



Framing  
**Active Teaching  
and Learning  
in CAPS**

Rob O'Donoghue



Framing

# **Active Teaching and Learning in CAPS**

KNOWLEDGE, TEACHING and  
ASSESSMENT for a whole school approach  
to environment and sustainability education

In 2010 the South African curriculum was revised again and a new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was developed. This new policy statement has brought a few important changes into the schooling landscape. There is a new emphasis on content knowledge, and the pacing and sequencing of the curriculum is much more structured. There is still a commitment to active learning in the curriculum, and most interestingly, there is a strong commitment to environmental content in a number of subjects. Environmental content knowledge has always been important for processes of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and what is exciting about the new CAPS curriculum is that this knowledge can now be 'brought out' to develop lessons with an environmental and sustainability focus.

This booklet has been developed for teacher educators. It provides them with a simple structure to think through the learning processes associated with a content referenced curriculum. In particular, it suggests that we need to start with literacy of learners, as this helps them to access the content that they are to learn. It also suggests that there is a need for a balanced approach and for knowledgeable teachers to mediate learning. It is therefore a framework that helps us all to think through how to approach a content rich curriculum. It can help teacher educators to orient teachers to the new curriculum and how it is constructed, but more importantly, it aims to share how we can teach well within the new curriculum framework.

The booklet aims to provide support for teacher educators in the Fundisa for Change programme. This is a partnership programme that supports transformative environmental learning through teacher education.

### **VERSION 1 – June 2013**

#### **Reference:**

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## Framework of Open Processes and Progression

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## Planning CAPS+ Teaching and Assessment

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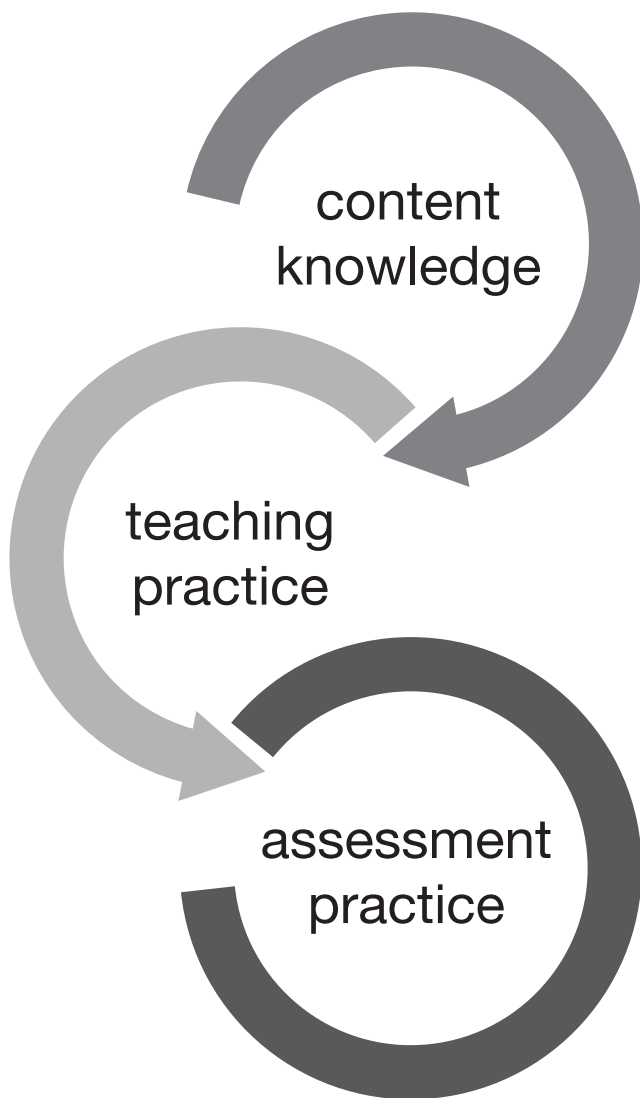
### HOW THIS BOOKLET WORKS

Numbers shown like this ① throughout the booklet correspond with the numbers in the inserted framework diagram. As you work through the pages of the booklet you should build up an understanding that can be consolidated into the framework diagram.

