

Working in Classrooms

Teaching, Time and Space

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Working in Classrooms

Teaching, Time
and Space

Learning Guide

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SECTION TWO

Time and space in teaching

Teaching as a practice that shapes, and is shaped by, time and space

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Time and space in teaching

A schematic story of Section Two

Teaching as a practice that shapes, and is shaped by, time and space

Time and space shape, and are shaped by, ordinary activities

For example: familiar activities like soccer and choral singing.

External arrangements of time and space shape activities in activities

Internal arrangements of time and space are shaped by participants

(SECTION 2.2; PAGES 13 - 15)

Activities involve intentional actions

Actions are performed by human agents with intentions.

Actions Other events

Human agents shape time and space through their actions

(SECTION 2.3; PAGES 16 - 18)

Practices are located in institutions and are conducted within a set of rules

Institutions are meant to enable practices, but can also disable or corrupt them.

Two kinds of rules are crucial for any practice:

Constitutive rules Regulative rules

Some rules (both constitutive and regulative) are rules about ways of shaping and using time and space.

(SECTION 2.8; PAGES 35 - 37)

Teaching as an activity

Teaching is an intentional everyday activity. We recognise teaching by its formal purpose.

The formal purpose of teaching is to bring it about that someone tries to learn something.

Teaching is a co-operative activity, with a double object (i.e. we teach something to someone)

Teachers should arrange the internal time and space of teaching in a way that best enables learning

(SECTIONS 2.4 - 2.6; PAGES 19 - 29)

School teaching is the practice of organising systematic learning

As a practice, school teaching has:

- a formal purpose;
- a community of practitioners;
- a history and traditions;
- flexibility in relation to changing conditions;
- openness to change, within the formal purpose;
- internal standards of success and excellence.

(SECTION 2.7; PAGES 30 - 34)

2.1

What can you hope to achieve by working through this section?

Section Two builds a conceptual foundation for the module as a whole. By the end of the section you should be able to use the following concepts to help you think about school teaching and how it is related to arrangements of time and space:

- internal time and space;
- external time and space;
- activities, agents and intentions;
- formal purposes;
- elements of teaching;
- practices;
- institutions;
- regulative and constitutive rules.



You should also be able to use these concepts to help you reflect critically on your own teaching, its special demands and challenges.

On the previous page you will find a map of the main concepts and key points in Section Two.

How activities shape, and are shaped by, time and space

2.2

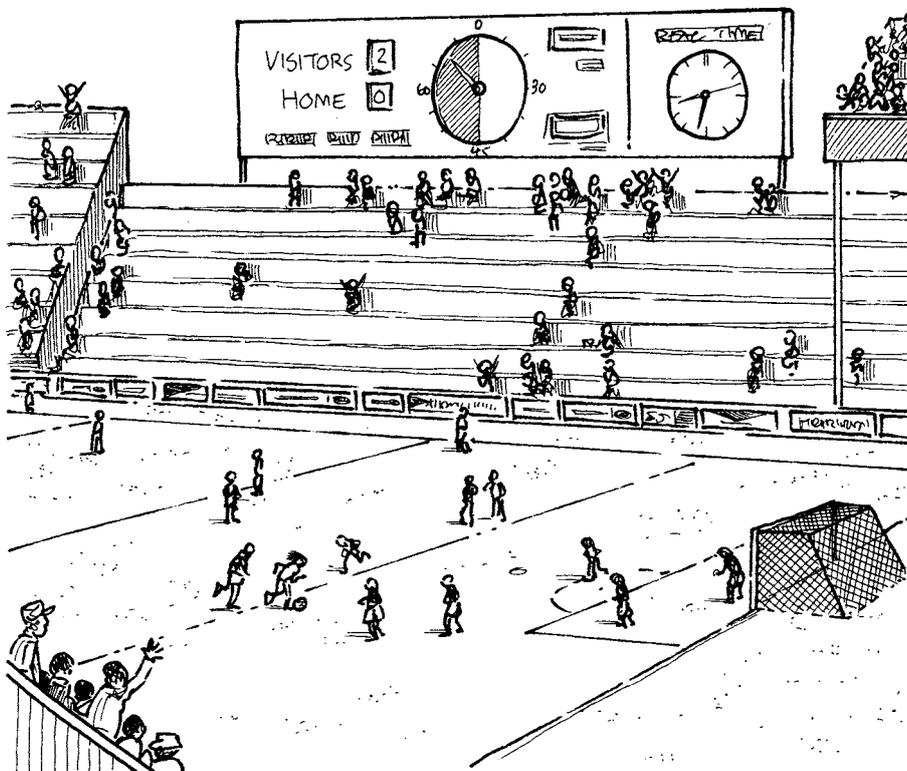
Let's think about teaching and the ways in which it is shaped by, and shapes, time and space.

What does this mean? We know what it would be to shape a piece of clay or wood, but can *time and space* be shaped? And can activities be shaped by time and space? We can begin to answer these questions by thinking about some familiar activities and how they shape, and are shaped by, time and space.

Time and space in familiar activities

Time and space in sport

A soccer match is shaped by time and space in obvious ways. The match starts at some particular time, is 90 minutes long, each half is 45 minutes, and the match takes place at a particular place, on a field with clearly- marked boundaries. These time and space conditions form the limits within which the match takes place, and they 'shape' it in a particular way, the strategies of the teams would be different if the field was larger or smaller, or the time longer or shorter. But such conditions are *external* to the game itself; they are not under the control of the players while the match is being played.



In a soccer game, there are clear boundaries in terms of external time and space.

But there are other elements of time and space which are under the control of the players while the match is being played, and which are *internal* to the game itself. A successful soccer team is one that shapes the game by having good control over time and space during the match. The way in which the members of a team occupy the field, the positions they take up, and the timing of their attacking or defensive moves or their passes to each other have an important effect on the outcome of the match. In a good team the players always seem to be in the right place at the right time. TV commentators are aware of these dimensions of internal time and space when they describe teams, or players, as 'creating space' or as 'seeming to have all the time in the world'. We understand what comments like this mean, and they express something very important about what it is to play soccer well - to shape the game by having good control over its internal time and space.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here. .

Stop. Think.

Think of examples of external and internal time and space in the game of cricket. How different are they to the external and internal time and space in soccer?

Cricket matches are shaped by time limits, and the size of the field. 'One-day cricket' is different from four-day matches, and on smaller fields, where the boundaries are closer to the batsmen, we can expect more fours and sixes. A game of cricket is, in this way, shaped by external time and space conditions. But there is also the internal time and space of cricket. The placing of the fielders shapes the match in a particular way; it makes a difference to the number of runs that can be scored and how quickly. A successful cricket captain will have a good sense of where to place the fielders in particular conditions, for a particular batsman and at a particular stage of the match. The control of internal time and space – when to bring on a fast bowler, from which end of the pitch the bowler should bowl, when to change to a slow left-arm spinner, when to go for a high-risk strategy, when to slow the game down, the sequence in which the batting team sends in its players to bat, and so on – also contributes significantly to shaping the match.

