Chapter 1
Curriculum and Crisis in the Unbundled University

1.1 Introduction

The university is in crisis. In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic forced universities around the world to close campuses and shift learning online at short notice. Academics accustomed to teaching on campus scrambled to move materials and classes into new formats, often with minimal preparation time. Students were forced off campus and required to grapple with new platforms and requirements. International students were cut off from their intended countries of study, or isolated within them. Sharply declining numbers of international students and falling international markets decimated university revenues globally. Casual staff lost work and mass redundancy programs commenced. In Australia, where the research this book is based on took place, there were predictions that the sector stands to experience losses of up to A\$19 billion overall by 2023 (Hurley, 2020) and reports that more than 17,000 staff lost their jobs (Maslen, 2021). As Bayne et al. (2020) write, 'in this changed world, every faculty member became an online teacher, every student became a distance learner, and the very survival of some universities became entangled with their ability to manage the digital "pivot"' (2020, pp. 11–12).

Many have suggested that this crisis presents an opportunity to reimagine teaching practices and embrace new models of online learning. There has been talk of a new balance emerging between online and on-campus modes of teaching, and a move away from the overreliance on the physical world as the space for interaction and engagement (Bebbington, 2021; see also Eringfeld, 2021). In 2020, nearly 90 percent of chief academic officers at public institutions in the US reported plans to expand online programs in 2020 (Jaschik, 2020). Similar moves have also been evident in the UK and Australia, where a number of universities have announced new strategies centered on expanding online programs and the Australian Government has called on universities to embrace new models of discounted online courses (Batty, 2020; Carey, 2020; Matchett, 2020; Visentin, 2021).

These shifts have led to a surge of interest in partnerships with online program management (OPM) providers, companies that work with universities to support

and expand their online offerings (Holon IQ, 2021). In the US, 33 percent of chief academic officers at private institutions and 17 percent at public institutions have plans to use outside providers to expand online programs (Jaschik, 2020). Australian universities have announced plans to increase engagement with micro-credentials and micro-masters from online program management providers (Matchett, 2020), and education companies and technology businesses have accelerated marketing efforts, including to universities (Williamson, 2021).

However, although the COVID crisis is unprecedented, the arguments for online learning and partnerships with online program management providers that have emerged at this time are not new. In the first half of 2012, another crisis moment for universities was also said to be underway when three new education platforms were launched, promising to offer free, world-class university-level education to anyone in the world with an internet connection. These new ventures were Coursera, EdX, and Udacity. Their free offerings were termed MOOCs, an acronym for massive open online courses. Each venture was associated with professors from 'top' universities, namely Stanford, Harvard, and MIT. The MOOCs offered were typically short subjects, developed by academics within universities and subsequently offered fully online to very large numbers of students via partnership arrangements with some similarities to those now being sought with online program management providers.

The global response was overwhelming. Hundreds of thousands of students enrolled to undertake the new free MOOCs and hundreds of universities signed on to partnerships to develop the new courseware. *The New York Times* declared 2012 'the year of the MOOC' (Pappano, 2012) and newspaper headlines and public commentators were full of pronouncements about their revolutionary potential. The president of Stanford University, John Hennessy, declared that 'a tsunami is coming' that would eradicate universities not prepared to adapt to the reality of new digital technologies (Brooks, 2012). Udacity founder Sebastian Thrun proposed that in 50 years, the world's higher education could be delivered by only 10 universities (Leckart, 2012). In Australia, MOOCs were widely taken up by Australian universities keen to associate themselves with elite global universities and to position themselves as leaders within the online learning space. By the end of 2013, more than half of Australia's 40 universities were offering MOOCs or had partnered with a MOOC provider. According to popular commentary (Barber et al., 2013; Pappano, 2012), MOOCs were a response to a sector in crisis. Digital technologies would disrupt higher education as they had media, manufacturing, and other industries. Online education could be more affordable and more effective than face-to-face teaching, and was what students were looking for. Universities needed to embrace these possibilities in their teaching and MOOCs were one way they could do this.