# 1 A CAPS+ approach

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- The curriculum stipulates **minimum standards** so we should always teach to CAPS+.
- **Environment is already in** and across the curriculum as topics that lend themselves to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- ESD is thus a matter **of taking up and bringing out** an environment and sustainability focus.
- We need a whole school approach for relevance and to overcome the **fragmented** nature of a topic-centred curriculum.
- The Fundisa for Change programme takes a CAPS+ approach and focuses on enhancing three essential aspects of teaching:
  - Knowing your subject,
  - Improving your teaching practice, and
  - Improving your assessment practice.



## ② CAPS Principles to bring out ESD

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### 7 CAPS Principles



- Social transformation ■
- Active and critical thinking ■
- High knowledge and high skills ■
- Progression ■
- Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice ■
- Valuing indigenous knowledge systems ■
- Credibility, quality and efficiency ■

**CAPS topics and  
assessment**

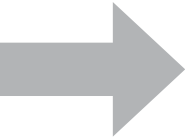






## **3 Pillars of ESD**

- Social
- Economic
- Environment



**Social justice**  
**Health**  
**Risk and change**  
**Sustainability**  
**Change practices**

### ③ Human social-ecological contexts

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The CAPS curriculum encourages the teaching for the mediated acquisition of knowledge interactions like

- **listening and reading-to-learn** (⑧) what is known towards
- more independent **enquiry** (⑨) to find out more for
- **learning-by-doing** (⑨) by trying out ideas and
- **deliberating** (⑩) what is best,

all of which are **assessed** to foster and mediate social learning processes that shape the competence for living in a changing world.

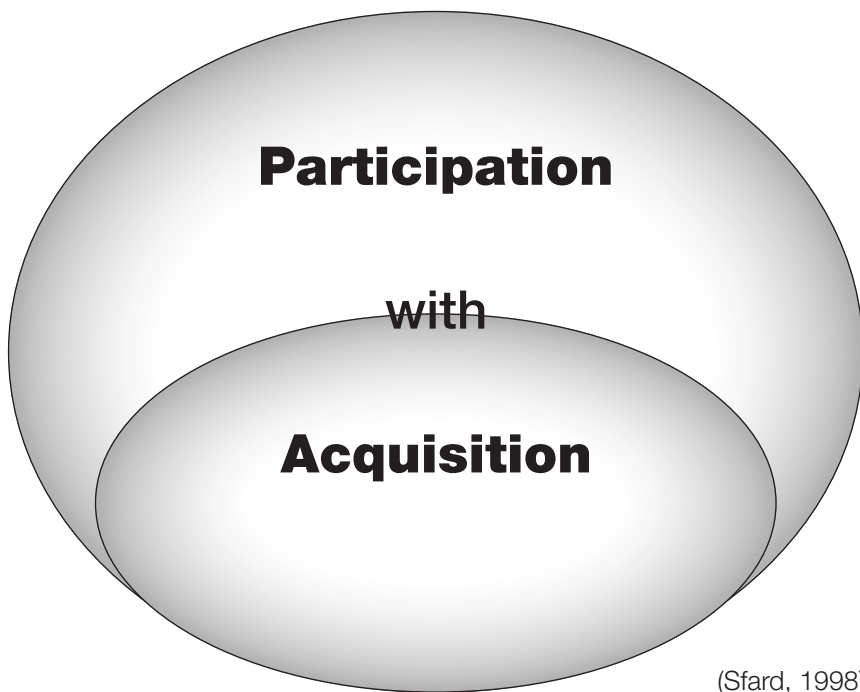
*Our experienced world is twofold in character...  
a world independent of, but including ourselves, and a world **mediated for our understanding** by a web of human-made **symbolic representations**, predetermined by their **natural constitution**, which materializes only with the help of processes of **social learning**.*

— Elias, 2012

## 4 A balanced approach

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- Approaches to education can shift between an emphasis on teaching to foster knowledge **acquisition** and learning through **participation** to construct knowledge.
- Sfard (1998) argues that it is not a matter of one or the other, but working with both and dealing with tensions between them.
- CAPS as a swing back to content knowledge should not be at the expense of a concern for active participation in the construction of meaning.