As in the case of soccer, the external time and space conditions of cricket are decided in advance of the match, and perhaps by people other than the players themselves, and during the match they are not under the control of the players. But again, as in the case of soccer, internal time and space *are* under the control of the players while the match is being played, and success depends, in large part, on which team manages most successfully to control internal time and space.

Time and space in other activities

Think now of a different kind of activity – choir singing – and the ways in which it is shaped by external time and space, and how the participants themselves shape the internal time and space of their singing. The performance of the choir is scheduled for a particular time and venue, probably arranged in advance, and possibly by people other than the choir members themselves. The performance will be shaped by these arrangements: the time allotted for it – say ten minutes or an hour – and the particular characteristics of the venue. A programme suitable for a ten-minute performance in a large hall is likely to be different from what would be suitable for a three-hour performance at an open-air venue or a forty-minute performance in a small room. But within the boundaries of such *external* conditions of time and space the choir itself will shape the *internal* time and space of its performance. The sopranos all stand together and in front of the tenors and for particular items the various parts of the choir might be differently arranged. In the case of choir singing the control of internal time is obviously at the heart of a successful performance. For example, the sopranos may need to come in with their piece at the precise moment at which the tenors reach the loudest point in a section, etc. As in the case of both soccer and cricket, here again, external conditions of time and space shape the

activity in a particular way, and might not be under the control of the participants at all, certainly not during the performance. But the shaping, and very success of the activity, depends heavily on the ways in which the participants shape the activity by controlling its internal time and space.

Stop. Think.

Think of a few other examples of activities that you know something about (perhaps cooking, boxing, ballroom dancing, tennis, aerobics, golf, netball, road running or gymnastics) and think about:

- how they are shaped by *external time* and *space conditions*, and
- how the participants themselves shape the *internal time* and *space* of the activity.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

Your examples and those of soccer, cricket and choir singing, highlight the ways in which these activities are shaped by external arrangements of time and space, and the ways in which the participants themselves shape the internal time and space of the activity. But they also begin to show us two other things:

- how the control of internal time and space contributes to success in the activity; and
- how different the appropriate organization of internal time and space is in different activities.

This is what we need to think about next.

Controlling the internal time and space of an activity

There are usually fairly obvious practical reasons for the arrangements of *external* time and space of the activities we have considered. Soccer matches generally begin at three or four on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, rather than at three o'clock on a Monday morning. Ballroom-dancing competitions take place in halls with wooden floors, and gymnastics takes place in well-lit venues. It would be very odd for a choir performance to be scheduled to take place in a noisy factory or a golf match to be scheduled to take place in darkness. But marathons usually start early in the morning, and it doesn't matter if it is dark or if the route leads through a noisy industrial area.

But what are the reasons for the organization of *internal* time and space?

How do the participants know what kind of organization of time and space is appropriate for the activity? These reasons depend on what the activity is. The participants know what kind of organization of internal time and space is appropriate because they understand the activity. A cricket captain knows where to place the fielders and when to bring on the slow bowler because he understands the activity of playing cricket. And we might add that the deeper his understanding of cricket the more likely it will be that his control and organization of the internal time and space of the game will lead to success.

Activities are different from each other: cooking is different from playing netball, and both are different from playing rugby, running marathons or making pots. Different activities require different organizations of internal time and space, and the participants in any activity know what the appropriate shaping of the internal time and space of the activity is because they understand what is distinctive of the activity.

Before we turn our attention to the activity of teaching, and what is distinctive of it, there is something important that we need to notice. We have been thinking about activities and the shaping and control of their time and space, and have considered a range of examples - from playing soccer to doing cooking and making pots. These activities are very different from each other but we call all of them 'activities'. Why is this?

2.3

Human actions and intentions

Activities always involve people, and they are things that people *do* rather than things which simply happen, people take part in activities *intentionally*. Let's think a bit more about human actions and intentions.

Jumping off a cliff is different from falling off a cliff, and both of these are different from being pushed off a cliff. Here are the differences:

1. Jumping off a cliff is something that someone *does*, it is an action performed with an *intention*, and the person who jumps can be called the *agent* of that action. The agent of an action is the person who has the intention and does the action.
2. Falling off a cliff is something that simply happens to someone, it is an accident, not an action, and there is no agent or intention involved.
3. Being pushed off a cliff is not an accident, there is an agent involved, but the agent in such a case is not the person who is pushed but the person who did the pushing. Something happens to the person who is pushed, she is not an agent but the victim of someone else's action and intention.

Human actions and other events

The distinction between human actions and other events is extremely important in our lives, including in our understanding of teaching and learning. We hold people responsible, or accountable, for their actions. We praise or blame people for the actions they perform, not for what they suffer or simply happens to them.

Practise making this distinction between human actions and other events by doing the following activity in your workbook.



Set aside about 20 minutes for this activity. You might like to reread and assess what you have written before you proceed.

ACTIVITY 1

Make a chart in your workbook, like this:

Human actions	Other events

In a typical newspaper or radio or television news bulletin there is usually a mixed bag of items. Look through the following list of news items, and write each under the appropriate heading in your chart (Hint: In each case ask whether there is a human *agent* with *intentions*):

- an earthquake has taken place in Turkey
- a shop owner in Khayelitsha has been murdered
- a new law has been passed in Parliament
- a young woman has been raped at a taxi rank in Pretoria
- a project to alleviate poverty has been successful
- a river in KwaZulu-Natal has flooded and destroyed an informal settlement
- the World Bank has agreed to lend South Africa 10 billion US dollars
- a huge storm is approaching Northern Province
- someone has rescued a swimmer attacked by a shark
- a building has collapsed in Gauteng

You probably found it quite easy to see that the murder, the rape, and the rescue are human actions – actions performed with intentions and for which the agents can be held responsible, and for which it would be appropriate for them to be punished or rewarded. You also probably found it quite easy to see that the earthquake, the flood, and the storm are 'other events' and not human actions. This is because no intentions or human agents are involved in these cases and, although we might be distressed by the consequences of such events, there is no one to blame or punish.

The other items on the list might have given you more difficulty. The collapse of the building should probably be classified under the 'other events' heading. The reason would be that, in spite of the collapse being, perhaps, a consequence of poor design or sloppy building – for which those who did these things can be blamed – the collapse of the building itself was not done by anybody, it was not the outcome of an agent's intention. For this reason the collapse of the building is not a human action.

By contrast with this, the passing of a new law in parliament is a human action, although in such a case it is a collective action and we can talk of *collective agency*. The project to alleviate poverty is also a human action – someone or some group of people must have had the intention to alleviate poverty – and this person (agent) or these people (agents) deserve praise.

The item about the World Bank lending money is interesting. Clearly the lending itself is a human action, and the collective agent of this action is the World Bank, so this item needs to be classified as a human action. But we need to notice something about this case, which is going to be useful when we turn our attention to teaching. A loan cannot be given unless the recipient agrees to accept it – there must be this kind of agreement between the two parties. The World Bank agrees to give the loan, but South Africa must agree to accept it. There are, thus, two agents involved, and two actions, (a) the action of giving the loan, and (b) the action of accepting the loan. The action of lending is incomplete, it needs a partner action, and it thus involves two agents acting in co-ordination with each other. In other words, lending is a *dual agency action*. Although we can identify and describe the two actions and agents separately, their actions are interdependent; there can be no such action as someone giving a loan unless there is also the action of someone accepting the loan – the news item mentions only the first action. We can contrast the action of giving a loan with the actions of giving someone a gift or pushing someone off a cliff. In these cases there are also (at least) two people involved but the recipient of the gift or the person pushed are not agents – they are simply the persons who benefit from or suffer from the actions of other people.