Since 2020, there have been strong echoes of the earlier MOOC claims in the popular commentary on the current COVID-19 university crisis. Again, we are told that now students have experienced what online learning has to offer, traditional modes of delivery will be fundamentally changed (Barsotti, 2020). The crisis offers an opportunity for transformative change that will enable 'a world where academics mix and match course content to create knowledge on demand and allow students to design their own curriculum' (Barsotti, 2020). Online courses offer convenience

and flexibility and are likely to 'unbundle the prevailing model of higher education' (Smith, 2020). Universities have remained over-reliant on business models that privilege the physical world and if they don't respond, will again be at risk of being usurped by start-ups who can offer the same credentials online for a much-reduced price (Ashford-Rowe, 2020; Smith, 2020).

Since the onslaught of MOOCs, there has been a significant growth in partnerships with OPM providers globally, and this has continued to intensify within the context of the current COVID-19 crisis. Although OPM ventures differ from MOOCs in that the subjects offered are not massive or free, they tend to offer a similar model of online course development whereby subject content is developed within universities, and teaching and/or administrative support is offered by the OPM company for an upfront fee or in exchange for a share of the tuition revenue (Perrotta, 2018). This model of separating the creation and delivery of course content promotes what has been termed an 'unbundling' (McCowan, 2017) of educational services.

This unbundled online learning model has significant effects on how curriculum and teaching are structured and practiced in universities. There has been much debate about the implications of MOOCs and other unbundled online learning models (e.g. Bennett & Kent, 2017; Huijser et al., 2020; Jordan, 2015; McKay & Lenarcic, 2015; Perna et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2020), but the focus has predominantly been on student learning and engagement.

This book takes a different and novel approach, looking instead at the effects of unbundling on curriculum and knowledge. It examines the form of teaching offered under both MOOC and OPM partnership arrangements, using the term 'unbundled online learning' to capture both models, and to explore their implications on curriculum practices. Contextualized within the contemporary moment, the book analyzes particular case studies of how universities responded to the MOOCs moment in the early 2010s through unbundled online learning initiatives (both MOOCs and OPMs). It considers the decisions and thinking of key people in these universities during that period and explores what these experiences offer for understanding the construction of curriculum and knowledge in unbundled online contexts and the challenges ahead in the 2020s. In a context in which explicit attention to the curriculum has been sidelined in universities' strategy, the book makes an argument for why curriculum matters, both in understanding the effects of unbundled online learning and its impacts on curriculum and knowledge practices in universities more broadly. The remainder of this chapter introduces the concepts of unbundling and curriculum and how they are taken up within the book and in the design of the underlying research project.

1.2 The Problem of Unbundling Curriculum and Pedagogy

The term unbundling has received increasing attention in the higher education literature since the MOOCs moment of 2012 (e.g. Bayne et al., 2020; Cliff et al., 2020; Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Komljenovic, 2021; McCowan, 2017; Neely & Tucker,

2010; Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016; Swinnerton et al., 2020). Unbundling is defined as 'the differentiation of tasks and services that were once offered by a single provider or individual (i.e. bundled) and the subsequent distribution of these tasks and services among different providers and individuals' (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015, p. 96). It comprises the process of disaggregating educational provision into its component parts for delivery by multiple stakeholders, often using digital approaches (Swinnerton et al., 2020). Practices of unbundling, as McCowan (2017, p. 733) writes, involve 'the separating out of the institution into its constituent roles and different activities, and the cutting away of functions perceived to be superfluous, allowing the consumer to purchase only those elements desired'. They can occur across many levels from systems and institutions (where different institutions are structured for particular purposes) to courses and academic staff (McCowan, 2017). Unbundling is not a new phenomenon, and practices of unbundling are evident throughout the history of higher education (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). However, current shifts in unbundling are, as McCowan (2017) writes 'far more radical than previous ones, and a greater challenge to our assumptions about the higher education institution', with 'an integral part of the process […] the unbundling of taught courses and academic work'.