(Sfard, 1998)

## 5 A knowledgeable teacher mediating learning

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Teachers need to be knowledgeable about:

- What is known and understood in a particular subject or on a particular topic
- How students participate in learning to develop skills and an understanding of concepts and topics
- Valued doing and knowing that has relevance in context and for continuing learning.

Here our knowledge is necessarily incomplete in times of change when we are all engaged in developing the **competence** to realise more just and sustainable futures in a changing world of and at risk.



Are there relevant applications?

**Participation**

with

Are grasp and skills being developed?

**Acquisition**

What is known and understood now?

## 6 Assessing knowledge and skills progression

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All of these dimensions of teaching and learning can be assessed in diverse ways:

- **Knowledge:** What is known and remembered by students (CAPS assessment)
- **Action / awareness:** The understanding and application acquired through participation in learning
- **Synthesis / innovation:** An emerging capacity to work with knowledge and skills of analysis, evaluation and innovation.

These can be specified as competences for producing and living in a more sustainable environment (Adombent and Hoffmann, 2013).



(analysis, evaluation and innovation)

**synthesis / innovation**

Are there relevant applications?

**Participation**

(understanding and applying)

**action / awareness**

Are grasp and skills being developed?

**Acquisition**

(knowing and remembering)

**knowledge**

What is known and understood now?

## 7 CAPS assessment of knowledge and skills

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The assessment of knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and reasoning can be undertaken in diverse ways from those that simply measure:

- Knowledge and concepts, to
- Evidence of application and understanding and
- Higher order skills of analysis, evaluation and innovation.

In ESD this teaching and learning progression builds competences and a capability to act with others in a developing context of risk and change.

## **Assignments, case studies and projects**

(can report / expand / apply to find answers)

**analysis, evaluation and innovation**

## **Activities, translation tasks and practical tasks**

(can do things to answer questions)

**understanding and applying**

## **Tests and exams**

(can answer questions)

**knowing and remembering**

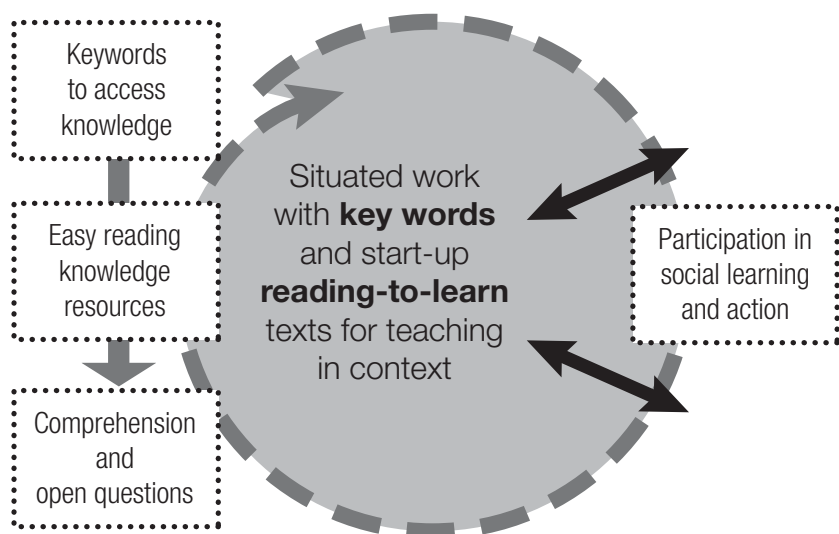
## 8 Key words for reading-to-learn (knowledge) start-up

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Learning is both made possible and unlocked with key words (concepts). Work with texts (listening, reading and writing) is thus central to all learning interactions, for example:

- Learning to read and decode key words;
- Reading to learn about what is known;
- Learning to answer and ask questions; along with
- Writing to read and ongoing reading to write.

