

# Curriculum on the map!

10 years of  
curriculum initiatives  
in higher education  
in Australia

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2007

## 'Curriculum' in higher education in Australia:

- a term given very limited currency.
- either restricted to 'content' of courses, or as a vehicle for attending to critical issues such as 'internationalising the curriculum'.

# 2007 – the unifying potential of curriculum

discipline interests

learning and teaching improvements

effective use of communication  
and information technologies  
for learning

key issues such as inclusivity,  
internationalisation

development of new programs  
of study

**CURRICULUM**

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graph TD; A[discipline interests] --> C[CURRICULUM]; B[learning and teaching improvements] --> C; D[effective use of communication and information technologies for learning] --> C; E[key issues such as inclusivity, internationalisation] --> C; F[development of new programs of study] --> C;
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**A common language of curriculum would be nice,  
but it is not going to happen  
and there is a useful richness in the diversity.**

**'Curriculum' needs to be 'a broad church'.  
(needs to allow for and cater to a wide range of  
opinions and people)**

**This appears to be borne out in the literature,  
with many recent writers arguing for broad  
definitions, while others take particular,  
usually critical, positions and expound on  
curriculum in that context.**



If Vietnamese people eat limes  
but call them lemons,  
are they eating lemons or limes?



# Is 'curriculum' a bit of a lemon?

**Alternative terminology:**

**program**

**course**

**learning package**

**educational experience**

**educational framework**

**educational directions**

**Alternative  
scope:**

**Curriculum – structure and content, but also including teaching, learning and assessment.**

**Curriculum – one of a set of terms of somewhat equal status , as in courses, curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment.**

**Curriculum – as a process and a medium for critique.**

# The last decade - the road to oblivion?

Universities  
2017

Industry

Government

TEQSA

AUQA

OLT

ALTC

Carrick Institute

drivers

2007 hello





# Compacts compacting curriculum

In the 40 university compacts (2014-2016),

- all used 'curric...' with a total of 611 occurrences.
- 10 used 'curric...' more than 20 times.
- structural and content aspects of 'curric...' dominate.  
(at program of study level at least once by 38 institutions;  
at unit/subject level at least once by 30 institutions)
- 24 institutions appeared to use the term in the context of a process that enables student learning.
- just 8 institutions used the term as a dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning, with students and teachers as co-constructors of knowledge.

## **Institutional 'curriculum' initiatives**

- **All Australian universities mention curriculum on accessible websites ( just five articulate its meaning).**
- **Somewhat vague and restricted use relating to philosophical approach, or to the content, structure or design of programs.**
- **Five universities made explicit mention of curriculum in their vision or mission statements.**
- **Seventeen made reference to curriculum in strategic plans.**
- **Nine universities outlined what could be considered elaborated curriculum models.**

## Institutional 'curriculum' initiatives

- There are few standing committees with 'curriculum' in the title (in only six universities).
- At least 12 institutions provide courses on curriculum development and design, typically run from Centres for Learning and Teaching.
- There is little evidence of institutions attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum initiatives.

## Three specific concerns arise in the paper

1. The declining use of the term 'curriculum' by government.
2. The continuing dominance of 'curriculum' as 'course content'.
3. The need for more attention to evaluation of curriculum initiatives.

The dichotomous expression 'teaching and learning' (or 'learning and teaching'), typically interpreted as 'what the teacher does' and 'what the student does' could beneficially be replaced by 'curriculum', 'what we engage in together'.