This book focuses on the unbundling which occurs through partnerships with MOOCs and online program management providers to deliver online learning. These models comprise a separation of the responsibilities for curriculum and content development, which are typically allocated to academics within universities, from teaching and administrative support roles, which are typically handled by the online program management company. This results in little to no engagement between the academics developing the course content and the students taking the subjects. It means the pedagogy tends to be primarily defined by the online program management provider and its online platform requirements, with limited input from the academic developing the curriculum.

More typical forms of online learning developed and supported in-house within universities also involve unbundling practices. Neely and Tucker (2010) have suggested that online learning is leading to an unbundling of the academic role in teaching, as delivery activities are increasingly separated from the instructional role, and educational responsibilities redistributed to staff with different kinds of expertise such as learning designers, technologists, and academic advisers (see also Macfarlane, 2011). Unbundling is also evident to an extent in the increased casualization of university teaching, whereby sessional academics are assigned responsibilities for tutoring but not curriculum development (Kezar et al., 2014). This book focuses on the more extreme forms of unbundling evident in unbundled online learning models involving MOOC and OPM providers, but some of the tensions raised may potentially be applicable in other contexts where unbundling practices are evident.

Unbundling has been positioned as a solution to the crisis facing higher education (Craig, 2015), and shifts toward unbundled online learning have been primarily driven by financial imperatives (Ivancheva et al., 2020; McCowan, 2017). Unbundling is seen to provide opportunities to reduce the costs associated with teaching provision through standardization, as well as open up access to new student markets

that are otherwise excluded from higher education. Online learning more broadly is frequently positioned as a means of reducing the costs of educational delivery and as an attractive option for teaching large numbers of students, since once the initial set up expenses are accounted for, the costs of adding additional students are low (see also Bayne et al., 2020; Norton, 2013). This is particularly the case in OPM models, where teaching and administration responsibilities are typically assigned to the OPM provider, and is a key factor highlighted in OPM marketing materials. Coursera's website, for example, entices universities to engage its services to 'increase student capacity without increasing infrastructure costs' (Coursera Inc, 2021). As Vasquez (2022) writes, 'the sales pitch is simple: Team up with us, and you'll quickly have a whole new menu of online degree programs to offer students, with virtually no upfront financial investment'. These financial considerations are important as universities struggle with rising deficits and reduced revenue.

However, OPMs and MOOCs also change how curriculum is developed and delivered in fundamental ways which require critical attention. OPM providers in particular market themselves as experts in online pedagogy and purport to transform educational practice through their endeavors. Within the partnerships, the provision of teaching support by the OPM company means that teaching pedagogy is determined by the OPM company and the platform used, rather than by academic teachers in relation to the knowledge taught. This raises issues about coherence and pedagogical fit between what is intended to be taught and how that is communicated to and engaged with by students.

Curriculum is about 'what' is taught via education, while pedagogy typically denotes 'how' that is taught. However, both are intricately connected in defining 'what counts' as knowledge within an educational program and how that is understood and received by students (Bernstein, 1976). In the 1970s, Bernstein (1976, p. 85) defined curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment as the core 'message systems' of education through which formal education knowledge is realized, suggesting that the three message systems exist in complex relation to each other, with each message system informed and constrained by the others. Within this formulation, pedagogy is not understood as the handmaiden to curriculum, nor are curriculum and pedagogy determined in reference to the proposed outcome or what is to be assessed, but curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation/assessment exist in relation to each other and together provide a sense of 'what counts' as knowledge within the education.

This classic argument highlights the complex and interconnected relations between curriculum and pedagogy. It suggests that new pedagogies or platforms are not neutral regarding the knowledge taught but contribute in substantive ways to what is made possible and how the knowledge of a subject is understood. This points toward problems with the separation of curricular and pedagogical responsibilities evident within unbundled online learning and the challenges that the dividing of these responsibilities raises for educational coherence.