Key words and easy reading texts on new topics are thus a key part of acquiring the foundational knowledge necessary for participation in further learning that is relevant.



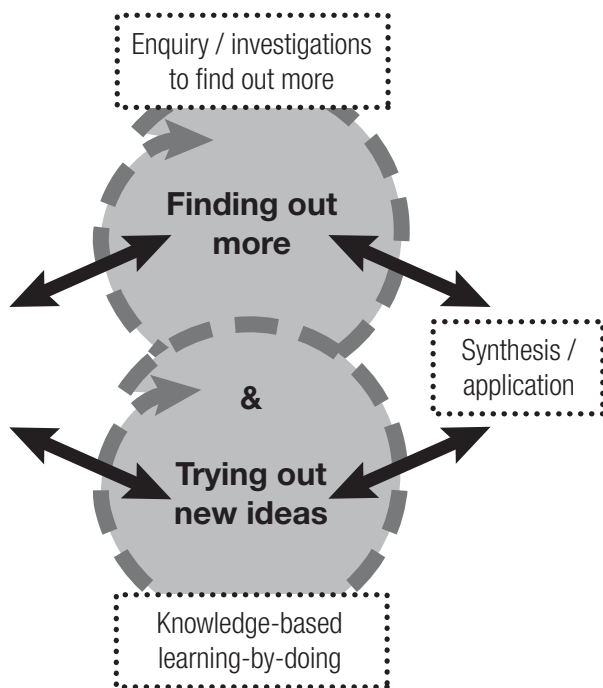
## 9 Finding out and doing more

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Prior knowledge and experience is one of the most important prerequisites for more independent and group learning by:

- Enquiry activities to find out more; or
- Practical work to try out and understand new ideas more deeply.

Without knowledge and skill there is little prospect of the application of what is known or the pulling together of key ideas for further, more in-depth learning.



## 10 **Synthesis and application of knowledge / skills**

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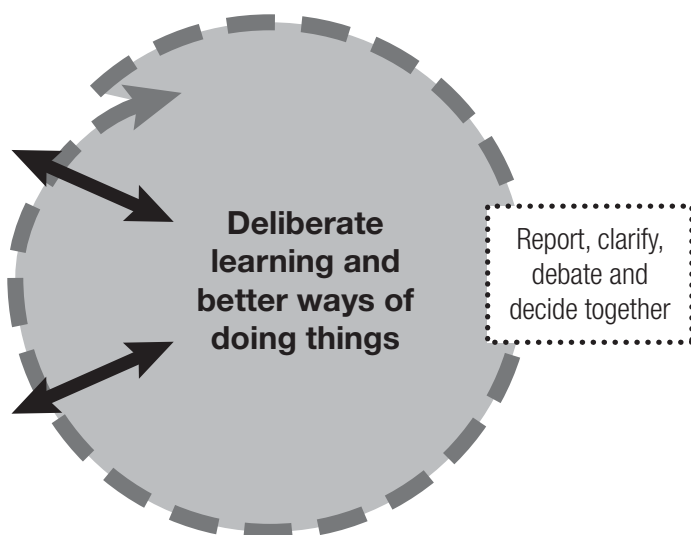
Finally, the higher order skills of

- debating and deliberating around what is known and
- making decisions to try out creative ideas towards better ways of doing things

are important, so as to reduce emerging issues and risk.

Here, application and synthesis are central to any learning journey.