Human agency in shaping of time and space

Shaping external time and space

Using the distinction between human actions and other events, let's now look back to our previous discussion of the ways in which activities shape, and are shaped by, time and space. We saw how activities are shaped by the organization of external time and space, and we noted how the organization of external time and space is not under the control of the participants during the activity. The organization of external time and space is, clearly, a human action – it is not something that merely happens, like a storm or an earthquake. But the agents of this action are not necessarily the participants in the activity in question. In fact, the participants are usually not the agents who organize external time and space.

Shaping internal time and space

Shaping the internal time and space of an activity is also a human action but the agents here can only be the participants themselves. The soccer team and the choir members, the gymnast and the marathon runner are the agents who control the internal time and space of these activities. In competitive activities, such as cricket

matches or marathon races, some participants might become the victims of their opponents' organization of time and space, but the most successful competitors are those who can assert their agency – they can 'dictate' the pace of the game and manage to 'dominate' the field. Within the boundaries of external time and space, the control and shaping of internal time and space are actions of the participants during the activity, and the participants in these activities need to see themselves as responsible for the shaping of internal time and space. Their success in the activity depends, in large part, on whether they take responsibility for shaping the internal time and space of the activity.

But, as we have noted, the appropriate shaping of internal time and space is different for different activities. Thus, for participants in any activity to take responsibility for shaping the internal time and space of the activity they need to understand the activity and what is distinctive of it. The actions they perform in shaping the internal time and space of the activity will be guided by their intentions, and if their actions are going to be appropriate their intentions will themselves need to be informed by a proper understanding of what is distinctive of the activity.

In the next section we are going to think directly about the activity of teaching and what is distinctive of it. We need to do this because teachers are the responsible agents in the shaping of the internal time and space of teaching – they can do this well only if they understand the activity of teaching.

Teaching as an activity

2.4

You already know quite a lot about teaching. You would not be here, reading this module, if you did not. You have been a student for many years in school, and perhaps also in college, and you have probably also done some teaching. Let's find some examples of teaching to help us to think about teaching as an activity. For a start, recall three examples of teaching from your own experience.

ACTIVITY 2

1. In your workbook, briefly describe three examples of teaching that you have experienced. Try to think of three examples that are as different as possible from each other. Identify each example with a few words, or a sentence or two. Label your examples (a), (b), and (c) to make it easier to refer to them later.
2. Think about your three examples by answering the following eight questions:
 - a Are all three of your examples cases of teaching taking place in schools?
 - b Are all the 'teachers' in your examples people employed as teachers in schools?
 - c Are you the 'teacher' in any of your examples?
 - d Are any of your examples cases in which more than one teacher was involved?
 - e Are any of your examples cases of teaching in which the 'teacher' was younger than the 'learners'?
 - f Are any of your examples cases in which the learners were not school or college students?
 - g Are any of your examples cases in which only one learner was involved?
 - h Are any of your examples cases of teaching that took place over a long time (more than the length of a school lesson)?



You will need 15 to 20 minutes for this activity. It's a good idea to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding. You do not need to write anything in your workbook for questions a-h. For some of these questions a simple 'yes' or 'no' is enough of an answer, but you must try to think carefully about your three examples, and your answers to these questions.

The point of the questions in Activity 2 is to try to break the hold of the common idea that teaching takes place only in classrooms in schools and colleges and other formal institutions of learning. Your three examples, (a), (b), and (c), are probably examples of this specialized kind of teaching.

The common picture of teaching is too narrow

From your own experience you know that teaching is found not only in classrooms in formal institutions of learning. You know that in everyday life mothers teach their children how to eat their food properly, grandfathers teach their grandchildren how to grow vegetables, older brothers and sisters teach their younger brothers and sisters how to dress themselves or clean their teeth, and school-going children might teach an older relative how to speak English, or to read. When we think carefully about teaching we are reminded that teaching is an activity which is constantly present in the everyday lives of normal human communities. In fact, most teaching takes place outside of the walls and timetables of schools and colleges, and most teaching is done by anyone who knows something that someone else does not, and not only by people called 'teachers' or 'lecturers'.

The common picture of teaching is too narrow. It covers only a restricted range of examples of teaching, and this is why it is misleading if we are trying to find out what is distinctive of the activity of teaching in order to think clearly about the appropriate shaping of its internal time and space.

In introducing Activity 2 one of the things we suggested is that you already know

“
Teaching is an activity which is constantly present in the everyday lives of normal human communities.
 ”

a lot about teaching because 'you have been a student for many years in school'. We can now see that this might have taken you off on too narrow a path. To say that you have been a 'student' for many years is different from saying that you have been a 'learner' for many years. You have been a learner for many more years than you have been a student, and many of the things you have learnt you learnt outside of schools and colleges. And a lot of what you have learnt you were taught by people who were not officially teachers. In the first five or six years of your life, before you ever went to school, you learnt some of the most important things you will ever learn, such as how to speak a language and be a human being. Throughout your life, many different people with whom you have come into contact have taught you many different things.

Also, in introducing Activity 2, we suggested that you 'have probably done some teaching'. Perhaps you took this to mean that you have probably already taught in a school, or some other formal institution of learning. But, thinking now in terms of the general activity of teaching, it is extremely unlikely that you have done no teaching at all. Think of examples such as mothers teaching children how to use a spoon to eat their food, uncles teaching their nephews how to restart a car which has stopped, sisters or brothers teaching each other, or their friends, how to dress fashionably or how to play some game, or of a grandmother teaching a grandchild how to thread a needle. As a normal member of a human community you must be able to think of many examples of teaching that you have done, although they might not have come to mind when you were thinking of examples for Activity 2.

Think, also, of how teaching some kinds of things can take extended periods of time, perhaps even years. Think, for example of the time it takes to teach a person how to read or write, and the time it takes to teach a person how to speak another language fluently. These examples also help us think about another way in which the common picture of teaching can be very misleading. That picture suggests that in all cases of teaching only a single teacher is involved. But we know that we were taught how to read or write by a series of teachers, over a number of years. We can also think of other examples in which a number of teachers are involved - a novice motorcar mechanic might be taught his skills by the half a dozen experienced mechanics already working in the garage.

Now think of some additional examples of teaching, examples that break free of the common picture.



Set aside 15 to 20 minutes for this task. Remember to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding.

ACTIVITY 3

In your workbook, write down an example of teaching for each of the following:

- d** An example of teaching which does not take place in a school.
- e** An example of teaching in which the 'teacher' is not someone employed as a teacher.
- f** An example in which you are the 'teacher' but are not teaching in a school.
- g** An example of teaching in which more than one teacher is involved.
- h** An example of teaching in which the teacher is younger than the learners. An example of teaching in which the learners are not school or college students.
- i** An example of teaching in which only one learner is involved.
- j** An example of teaching which extends over a long time.