These curriculum issues have been underexplored in discussions of unbundling. Cliff et al. (2020) have considered some of the different kinds of thinking and shifts that emerge when institutional leaders talk about curriculum purposes in relation to unbundled forms of online learning. They suggest that a different understanding of

curriculum is emerging as a result of the intersecting processes of unbundling, digitization, and marketization, one which is undermining Bernsteinian understandings of curriculum as about knowledge (discussed further in Chap. 3), as well as understandings about curriculum that are framed in social justice and praxis perspectives. Others have also suggested that practices of unbundling position education as primarily transmission-based, and undermine the importance of relational aspects of teaching and learning (McCowan, 2017). Such configurations are said to position academics as 'script writers' and give primary power to learning designers in 'taking the responsibility of aligning pedagogy, technology and organization' (White & White, 2016, p. 5). Beyond this, work considering the curriculum implications of the take-up of digital technologies and the use of new platforms and partnership arrangements has been limited.

There is also growing critical literature on the use of digital technology in higher education which has highlighted the ways its take-up is changing pedagogical practices, relationships between teachers and students, and the ways in which curriculum knowledge is disseminated (e.g. Bayne et al., 2020; Castañeda & Selwyn, 2018; Kim & Maloney, 2020; Land, 2011; Perrotta et al., 2021; Peters, 2007; Peters et al., 2012). This research raises important questions concerning the technological affordances and constraints of particular platforms and technologies, and how these affect what students and teachers are doing within educational situations, including in relation to issues of unbundling raised by new models and partnerships (McCowan, 2017). These are issues discussed further in Chap. 2.

However, this literature tends to pay less attention to how these changes impact on the content taught or how they relate to the wider context and purpose within which the education is situated. Castañeda and Selwyn (2018) have argued that 'discussions about the pedagogic underpinnings of the technologies being used in university teaching and learning are much-needed and long over-due'. However, such discussions also need to take account of curriculum issues and concerns, including the implications for what is taught and received as knowledge by students (Ashwin, 2014; Barnett & Coate, 2005; Biesta, 2014). This book aims to attend to this gap by exploring the intended and unintended changes to knowledge that accompany shifts toward unbundled forms of online learning. Rather than focus on the technological affordances of the particular platforms, it considers how those engaged in curriculum redevelopment in universities as part of early developments in MOOCs and OPMs interpreted the new contexts in which they were working and the assumptions about knowledge underpinning that work.

Technology is too often framed in instrumentalist or essentialist terms, 'either as a neutral tool that functions purely as an instrument of human intention or as an unstoppable force that drives and determines social change' (Bayne et al., 2020, p. 83). However, as Selwyn (2016) argues, 'technology' comprises both social and technical aspects, including the ways technologies are designed, the ways they are taken up within practices, and the social arrangements and organizational forms that surround their use. The use of technology in education is therefore not neutral but should be considered in terms of 'the limits and structures that it imposes as well as the opportunities that it may offer for individual action and agency' (Selwyn, 2016,

p. 9). Selwyn (2016, pp. 9–10) writes, 'even what may appear to be the most "transformatory" technology can end up limiting the choices and opportunities available to some individuals' and that 'it is therefore important to acknowledge that technologies do not always change things in education for the better'. As a result, he argues there is a growing need for critical social research that examines the realities of institutional technology use within educational settings and the practices and attached meanings that surround them. This book aims to engage with these questions.

1.3   Foregrounding Curriculum

This book focuses on curriculum, an area which has been much neglected in higher education research and debate. Although there is much discussion about what university teaching should look like and how it can be structured to meet the needs of a widening and diversifying student body, there is limited explicit interest in 'curriculum' as a subject of scholarship and policy debate within higher education (Hicks, 2017; Krause, 2020), and a tendency to position questions around 'what' is taught as being outside the frame of debate (Ashwin, 2014; Barnett & Coate, 2005, discussed further in Chap. 3). Research into online learning has likewise tended to focus on what the learner is doing, with far less attention to the role of the teacher (Bayne et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2019). As a result, despite important changes in how curriculum and teaching are positioned within universities, both in relation to unbundled online learning developments and more broadly, the substantive attention to the intended and unintended changes to curriculum and knowledge that accompany these moves has been limited.