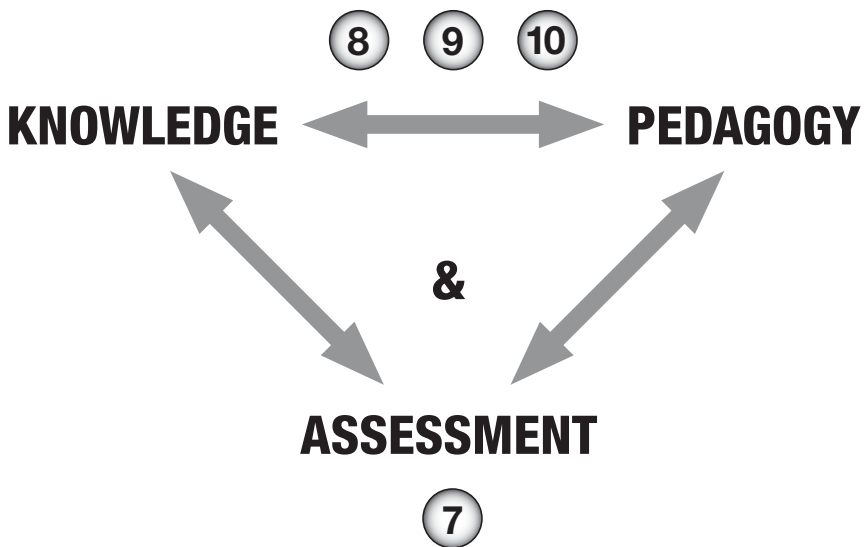
## 11. CAPS and ESD lesson planning

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A CAPS perspective on ESD has knowledgeable teachers teaching with a knowledge and assessment specified curriculum. Here the planning and mediating learning has

- knowledge;
- pedagogy; and
- assessment interacting

to provide quality education that enables equity and valued freedoms towards more sustainable livelihoods (ESD). **The challenge is to work with the curriculum specifications in enabling ways that bring out ESD.**



How can we work with  
CAPS in additive ways  
that bring out  
**ESD**  
learning-to-change?

## 12. T-sheet: Knowledge and assessment planning

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### **FIND OUT** (Knowledge)

*What I know and can find out*

8

#### **FIND OUT** (Summarise knowledge)

(keywords and concepts in...)

- what the curriculum requires;
- what I already know; and
- what is **known** and could be read by the learners, whilst, at the same time ‘knowing what we don’t yet know’ but can strive to find out and realise together;

and

consider possible learning-to-change practices towards realising this shared moral imperative.



## **WORK OUT (Practice)**

*Why do we do things in particular ways?*

### **WORK OUT (Plan learning)**

From what learners already know:

8 ■ what **reading**;

9 ■ **writing**; and

■ **activities**

will enable **understanding** and deliberative synthesis/application? 10

7

#### **ASSESSMENT** (knowledge, skills valuing)

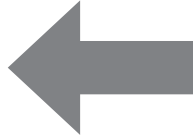
- What is known and can be remembered?
- What is understood and can be explained?
- What analysis, evaluation and innovation of how things can be done better is included?

## CAPS topic:

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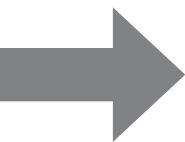
### **FIND OUT** (Knowledge)

*What I know and can find out*



(Use this blank template to develop your own lesson plan)

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## **WORK OUT** (Practice)

*Why do we do things in particular ways?*

### **ASSESSMENT**

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1  
2  
3

# CAPS knowledge, teach social-ecological context

4

Acquisition

wi



Situated work with **key words** and start-up **reading-to-learn** texts for teaching in context

8

Enquiry / in  
to find o

Finding  
mo

9

8

Trying  
new i

Knowledge  
learning-

6

knowledge acquisition  
(knowing and remembering)

action/av  
(understanding)