You have now provided eleven examples of teaching in your workbook (in Activity 2 and 3), and we have given some other examples in the previous paragraphs. The next question to ask is how we can know whether they are examples of teaching rather than of some other kind of activity, such as, for example, choir singing, gardening, cooking, playing soccer, entertaining or making a political speech. In some ways the examples will be very different from each other, mentioning different teachers, different learners and different things being taught, in different times, places and settings, but what we need to do now is to ask in what ways they are all

the same as each other. What reason do we have to say that in spite of their obvious differences they are all examples of teaching? What is it that makes them all examples of teaching? This question will help us to discover what is distinctive of the activity of teaching – and how we tell the difference between teaching and other activities. Remember that we are trying to find this out so that we can think clearly about the appropriate organization of the internal time and space of teaching.

So, what is it that makes them all examples of teaching? We already have a starting point for answering this question. Teaching is an activity and, as such, is done by an agent (or agents) with intentions. In this way teaching is more like jumping off a cliff than either falling or being pushed off a cliff. The agent of the activity of teaching is the 'teacher'. Remember that we are talking not only about people who are officially teachers in schools or colleges. But there is an important way in which teaching is not like jumping off a cliff, and noticing this difference will take us forward to an answer to the question of what makes them all examples of teaching.

2.5

How can we tell whether someone is teaching?

Identifying what activity a person is doing



Week 2 begins.

We can identify a case of someone jumping off a cliff by looking, and finding out what the intentions of the person were. We need to see, for example, a person standing at the top of a cliff and then dropping down the cliff in a situation where his foot did not slip, where no one else pushed or shoved him and where there is no obvious event (such as a sudden gust of wind) that might have caused him to fall. And we need either to ask him or to find out in some other way what his intentions were.

But when trying to identify a case of teaching, there is no particular action we would have to observe. Someone who is teaching might, or might not, be speaking, or showing or demonstrating something, explaining something, writing in a book, doing an exercise, playing a musical instrument, giving instructions to someone, telling someone something, and so on. Someone might be doing any of these things and yet not be teaching, and there is no particular action a person must be doing in order to be correctly described as teaching. Furthermore, even to add the intentions of the agent to this story does not give us a foolproof answer to the question of whether the person is teaching. Those intentions themselves need to be of a particular kind.

Let's think of a contrast between teaching and playing tennis, baking a cake or riding a bicycle. Simply by looking we can discover whether or not someone is playing tennis, baking a cake or riding a bicycle. Someone can't be playing tennis, for example, unless they are using a tennis racquet and trying to hit a tennis ball. It could never be correct to describe someone as baking a cake unless they were measuring some ingredients, mixing some ingredients together or putting a cake-tin filled with the mixture into an oven. Similarly we can describe someone as 'riding a bicycle' only if they are on a bicycle and pushing the pedals to make it move forward.

But this method of simply looking doesn't work in the case of teaching and some other familiar activities.



Pause to think about these examples before reading on.

Stop. Think.

Think of the examples of the activities of working, housework and gardening. What would you look for to see whether someone was doing these activities?

If you were told that someone was working what might you expect to see if you went to see what they were doing? Well, you might see them standing behind a shop counter, or writing, or digging a hole in the ground, or playing cricket, or painting a roof or a picture, or singing, or carrying a piece of furniture, or driving a car ... And this list simply goes on and on. In trying to find out whether or not someone is really working we would need to discover what their intentions are, and some other things as well- such as whether they are being paid to do whatever it is they are doing. Not everyone who is playing cricket or singing is working, although some might be, and we can't, simply by looking, answer the question of which cricket players or singers are working and which are not.

Similarly, if we were told that Pat was doing housework we cannot be at all sure what it is that we would observe if we went to try to find out whether this was true. We might see Pat sweeping the floor, making the beds, cleaning the windows or dusting the furniture, or we might see him doing none of these things because at

this time he happens to be washing the dishes. Pat must be doing *some* action if it is true that he is doing housework but there is no particular action that he *must* be doing now. How then, can we tell whether or not it is true that he is doing housework? The answer here is that he must be doing anyone of a wide range of possibly relevant actions and that he must be doing it with intentions that form part of the formal purpose of the activity of housekeeping.

The concept of the *formal purpose of an activity* is going to become central to this module, and one of our main tools in thinking about the organization of the time and space of teaching. So let us think about what this concept means.

The formal purpose of an activity

What we need to notice here is that the formal purpose of an activity is a concept which is shared in a community, it is not something that can be changed by a decision, and it is not personal or subjective.

If we saw Pat, for example, sitting and watching the TV then he cannot be doing the housework. He might tell us that he is indeed doing the housework, and try to persuade us that the action of sitting and watching TV falls within the range of actions of doing housework, but his story would have to be very good to persuade us to agree with it. But if he tells us that he sees no reason why he should conform to someone else's concept of housework, that he has his own concept of housework – his *own view* about what the formal purpose is of the activity of doing housework – and according to his concept, sitting and watching TV is part of doing housework, then we will not be persuaded. What the formal purpose is of the activity of doing housework was not decided by anyone, and it is not *owned* by anyone, and it is not possible for any individual person to change it. It is part of the shared understanding of a community.

Think, now, of how we could find out whether Martha is gardening. She must be doing something observable and definite – she must be doing an activity such as digging, planting the seeds, pruning a tree, or raking the path – but there is no *particular* thing that she must be doing. To find out whether or not it is true that she is gardening we would need to find out whether she is doing something within the very generous range of actions which might fall within the scope of the formal purpose of gardening, and she must be doing it with intentions appropriate to that purpose. If we do not know very much about gardening we would not be in a good position to make reliable judgements about whether someone was or was not gardening if we saw them, for instance, pouring a bucket of water into a hole in the ground. And if our understanding of gardening was shallow we might think that there is nothing more to gardening than, for example, cutting the grass. So, we may think that if Martha is not cutting the grass that means she is not gardening. But we would, of course, be wrong if we thought this.

There is a word we can use to describe activities such as working or doing housework or gardening – they are *polymorphous* activities, activities that take many forms. Someone doing housework or gardening could be doing any of a wide range of actions – but this range is not unlimited. If someone is lying in bed, running in the forest, or sitting and watching TV, then they simply cannot be doing housework or gardening. If we want to know which actions and intentions are appropriate to an activity we need to ask what the formal purpose of the activity is.

Polymorphous activities, unlike activities such as jumping off a cliff, playing tennis, baking cakes or riding bicycles, cannot be identified by straightforward observation. *Polymorphous activities are defined by their formal purpose*, and that purpose draws the boundary around both what could count as appropriate actions and what could count as appropriate intentions for the agent. In order to know whether or not anyone is doing any of these polymorphous activities we need to be able to observe some appropriate action, and we need to know whether the intentions of the agent are appropriate to the activity. And what is appropriate depends on what

the *formal purpose* of the activity is. It is the formal purpose of the activity that is the same across the various examples of the activity, and we can't find out what the formal purpose is merely by looking.