   This book sets out to attend to this gap. In contrast to the majority of research on university teaching, the book takes 'curriculum' rather than 'pedagogy' as a starting point, focusing primarily on what substantively is being developed as knowledge within an educational program and the assumptions and contradictions that are part of that, rather than concerns about how effectively students learn. Drawing on the traditions of curriculum inquiry (Bernstein, 1976; Deng & Luke, 2008; Karseth, 2006; Yates, 2006), it puts forward an original perspective on curriculum development focused on the question of 'what counts as knowledge' (discussed further in Chap. 3). Curriculum here is understood as a knowledge practice that is both boundary enforcing, defining what counts as legitimate knowledge within a field and enrolling students within particular knowledge traditions, but also as a potential site of change that enables the building of new knowledge and the development of new trajectories toward an unknown future. It represents a site of struggle over the question of 'what counts as knowledge', which is inevitably infused with points of contestation about what matters within a disciplinary field and for the education of students.

   In part, the purpose of this book is to show what kinds of insights about universities and their activities become evident when research on university teaching takes curriculum and curriculum development as a starting point, compared with a focus on

students, pedagogy, and learning. As Morgan and Lambert (2018, pp. 42–43), write, 'curriculum making takes in pedagogic perspectives, [but] it is led by the question of what to teach'. Curriculum and pedagogy are intricately entwined (c.f. Bernstein, 1976; Biesta, 2010; Yates, 2009), yet taking curriculum rather than pedagogy as a starting point allows for different insights and questions to emerge. As Yates (2009) highlights, while pedagogy is readily associated with issues about how effectively students learn or are engaged, curriculum brings attention to what, substantively, they are being drawn into as knowledge. This enables engagement with the details of particular subjects in ways which are often absent from broader studies of policy shifts.

In a context in which explicit attention to the curriculum has been sidelined in university strategies, this book makes an argument for why curriculum matters, both in understanding the effects of unbundled online learning and more broadly. Through case studies from the MOOCs period, it explores the particular ways individuals struggle with their curriculum decisions and the competing values and tensions that are part of that, taking into account what knowledge is selected and how it is put together, and the rationales and purposes behind those selections. In doing this, it takes up two particular curriculum issues which are amplified in an unbundled context: differences between disciplines and fields in the formulation of curriculum, and the extent these are recognized in university strategy; and the push for constructivist pedagogies, and its effects on curriculum construction.

In relation to the first issue, there has been a longstanding debate in the literature over the current role of disciplinary knowledge and its potential to be undermined in the face of new agendas (discussed further in Chap. 4). Many suggest that disciplinary knowledges are being replaced or sidelined by new collaborative and interdisciplinary forms of knowledge development (Gibbons et al., 1994; Maassen et al., 2018; Yates et al., 2017) and by a context in which there is an increasing tendency to privilege generic vocationally oriented agendas (Young & Muller, 2015). Questions have been raised about the extent to which disciplines continue to matter and the extent to which research in higher education should take disciplinarity and the differences between different forms and fields of knowledge as a frame of analysis as a result (Trowler et al., 2013). In the literature on disciplinarity and forms of knowledge, a binary is frequently drawn between disciplines that orient toward 'truth' or knowledge itself, such as chemistry or philosophy, and professional fields which orient toward vocational practice and the application of knowledge, such as medicine or law (Becher, 1989; Bernstein, 1996; Muller, 2009). Research drawing on these distinctions has raised questions about whether the current directions in universities are impacting more significantly on traditionally inward-facing disciplines than on professional fields (Yates et al., 2017).

Drawing on case studies from the early to mid-2010s, the book considers distinctions between disciplinary and professional forms of knowledge in the formulation of curriculum and the ways these bear out as curriculum is remade for unbundled online contexts. Are academics located in disciplines and professional fields being differently impacted by new teaching agendas? How are their teaching aims similar and different and what ways are they changed and not changed by the requirements of

unbundled online platforms? How are different disciplinary ways of constructing curriculum acknowledged at the level of university policy? The book examines different lecturers' ideas about their educational values and aims, highlighting differences in the disciplinary traditions to which they belong, and how these lead to genuine struggles to rethink curriculum design. It explores the importance of differences between disciplines and fields and the ways these are being acknowledged at the university policy level.

