the country. This is not how the curriculum is meant to work. The Australian Curriculum is not the Bible, each word of which must be learned and memorised. The Australian Curriculum is a description of the content that should be mastered by a particular age cohort. If some of that content is taught and mastered, good and well. If some of that particular content is not taught (for a range of reasons including shortage of time, overcrowding, etc.), then it can reasonably be assumed that the

student possesses the requisite skills to transfer and apply what they learned from one content area to another. The Australian Curriculum is not about filling empty vessels; it is still in the teacher's domain to light the fires of passion for and mastery of knowledge. (Kindler, 2015)

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The argument posed by the author here is that teachers might select content other than that specified in the Australian Curriculum. How do you think different stakeholders (e.g. governments, businesses and parents) might respond to this idea?
2. If teachers do what is suggested here—select content relevant to the needs of students—what does this say about their pedagogical principles?
3. What are the implications for assessment when teachers vary the content of the curriculum?

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