Teaching is a polymorphous activity, it takes a variety of forms, and it is defined by its formal purpose. Someone who is teaching might be engaging in any of a wide range of actions, and there is no straightforward observation that could be used to discover whether anyone is teaching. This is the key to answering the question of what, in spite of their obvious differences, is the same across all our examples of teaching. They are all, in their various ways, examples of actions guided by the formal purpose which defines the activity of teaching, and they all involve agents whose intentions are shaped by that purpose.

What have we learnt so far?

Here are the main points of our discussion about how we can tell whether someone is teaching:

1. A person who is teaching must be engaging in some appropriate *action*, and must be engaging in that action with appropriate *intentions*.
2. We can tell what the *appropriate* actions and intentions are only in terms of the formal purpose that defines the activity of teaching.
3. The *formal purpose* of an activity is a concept that is shared in a community, it is neither personal nor subjective.

But what is the formal purpose of the activity of teaching? This is what we need to think about next.



The formal purpose of the activity of teaching

2.6

In your workbook you have written eleven examples of teaching (from Activity 2 and 3) and, in Section 2.4, about twelve other examples are mentioned. We raised the question of what it is that makes all of these examples of teaching. If we think that by simply looking we will discover what is common to all the examples, this is a difficult question to answer. But if we understand that teaching is a polymorphous activity, defined by its formal purpose, we have a way of answering the question. But only if we are clear what that purpose is.

ACTIVITY 4

Look back over the examples we have gathered in Activity 2 and 3 and in Section 2.4. In your workbook, make a list in point form of what is the *same* across all the examples.



Set aside 30 to 45 minutes for this task. What you write here provides an important first step for thinking about the formal purpose of teaching. So it's a good idea to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding.

Teaching requires a double object

Here is another example of teaching: Khaya (T) is teaching Peter (L) how to drive a car (C). Think of this as a sentence and think about how in most simple sentences we can find a subject, a verb and an object. In the sentence 'Mandisa hit the dog', the subject is 'Mandisa', the verb is 'hit' and the object is 'the dog'. Now think about 'Khaya is teaching Peter how to drive a motor car'. The subject of this sentence is 'Khaya' and the verb is 'is teaching', but there are *two objects* – both 'Peter' and 'how to drive a motor car'. This is an unusual feature of the verb 'to teach' - it requires a double object.

This is a key point in understanding the formal purpose of the activity of teaching. Teaching always requires a double object – someone being taught (L) and something being taught (C). Sometimes when people, and even teachers themselves, think about teaching they forget this, and when they do then they might say things like 'I teach children, not subjects', or they might think of teaching as a 'process' without thinking of any 'content'. But we can see now that this can't make sense. If you are teaching children, you must be able to say what you are teaching them, and the 'process' of teaching necessarily involves something being taught.

We can emphasize this point by saying that we can always ask two questions of anyone who says they are teaching:

- 'Who are you teaching?' and
- 'What are you teaching them?'

These same two questions can be used in a variety of different contexts. We can ask someone who is planning some teaching: who are you going to teach, and what are you going to teach them? And these same two questions can be used in analyzing (thinking carefully about) any example of teaching.

There are thus three basic things involved in all examples of teaching:

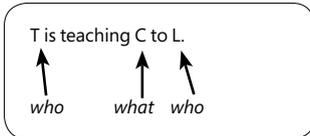
- a teacher (or teachers);
- something being taught (the 'content' of the teaching); and
- a learner (or learners).

In any example of teaching we must be able to identify these three things: who is teaching (this might be one person, or a number of people), what they are teaching, and *who* they are teaching (again, this could be one person or many). Here we have something that must be in all examples of teaching. In some of your examples you might not definitely have mentioned each of these three things separately but

merely implied them in the example – nevertheless they must be there, otherwise it cannot be an example of teaching at all.

A formula for the activity of teaching

To help us to remember this we can use the following formula: T is *teaching* C to L. We call this a formula because it is an empty sentence pattern, it does not mention any particular teachers or learners and it does not mention what is being taught. The letters T, C, and L stand for *any* teacher, content and learner, and the formula is a *general* formula for all cases of teaching. This formula is like a skeleton; actual examples of teaching put flesh on the skeleton by referring to particular teachers, content, and learners.



As we have seen from the many examples we have considered, for many people who teach we have no special names – they are simply mothers, uncles, grandpas, sisters, brothers or friends – but for some who teach we have specialized names such as 'teacher', 'coach', 'instructor', 'trainer', 'lecturer', 'facilitator' or 'mentor'. We do not need to worry about these special labels here, or how they might be different from each other. In the formula, T stands for any teacher and C stands for the content – for *whatever* is being taught and learnt in any situation. Sometimes the content is a 'subject' -like arithmetic or history; sometimes it is a learning area – like life orientation; sometimes it is an activity – like reading, playing netball, or fixing a door, sometimes it is a skill or competence -like how to use a spanner, how to greet strangers, or how to thread a needle. And, of course, not all learners are called 'students' – in our formula anyone who is trying to learn is a learner.

Now practise using this formula by doing the following activity:



You should spend about 30 minutes on this task. It's a good idea to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding.

ACTIVITY 5

Make a chart like the following in your workbook and complete it with reference to the eleven examples (a - k) of teaching you have provided in Activity 2 and 3. (In some of your examples you might not have mentioned who the teacher is, what was being taught or who the learners were. Here you will have to work that out. Remember, too, that in some of your examples there might be more than one teacher, and more than one learner.)

T	is teaching	C	To L
a			
b			
c			
d			
e			
f			
g			
h			
i			
j			
k			

This formula (T is teaching C to L) provides us with a major step towards understanding what the formal purpose is (what is distinctive) of the activity of teaching. At this point, look back in your workbook to what you wrote for Activity 4 when you tried to say what was the same across all the examples of teaching we have been considering. See whether there are other things you mentioned there which are *not* expressed in our formula. Perhaps you remembered what we noticed in thinking about the example (in Activity 1) of the World Bank agreeing to lend South Africa 10 billion US dollars, and perhaps you mentioned something about how teaching is a dynamic activity – something our highly abstract and 'bloodless' formula doesn't mention.

Teaching is a co-operative activity

Remember when we discussed the example of the World Bank lending money to South Africa that we said that the action of lending is 'incomplete' – it needs a partner action and involves at least two agents acting in co-ordination with each other. Teaching is also like this. On its own, it is 'incomplete'; it needs a partner action. Teaching is a *co-operative activity*, teachers and learners are not in competition with each other (although it may often seem this way); they need to co-operate for teaching to be possible. This is not brought out dearly in our formula. The 'L' in the formula does indeed refer to a learner, or to learners, but it tells us nothing about what they should be doing. The activity of teaching is incomplete without the action of trying to learn. This is one reason for saying that the formula is not a satisfactory account of the formal purpose of the activity of teaching.

The formula is too static, it doesn't make clear enough that teaching involves an active, co-operative relationship between the teacher and the learner(s), and, although the teacher is the main agent, both the teacher and the learner(s) have important parts to play. This is similar to the case of giving someone a loan (rather than a gift); there can be no such thing as the action of giving a loan without the partner action of someone accepting the loan. Learners are not merely the passive victims of teaching. For teaching to be successful, the learners need to engage actively in trying to learn. But we need to add that part of the responsibility of anyone who is teaching is to act in a way that encourages learners to learn. Teaching is a dynamic activity, and success in teaching depends largely on whether the person doing the teaching stimulates and enables the learners to engage in the actions of trying to learn. We now have what we need to express the formal purpose of the activity of teaching:

The *formal purpose* of the activity of teaching is to bring it about that someone (L) tries to learn something.