In relation to the second issue concerning constructivist teaching, there has been a strong focus on moving university teaching away from a so-called 'instructivist', lecture-centered mode, in which the focus is on what teachers are doing, toward a more student-centered 'constructivist' approach, focused on active learning and students' own constructions of knowledge rather than teacher-developed content (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Cullen et al., 2012). At the same time, arguments for outcomes-based education have become increasingly prominent, with calls to focus curriculum design on the desired end point, rather than the content to be taught (Suskie, 2018). John Biggs' theory of 'constructivist alignment' (Biggs, 2014; Biggs & Tang, 2011) has been particularly influential and adopted by higher education policy makers across the world (Loughlin et al., 2021). The widespread take-up of these practices, however, has been critiqued, with a number of scholars arguing that the particular approaches advocated give rise to both negative and positive effects and are not universally appropriate for all educational purposes and forms of knowledge (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Biesta, 2014, 2017; Karseth, 2008; Young & Muller, 2015); and have been translated poorly in practice (Loughlin et al., 2021; Schoepp, 2019).

Drawing on the case studies, the book explores the assumptions about 'good' teaching and curriculum development evident at the policy level of universities and in the curriculum work of academics, as well as how different reference points are put together and to what effect. In doing so, it highlights the limited and contradictory ways in which intentions to make university teaching more 'constructivist' have been brought to bear within the context of unbundled forms of delivery. Through analysis of these particular curriculum issues, the book shows why curriculum matters for higher education today, and the importance of explicitly attending to matters of curriculum in university strategy.

1.4 Case Studies of Unbundled Online Initiatives

The cases discussed in this book comprise unbundled online learning initiatives developed at two different Australian universities in the early 2010s. The universities comprised one well-established research university (referred to in this book as 'SandstoneU') and one former technical college (referred to as 'TechU'). The unbundled online learning initiatives these universities were pursuing at the time involved partnerships with OPM providers which continue to operate today. They include both initiatives to develop and offer MOOCs, and initiatives offering online subjects as part of formal degree programs. Although the form these initiatives took was

different, they all have in common the unbundled model described above, whereby the subject content was developed by lecturers within universities but delivered via external platforms, and in all but one initiative the academic or lecturers had limited involvement in the delivery of the subject. In each case, the content material was developed in full prior to being taught by academics who predominantly had little to no contact with the students taking the subjects.

The discussion of these cases focuses on the institutional policies and understandings framing the development and uptake of new online initiatives, and the development of new curriculum materials for new online subjects. It draws on interviews with university leaders at the two universities and multiple interviews with lecturers developing selected subjects over the period of development alongside analysis of policy documents and curriculum materials. The subjects discussed were selected to shed light on the implications of current directions on different forms of knowledge and include subjects located within both disciplines (ecology and classical studies) and professional fields (business studies and teacher education), as well as an interdisciplinary field of study (logic). All participants, subjects, and universities are referred to by pseudonym and further details regarding the interviews and documents drawn on in the book are provided in the Appendix.

The focus of the cases is on the intended curriculum rather than its enacted form and on how lecturers understood what was being set up in teaching. The curriculum is understood as more than just the intentions of particular lecturers, but intentions and interpretations are seen as an important part of what is put together as curriculum. As Yates (2006) argues, curriculum asks us to think about what is being *set up* to be taught and learned and the kinds of agendas taken up and not taken up in that, as well as what is actually being taught or learned. The concern of the research project was with what was being conveyed or intended to be conveyed as new courses were put together, and with the choices being made about values and emphases and directions (Yates, 2009).

The focus of the cases is also on the practices and understandings that surround the use of the new platforms, rather than the technological affordances of the platforms themselves (Selwyn, 2016). The approach was not designed to capture every element of what might be considered relevant to understanding the impacts of unbundled initiatives, but to take up some particular angles which tend to be sidelined in prominent ways of thinking about university education and where it is heading. The project was intended to engage with both the assumptions about knowledge evident and the implications of the directions of universities today in respect of teaching and curriculum.

