

Does curriculum have a place in a Bachelor of Arts?

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Historically, the Bachelor of Arts (BA) is the means by which students experience the humanities and social sciences in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and South Africa. The BA was described by academics interviewed in a 2008 study seeking to understand Australian BA programmes as a “smorgasbord” or a “shopping trolley” full of pre-packaged, unrelated modules chosen on a student’s whim (Gannaway & Trent, 2008); a veritable “junkyard curriculum”(Reardon & Ramaley, 1997). On the surface level, it certainly appears as though the notion of a prescribed curriculum is largely absent from a BA programme, and that, as Bloomer found in a school education setting, “*students and teachers ‘make’ rather than ‘take’ their roles*” (Bloomer, 1997). In 2012, a further exploration into the Australian BA examined whether the notion of an intended curriculum (Van den Akker, Kuiper, & Hameyer, 2003) that is purposefully designed and implemented. Using a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2007), the study drew on multiple data sources to determine curriculum elements of structure, purpose, content and outcomes (Walker, 1990).

This showcase presentation provides an overview of the findings of this study. In particular, it found that there is a clear intended curriculum outlined. In addition, the presentation offers a definition of “curriculum-making” to replace the notions of “curriculum design” commonly used to describe the processes of developing curriculum in large, generalist programmes such as the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science.