Take note of this key point about the formal purpose of the activity of teaching.

Conditions for learning – time and space

The formal purpose of teaching shows us something about how teaching is related to time and space. In order to bring about that someone tries to learn something, the *conditions for learning* need to be taken into account. These include conditions of time and space, which vary according to who the learners are and what they are trying to learn. Subsequent sections in this module develop this point in detail, but here we can note some brief points.

The time it takes different learners to learn something

We all know that some learners take a much longer time than others to learn certain things. A brother in a family might take a long time to learn how to greet strangers politely but his sister might learn this very quickly- almost spontaneously. But the same brother might learn very quickly how to make clay pots while his sister takes a long time to learn this. There are some things which younger learners usually learn much more quickly than older learners – we might think here of the comparatively short time it takes for a normal human being to learn their first language.

What is being learnt?

In general, how long it takes to learn something also depends on some features of what it is that is being learnt. If what is being learnt is a straight- forward item of information such as the birth date of the president or the size of the population in China, this might be learnt in an instant. But if what is being learnt is something complex such as how to read or solve quadratic equations, it is likely – as we know from our own experience – that it will take a long time, perhaps years.

Appropriate space for learning

In the same kinds of ways the conditions for learning include conditions that have to do with space and place. For example, one cannot learn a physical skill like how to ride a bicycle or balance on top of a fence while sitting in a classroom, and one cannot learn to write if one is not in a place which is something like a classroom. Learning how to do woodwork is much more difficult if you are not learning it in a workshop with the appropriate tools and benches or in a classroom that is set up like a workshop. This is a reason why the teachers of some subjects would like to have specialized class- rooms.

Appropriate time and space for learning different activities

There are many different ways in which the conditions for learning show the ways in which teaching – understood as the activity of bringing it about that someone tries to learn something – is related to time and space. As I have said, this topic is developed in detail in the other sections of this module. But there is one very important general point that is worth high- lighting here. Some kinds of things can be learnt best out on the streets or in the fields, but there are other kinds of things that can be learnt best in schools and other formal institutions of learning. If we think carefully about the conditions for learning – especially those conditions that have to do with time and space – we can understand why it is a mistake to think that schools can teach everything that can be learnt. 'School knowledge' is a selection of knowledge and one very important criterion for this selection is that it is the kind of knowledge which can be learnt in the time and space characteristic of schools.

Concluding points about the formal purpose of the activity of teaching

Before we carry these understandings forward, there are two important things we need to remember:

- 1 Teaching because teaching can take many forms, it is a polymorphous activity,

and there is no particular action that it *must* involve. Someone who is teaching might be talking, but they might not be, they might be writing on a chalkboard, but they might not be, and so on.

Stop. Think.

Look back over the many examples of teaching we already have – both those given in this book and those you thought of. In each case, ask whether they fit in with what we have now said is the formal purpose of teaching. If you can find an example which seems to you clearly to be a case of teaching but which does not fit the formal purpose of teaching, think about it very carefully. Perhaps you'll find out that we have not yet been successful in expressing the formal purpose of the activity of teaching or perhaps you will be persuaded that what seemed to be an example of teaching wasn't really an example of teaching but of some other activity.

- 2 The external time and space of an activity is not under the control of the participants during the activity. However, they do have some control over the internal time and space. In fact, for an activity to be successful, it usually depends on the participants having good control of its internal time and space. The formal purpose of the activity of teaching is what is distinctive of the activity of teaching. So, if anyone is going to know how to shape the internal time and space of teaching satisfactorily they need to know this formal purpose. If they understand that the formal purpose of teaching is to bring it about that someone (a learner, or learners) tries to come to learn something, then they will have some sense of how the internal time and space of the activity needs to be organized.



Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

What have we learnt so far?

Let's summarize some key points before moving on:

- 1 Different activities require different arrangements of time and space. Participants in an activity know how to shape internal time and space appropriately because they understand what is distinctive of the activity.
- 2 Teaching is distinguished by its formal purpose, which is to bring it about that learners try to come to learn something.
- 3 When teachers arrange the internal time and space of teaching, they need to think about which arrangements will best enable learning.

2.7

The practice of teaching



Week 3 begins.

We have already come a long way since we started to think about how the activity of teaching shapes, and is shaped by, time and space. We have been thinking of teaching as a familiar activity that is constantly part of the everyday lives of normal human communities, and we concluded that this activity is defined by its formal purpose – which is to bring it about that someone tries to learn something. We are now going to start thinking about the specialized kind of teaching which takes place in schools, in formal institutions of learning. To identify this specialized kind of teaching we will call it 'school teaching', and we will now think about it as a practice. To call something a practice is to claim that it is an activity, but an activity with some special characteristics. Like all teaching, school teaching is an activity. Thus what we have discovered so far applies to school teaching as well, but it has some special characteristics. Some of these characteristics are that it normally takes place in the context of an institution, that it characteristically involves teaching a number of learners simultaneously, and that those who do this kind of teaching are usually professionally employed in this capacity. Although these characteristics are important in thinking about school teaching, they are not essential to its being a practice. In subsequent sections of this module these other characteristics will be explored in detail. Here we will think about the implications of thinking of teaching as a practice.

Characteristics of practices

We shall here briefly introduce five characteristics of practices in general, and then, in Activity 6, you will have a chance to think about how they can provide us with some important insights into school teaching. The five characteristics of practices are:

- 1 Practices are necessarily social.
- 2 Practices have histories and traditions.
- 3 Practices are flexible in relation to changing conditions.
- 4 A practice can change, but only within the boundaries of our understanding of what makes it a distinctive practice.
- 5 Practices have their own internal standards of success and excellence.

As you read about each characteristic, think about how it applies in the case of school teaching. This will help you to prepare for Activity 6.



1 Practices are necessarily social

In a stronger way than in the case of some other activities, practices are shared and sustained in *communities of practitioners*. To see something as a practice places much more emphasis on the way in which it is necessary that it is social. This is not merely a point about how some activities – such as, for example, playing a team game or having a discussion – necessarily involve a number of participants acting in co-ordination with each other (a person cannot play hockey or chess, or teach, by themselves.) But it is a point about how what could even count as an example of participating in the activity cannot be a matter of personal intentions or individual decision. There are some practices, such as writing a novel, which might be done by a single person working on their own, nevertheless, what counts as writing a novel cannot be a matter of individual decision.

We have already considered examples of this kind in relation to Pat doing housework and Martha doing gardening. Our shared understanding of housework and gardening draws a boundary around what could count as an example of participating in the practices of housework or gardening. This boundary might not be very sharp but we know that there is a boundary because we know, for example, that dozing in front of the TV cannot be a kind of housework or gardening. This boundary was established by something like agreement amongst those who participate in the activity and people who talk and think about these things. The origins of this understanding are unlikely to have been an explicit agreement at a particular moment -like agreeing to name a new child 'Thandi'. However, there is implicit agreement about the concepts in terms of which we understand this part of our world. Because this understanding is shared and communal, rather than individual or personal, we can say that it is based on interpersonal agreement. And in this way practices are essentially social.