5

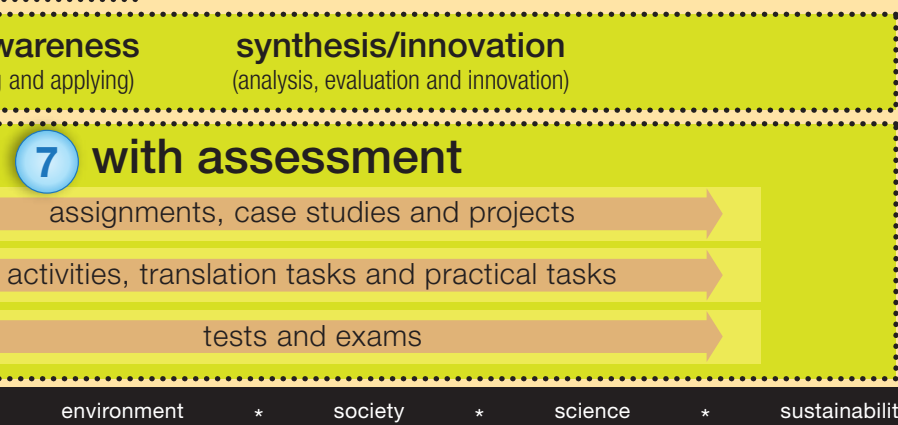
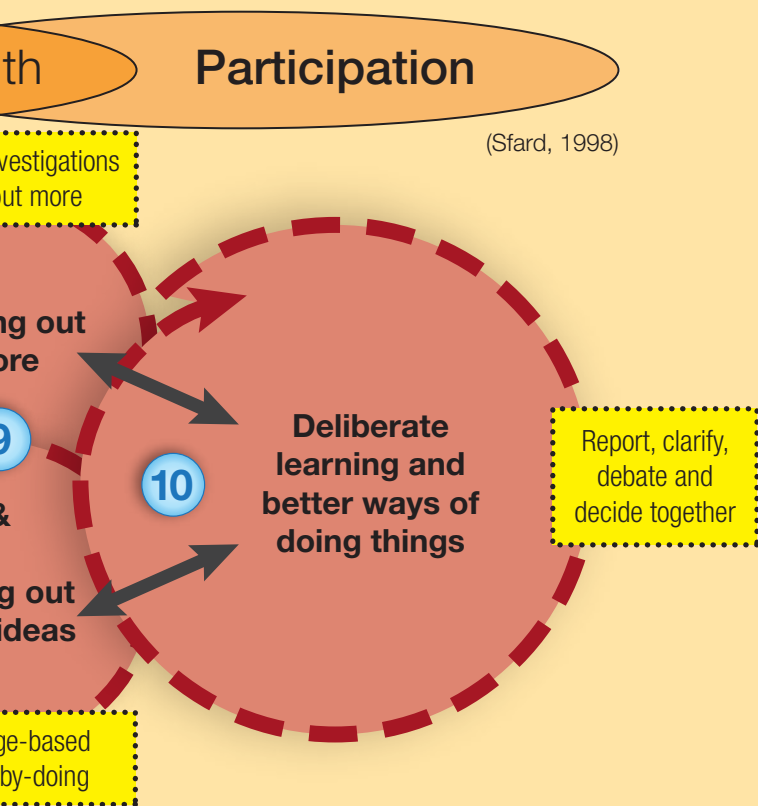
Are there relevant applications?

Are grasp and skills being developed?

What is known and understood now?



# Learning and assessment in Contexts of learning-to-change



# References

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Adombent, M. and Hoffmann, T., 2013. The concept of competencies in the context of Education for Sustainable Development. [www.ESD-Expert Net](http://www.ESD-Expert-Net.org), March 2013.

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Sfard, A., 1998. On two metaphors of learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, March 1998 Volume 27 Number 2 pp. 4-13.



A partnership programme  
for environmental learning  
and teacher education



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