These cases remain of significance in current strategic directions as universities continue to embrace unbundled forms of online learning. They were selected as emblematic of university priorities during the MOOCs heyday in the early half of the 2010s but continue to have wider resonance and speak to where universities are potentially heading in the current moment. They offer insights into the contemporary context of teaching and knowledge as OPM developments continue to take hold.

1.5 Structure of the Book

In summary, this book draws on empirical accounts of unbundled online learning in universities in the early 2010s to understand the effects of these new forms on curriculum and knowledge and the implications for current university teaching strategy as we move into the 2020s. The research arises from some conceptual questioning about knowledge work and about the directions of universities. It engages with and aims to contribute to the contemporary literature on curriculum, knowledge, and the policy and management of curriculum and teaching in universities.

The book begins with this literature and its questions (Chaps. 2–4). Chapter 2 examines the current context of university teaching in which unbundling is emerging, pointing to diminishing academic autonomy over teaching, the tendency for digital technologies to be taken up in ways that serve managerial rather than transformative agendas, and the dominance of constructivist and outcomes-based agendas in thinking about best practice teaching. It argues that within this context, questions around what is taught and the unintended effects of new approaches on curriculum have been neglected. Chapter 3 then discusses the concept of curriculum and its value for understanding the implications of unbundled online learning. It highlights the concerns a focus on curriculum draws attention to, which are too frequently missed in conversations focused solely on learning and teaching. Following this, Chap. 4 looks in more detail at the particular curriculum issues taken up in this book: differences between disciplines and fields in the formulation of curriculum and the extent these are recognized in university strategy, and the push for constructivist pedagogies and its effects on curriculum construction. It points to important distinctions drawn between disciplines and professional fields, and debates about the role disciplines and professional fields play in the formulation of curriculum today.

The middle section of the book (Chaps. 5–7) then looks in some detail at the research findings, first in relation to the policies of the two universities, and then in relation to their new subject offerings. Chapter 5 tells the story of the new unbundled initiatives introduced at these universities, the rationales behind the new initiatives, and how issues of curriculum, pedagogy, and knowledge were framed as part of this. Chapter 6 then discusses the development of particular case study subjects for the unbundled online initiatives at SandstoneU, a context where academics were able to develop their curriculum with relatively high levels of autonomy. This is followed in Chap. 7 with a discussion of the development of case study subjects for the unbundled online initiatives offered at TechU in a context where the academics involved had far less autonomy over their curriculum development.

In the final section (Chaps. 8–10), the book reflects on these findings from the two universities and the effects of the unbundled reforms on curriculum practice. Chapter 8 examines the debates about disciplinary and professional forms of knowledge in relation to the moves toward unbundled online learning, considering both differences between the case study lecturers and how such differences were recognized at the university level. Chapter 9 then considers the case studies in relation to the aims of the university leaders to encourage constructivist pedagogies, pointing

to the ways the unbundled contexts worked against this objective. Finally, Chap. 10 summarizes the main arguments of the book and the importance of attending to curriculum in university strategy.

Overall, the book aims to contribute to debates about new directions in university teaching and curriculum. This is a book that will be of interest to readers interested in reforms and challenges in universities today as it highlights the problems of new directions, as well as the genuinely difficult work involved in rethinking curriculum design. It will also be a book of interest in the context of the upsurge of recent work in the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Barrett et al., 2018; Yates et al., 2017; Young & Muller, 2015). Many of these works discuss in broad terms the rationale for 'disciplinarity' or criticize particular programs of curriculum renewal. What is newly captured in this book is a focus on the detail of curriculum development and the tensions evident within that. Through the case studies and analysis, the book captures in detail the complex and difficult work involved in university curriculum making in a way rarely seen in discussions of higher education. It also offers new insights about some of the critical problems manifest in the ongoing moves to embrace unbundled online learning today.

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