2 Practices have histories and traditions

Unlike some other activities, practices have histories and traditions. The practices of cooking, building shelters, playing soccer or thinking scientifically, and, of course, school teaching, all have histories during which particular traditions have developed of how to participate in the practice, and of what counts as good or excellent participation. To become a participant in a practice involves critically appropriating its history and traditions, and anyone who imagines themselves as having invented a practice without having taken account of its history and traditions is simply naive or ignorant.

3 Practices are flexible in relation to changing conditions

The traditions that are embedded in a practice, and that serve, partly, to define it, are not rigid or static. Practices can be thought of as open and ongoing projects that stop changing only when they cease to have vitality and significance in our communal lives. Over time practices change, sometimes gradually, but sometimes quite rapidly. What brings such changes about is changes in our knowledge of the practice and how its definitive goals can be better served, changes in relevant technologies, and circumstances, and creative innovations from some of its participants. In these ways, practices remain open to revision and improvement.

4 A practice can change, but only within the boundaries of our understanding of what makes it a distinctive practice

Although practices are open to revision, those revisions and improvements remain within the broad boundaries that mark out the scope of the practice. There is an important difference between improving a practice and either abandoning the practice or substituting a different practice for it. Over time a practice like playing cricket changes, although the question of whether such changes count as improve-

ments is always a matter of controversy. The practice of playing cricket doesn't change by everyone simply ceasing to play cricket, or by substituting another game, such as baseball, for cricket. There is something essential to the practice of playing cricket, and changes take place within, as we might put it, the framework of that essence – otherwise the changes in question are not changes in the practice of cricket at all.

If we think back to what we have discovered in the formal purpose of the activity of teaching we can see how this might work. That formal purpose, now being seen as a formal purpose of the practice of teaching, makes a conceptual and practical boundary to what we are prepared to accept as an example of teaching. The formal purpose of teaching is to bring it about that someone tries to learn something. How this might be done is not specified in this purpose, and we know that there are many ways of doing this. Improvements in the practice of teaching might arise from changes in relevant technology, changes in our knowledge of the conditions for learning, or even from a practitioner discovering a way of accomplishing this purpose that had previously not been thought of.

5 Practices have their own internal standards of success and excellence

A very important fifth characteristic of practices is that they have internal standards of success and excellence. Someone can participate well or poorly in the practice of, for example, cooking. Some participants are much more successful than others and some even achieve excellence in this practice. The criteria for success or excellence are internal to the practice – one cannot judge the excellence of choir singing in terms of the criteria appropriate for judging the excellence of participating in the practice of gymnastics – and such judgements are not subjective or personal opinion. We can add here that when the standards of success and excellence of one practice are used in judging success or excellence in another practice, that practice can be corrupted or distorted. In Section Three you will see an example of the way this happens – there an efficiency expert uses the criteria appropriate in assessing efficiency to assess a musical performance.



You should spend about 45 to 60 minutes on this task. It's a good idea to set aside the last 10 to 15 minutes to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding.

ACTIVITY 6

In your workbook, under the following five headings write some notes in which you think about school teaching as a practice:

- 1 School teaching is an activity which is shared in a community of practitioners**
- 2 School teaching has a history and a tradition**
- 3 School teaching is an open practice**
- 4 Changes in the practice of school teaching remain within the boundary of the scope of this practice**
- 5 School teaching has internal standards of success and excellence**

School teaching as a practice

Let's now consider a formal definition of the practice of school teaching. We can begin by recalling the formal purpose we discovered for the general activity of teaching. We said that the formal purpose of the activity of teaching is to bring it about that someone tries to learn something. In defining the practice of school teaching we are not going to reject this formal purpose – school teaching is, after all, a specialized kind of teaching. But in thinking of the practice of school teaching there are other things we need to bring into view.

The formal purpose of the general activity of teaching leaves entirely unspecified what *kind* of learning is involved. For all that formal purpose says about the matter, it could be any kind of learning at all – from the most trivial bits of information to some highly complex kinds of learning, such as the moral principles in terms of which to live one's life. But schooling is centrally concerned with a very particular kind of learning, the kind of learning which leads to the development of conceptual frameworks in terms of which to understand the world in which we live our lives. Such learning needs to be systematic for it to have a chance of being successful. And in order to bring it about that someone engages in trying to learn such things, the learning needs to be organized by those who already understand those conceptual frameworks.

The point being made here might seem complicated, but an example will show that it is, in fact, quite familiar and obvious. Numeracy can be understood as a conceptual framework which we need in order to understand some very important features of the world in which we live. But learning how to be numerate – in other words how to operate with numbers and to do arithmetic – requires systematic learning which usually takes place over a number of years. It is most unlikely that such understanding could develop simply by chance or accident in the daily activities of ordinary life, and this is one reason why we think that it is appropriate for the development of such understanding to be part of the school curriculum. The teacher of numeracy needs herself to understand numeracy – what she is going to teach – and to understand it in such a way that she can organize the systematic learning of numeracy by the learners she is teaching. And here we have the elements we need to formulate a formal definition of the practice of school teaching:

School teaching is the practice of organizing systematic learning.

We need to emphasize that this definition does *not* replace the formal purpose of the activity of teaching, it takes it for granted and adds to it. 'Organizing' is an active verb which implies an agent – and the agents, in the practice of teaching, are obviously the teachers who participate in that practice. In addition, 'learning' requires learners and something being learnt. So this formal definition still meets the requirement that anyone who claims to be teaching must be able to provide adequate answers to the two key questions: 'Who are you teaching?' and 'What are you teaching them?' Finally the word 'systematic' has strong implications of orderliness through time.

To organize learning systematically means to arrange sequences of learning tasks that gradually enable the learner to grasp more and more complex skills and concepts. This sequence unfolds through time. As we have previously noted, some kinds of learning take years to accomplish, and good school teachers are those who know how to organize long stretches of learning in sequences which enable learners to access more complex kinds of knowledge.

As every primary school teacher knows, there are various 'Reading Schemes' which are expressions of the most effective sequence in which to teach reading. Some begin by teaching the letters of the alphabet, others begin with whole words, and so on. But, whatever the differences between 'Reading Schemes', and there are big differences, all of them are providing maps for programmes of systematic learning. This is at the heart of school teaching, and the example of 'Reading Schemes' shows how it can be worked out in relation to teaching reading.

Take note of this key definition of school teaching.

One other thing we need to note is that a *formal* definition of a practice is a way of specifying the boundaries to what could count as an example of the practice. But within those boundaries there are, and can be, an enormous variety of different ways of proceeding to accomplish a variety of more detailed intentions. The formal definition shows in what ways the practice of school teaching is an open project, in the sense that it is always open to renewal and improvement.

To conclude this section let us now enrich our understanding of school teaching by thinking about it in relation to institutions and rules.



