

The introduction of the three waves of curriculum change in South Africa

16 October 2012 – Martin Gustafsson

The following two tables reflect what I believe would be useful for South African education planners. Both tables illustrate the rather complex sequence of curriculum changes that have occurred since 1998. The tables reflect the changes required according to official policy. A point made by many education researchers is that what policy said around curriculum and what actually happened were often rather different. Yet official curriculum changes have undoubtedly had an impact on how teachers teach, how they assess and the materials they use. Table 1 reflects simply what curriculum rules applied in particular grades in particular years. Table 2 elaborates on the information in the first table by indicating the history of curriculum rules different groups of learners would have experienced.

Table 1: Curriculum changes over the years¹

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Gr R	O	5	5	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 1	O	5	5	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 2	O	O	5	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 3	O	O	O	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 4	O	O	O	O	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 5	O	O	O	O	O	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 6	O	O	O	O	O	O	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	
Gr 7	O	O	O	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	
Gr 8	O	O	O	O	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	
Gr 9	O	O	O	O	O	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	
Gr 10	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	R	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 11	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	C	
Gr 12	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	R	R	R	R	R	C	C	

Note: The following abbreviations are used:

O – Old curriculum inherited in 1994

5 – Curriculum 2005

R – Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)

C – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The table reflects official switchovers. In practice, there would be modifications within particular grades even if officially the curriculum was the same. Often these modifications were introduced to prepare the system for the next official switch. For instance, there were a number of rule changes in the old curriculum in Grades 10 to 12 before the official switchover to the RNCS in 2006 to 2008. There were similar modifications to Curriculum 2005 in the years preceding the switches to the RNCS in Grades 4 to 9.

¹ Assistance from Jennifer Kinnear in checking this information was appreciated.

Table 2: Histories of curriculum experiences

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Gr 1	O	5	5	5	5	5	5	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Gr 2	O	O	5*	5	5	5	5	5R*	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Gr 3	O	O	O	5*	5	5	5	5R*	5R*	R	R	R	R	R	R
Gr 4	O	O	O	O	5*	5	5	5	5R*	R	R	R	R	R	R
Gr 5	O	O	O	O	O	5*	5	5	5R*	5R*	5R*	R	R	R	R
Gr 6	O	O	O	O	O	O	5*	5	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*	R	R	R
Gr 7	O	O	O	O5*	O5	O5	O5	5*	5	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*	R	R
Gr 8	O	O	O	O	O5*	O5	O5	O5	5*	5	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*	R
Gr 9	O	O	O	O	O	O5*	O5	O5	O5	5*	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*
Gr 10	O	O	O	O	O	O	O5*O	O5O	O5O	O5R*	5*R	5R*	5R*	5R*	5R*
Gr 11	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O5*O	O5O	O5O	O5R*	5*R	5R*	5R*	5R*
Gr 12	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O5*O	O5O	O5O	O5R*	5*R	5R*	5R*
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Gr 1	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 2	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 3	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 4	R	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 5	R	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 6	R	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 7	R	R	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 8	R	R	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 9	R	R	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 10	5R*C	RC	RC	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 11	5R*	5R*C*	RC	RC	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C	C
Gr 12	5R*	5R*	5R*C*	RC	RC	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	RC*	C	C	C	C

Note: The letters and asterisks in each cell indicate the history of each cohort at that stage in its schooling, assuming learners who do not repeat any grades. To take an example of a cohort with a complex history, the Grade 12 group in 2014 has '5R*C*'. This means that these learners experienced in their schooling lives a bit of Curriculum 2005 (5), some teaching under the Revised National Curriculum Statement (R) and some under the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (C). The asterisks indicate that this group experienced the RNCS when it had just been introduced (one can see in the table this occurred in Grade 2 in 2004) and that it also experienced the introduction of the CAPS (in Grade 10 in 2012). The colouring in this table has been inserted to facilitate the tracking of single cohorts of learners. Grade R has been left out of this table as this grade has not been made compulsory yet.