Institutions and rules

2.8

Among the institutions of a society are such things as hospitals, prisons, churches, mosques, the army, the courts, and of course, schools, colleges, technikons and universities. To think about some of the similarities and differences between these institutions is a very interesting exercise. It is especially interesting in relation to thinking about how these institutions organize time and space in line with their formal purposes, and taking account of the kinds of people in them. In what ways is a school either different from or similar to a prison, or a hospital? In what ways is a university or a school like a church? In Sections Three and Four of this module you will be asked to think about some questions like this.

Here we will prepare the conceptual ground for thinking about the relationship between the practice of school teaching and its home institution, the school.

Institutions and practices

Institutions are established, and maintained, to provide a home for practices. Think, for example, of hospitals and the practices of healthcare. In the ordinary life of a normal community there are, similar to the case of teaching, ongoing informal practices of healthcare. In ordinary communities minor injuries – a child gets a thorn in her finger, another cuts his leg on the fence, and so on – and ailments such as people catching colds or having headaches, are simply dealt with on a routine basis, and any mother has a repertoire of healthcare practices to cope with these little problems. And there are some healthcare experts who participate in the practices of healthcare quite outside of the frameworks of an institution. What happens when we establish hospitals is that we create an institution that gathers together a range of healthcare practices 'under a single roof'. There might be many reasons why we do this – reasons to do with the idea, for example, that these various practices can mutually support and complement each other. But at the heart of institutions like hospitals is the idea that such practices are important enough to the whole society for them to be resourced and protected in an institution. It is obvious that the same story can be told about teaching and schooling.

However, when we take important and significant social practices into institutions then problems arise. Institutions are established precisely to enable the relevant practices to flourish, but institutions develop characteristics that tend to restrict practices, sometimes to corrupt them, or so seriously distort them that they cease to be able to accomplish their formal purposes. When this happens, then people tend to start complaining about 'The Department' or 'bureaucracy' or 'the rules'. We need no reminding of the ways in which this problem emerges in teaching and schooling.

The ideals of the practice of teaching are unlikely to flourish in a society unless we locate that practice in institutions. However, when we do that, there is the constant risk that the institutions in which we locate them will either corrupt the practices or prevent them from achieving their formal defining purposes. It is obvious that this kind of conflict is important in thinking about school teaching, and you should keep it in mind throughout this module.

We might have noted that in tensions between practices and institutions there is frequently dispute about 'the rules'. In thinking about teaching in general, but also school teaching, it is very important to consider the rules.

Rules, institutions and practices

When people think of rules they tend to think of all rules as restricting people's freedom – rules prevent people from doing what they would otherwise do. But when we think like this we have lost sight of such things as the rules of games – soccer, cricket, netball, chess, bridge, and others. The rules of a game don't prevent you from doing something, they actually make it possible for you to do it. Without the rules of cricket it would not be possible to score a (cricket) century. The rules of games can be said to create a world in which previously unimaginable activities become possible. The rules of language, and academic practices, such as mathematics or history, are the same. They do not *prevent* us from doing something; they make it *possible* for us to do something.

We can thus talk of two kinds of rules – rules that restrict or prevent us from doing something and rules that create the possibility of doing something. As we will see, the difference between these two kinds of rules is extremely important in thinking about teaching, including school teaching. Let's name these two kinds of rules *regulative* and *constitutive* rules:

- *Regulative rules* regulate behaviour and actions that are possible entirely independently of the rules.
- *Constitutive rules* create the possibility of actions that are not possible without the rules.

The following activity will help you to deepen your understanding of the two kinds of rules and their significance.



You will need about 90 minutes to read the passage and to write your responses to the questions. In the interests of your own systematic learning, it's a good idea to reread and assess what you have written before proceeding.

This is taken from Searle, J. *Mind, Language and Society* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), pp.122-24.

ACTIVITY 7

- 1 First read the following passage from a book by John Searle. Then, in your workbook, answer the questions that follow the passage:

Two different kinds of rules

Some rules regulate antecedently existing forms of behavior. Think, for example, of the rule 'Drive on the right-hand side of the road'. Driving can exist on either side of the road, but given the fact of driving, it is useful to have some way of regulating it, and so we have rules of the form 'Do this or do that'. And in general we have rules that regulate activities that exist independently of the rules. Such rules are regulative. They regulate antecedently existing forms of behavior. But not all rules are of that sort. Some rules not only regulate but also constitute, or make possible, the form of activity that they regulate. The classic example is the rules of chess. It is not the case that people were pushing bits of wood around on a board and someone finally said, 'In order to keep from banging into each other, we need to get some rules.' The rules of chess are not like the rules of driving. Rather, the very possibility of playing chess depends on there being rules of chess, because playing chess consists in acting in accordance with at least a certain sizable subset of the rules of chess. Such rules I call 'constitutive rules' because acting in accord with the rules is constitutive of the activity regulated by the rules. Constitutive rules also regulate, but they do more than regulate; they constitute the very activity that they regulate in the way that I have suggested. The distinction between brute facts and institutional facts, I have argued and will continue to argue here, can only be fully explained in terms of constitutive rules, because institutional facts only exist within systems of such rules.

Constitutive rules always have the same logical form, even in cases where the logical form is not obvious from the grammar of the sentences expressing the rule. They are always of the logical form: such-and-such counts as having the status so-and-so. I like to put this in the form

'X counts as Y', or more generally, 'X counts as Y in (context) C. Thus, in the context of a chess game, such-and-such a move on the part of a certain shape of piece counts as a move by the knight, such-and-such a position on the board counts as a checkmate. In American football, to cross the opponent's goal line in possession of the ball while a play is in progress counts as scoring a touchdown. A touchdown counts as six points. Getting more points than the opposition counts as winning.

- 2** Now, in your workbook, write answers to the following questions:
- a** What is the single example of a regulative rule given in this passage?
 - b** Write down an example of a regulative rule that might be appropriate in a school.
 - c** When the author writes 'the very possibility of playing chess depends on there being rules of chess', what kind of rules is he referring to?
 - d** One of the constitutive rules of soccer is that no player (other than the goalkeeper) is allowed to touch the ball with his hand. What would you say to someone who says that he thinks that rules are always a limitation of freedom, and that he is going to ignore this rule while he is playing soccer?
 - e** In the second paragraph the author suggests a 'logical form' for all constitutive rules: X counts as Y (we can ignore here the way in which, in the next line, he includes an element about context). He then gives an example from chess, and three examples from American football - one of which is: 'A touchdown (X) counts as six points (Y). Find an example of a constitutive rule from each of two games you know about, and write them down as sentences in the form: X counts as Y.
 - f** Now page back to our formulation of the formal purpose of the activity of teaching on page 31, and our formal definition of the practice of school teaching on page 36. Using the sentence frame 'X counts as Y', rewrite them as the constitutive rules.

2.9

Concluding comments

In this first section of the module, we have established a conceptual framework for thinking about teaching as a practice that shapes, and is shaped by, time and space. In establishing this conceptual framework, we have drawn a number of crucial distinctions: for example, between internal and external time and space, between actions and events, between activities, practices and institutions, and between regulative and constitutive rules. And we have used a wide range of examples – from a range of everyday activities and from teaching – both to help us see where we needed to draw conceptual distinctions and to help us test the accuracy of the distinctions. This analytical approach to thinking about teaching is one that you should try to develop as you work through the rest of the module.