



Curriculum differentiation of undergraduate Nursing programmes at a University of Technology

22nd SAAIR Conference 2015

29 September – 1 October 2015

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Bellville campus

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Outline of this paper

- Purpose and objectives of the study
- Theoretical perspectives
 - Knowledge is central to the purpose of higher education and a concern of curriculum (Wheelahan, 2010; Maton, 2014)
 - Nature of vocational and professional curricula (Barnett, 2006; Wheelahan, 2010; Winberg et al. 2012)
 - Vertical and horizontal discourse (Bernstein, 1999; 2000)
 - Semantic codes (Maton, 2011; 2014)
 - Framework for differentiated higher education curricula (Shay, 2012)
- Nursing as an academic field of study
- Curriculum differentiation of Nursing qualifications (HEQSF, 2013)
- Conclusion

Purpose of the study

- To determine the different forms of knowledge prevalent in three undergraduate Nursing curricula at a University of Technology using the semantic codes of Maton's Legitimation Code Theory (2011).
- To map these forms of knowledge to Shay's curriculum differentiation framework (2012) in order to gain deeper understanding of the curriculum logic of each programme in relation to the type, purpose, nature and characteristics of the qualification types as defined in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (2013).

Research design & methodology

- Qualitative study within an social realist paradigm
- Iterative and developmental approach
- Curriculum data were obtained through curriculum development workshops with academic staff members over a period of 5 years which include the following sources:
 - SANC regulations (present and future qualifications)
 - National policy framework and directives
 - HEQSF (2013) and SAQA level descriptors (2012)
 - SANC and HEQC programme accreditation criteria
 - Unstructured interviews with staff during workshops
 - Stakeholder engagement – two formal sessions in March 2014
 - Programme and subject guides of each programme

Knowledge is a concern of curriculum

- A 'technical model of teaching and learning promotes atomistic and mechanistic meanings of knowledge' and that 'technical 'know-how' is epitomised by the possession of 'transferable' skills, espoused by learning outcome objectives' (O'Brien & Brancalone, 2011:15)
- Wheelehan (2010:137) argues that competency-based education, as practised in the vocational education and training qualifications in Australia through the delivery of training packages, results in knowledge being tied to workplace tasks and roles within units of competency, hence fundamentally transforming the nature of knowledge by 'delocating it from the vertical discourse in which it is classified and relocating it into a horizontal and segmented knowledge structure'.

Nature of vocational and professional curricula

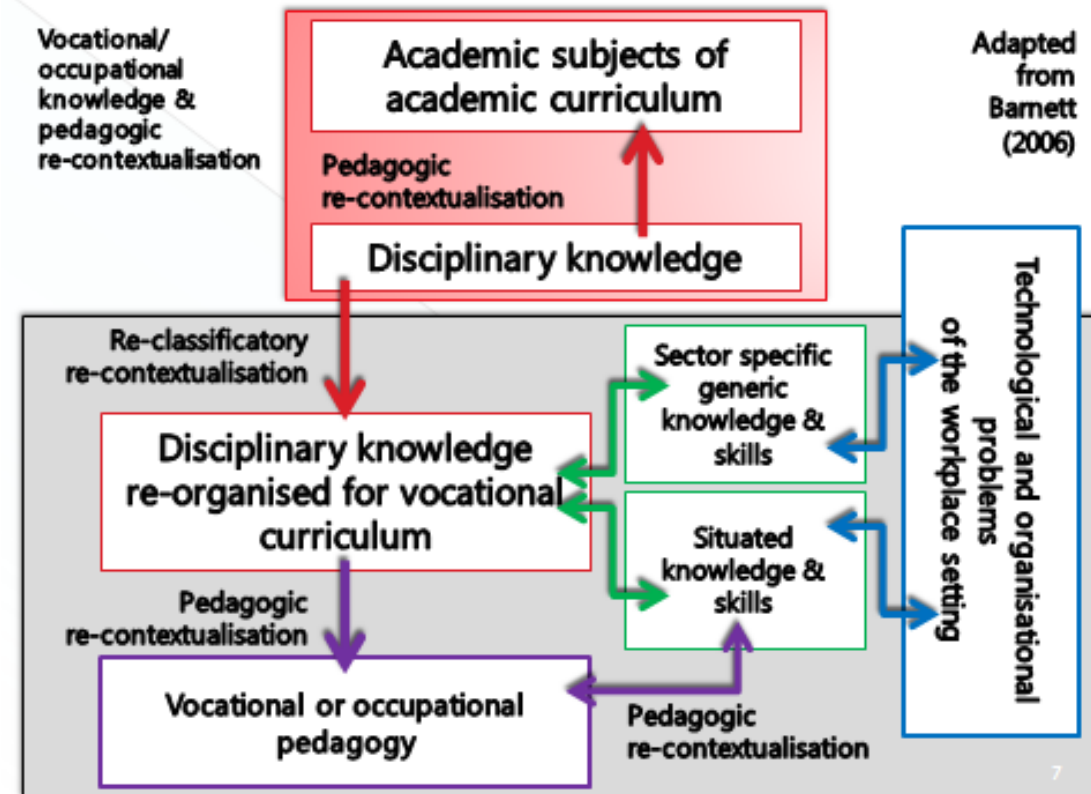
- Barnett (2006:152) and Wheelahan (2011:127) explain that vocational and professional curricula must ‘face both ways’ to context-independent (theoretical, disciplinary or “general”) knowledge and to the field of practice (context-dependent, situated, practical or “particular” knowledge).
- Vocational and professional undergraduate curricula must prepare students for the workplace and occupational (career paths) progression as well as for academic progression in the academic discipline towards postgraduate studies, which results in a complex relationship between theory on the one hand and practice on the other.

Nature of vocational and professional curricula

Bernstein's pedagogic device and the relationship

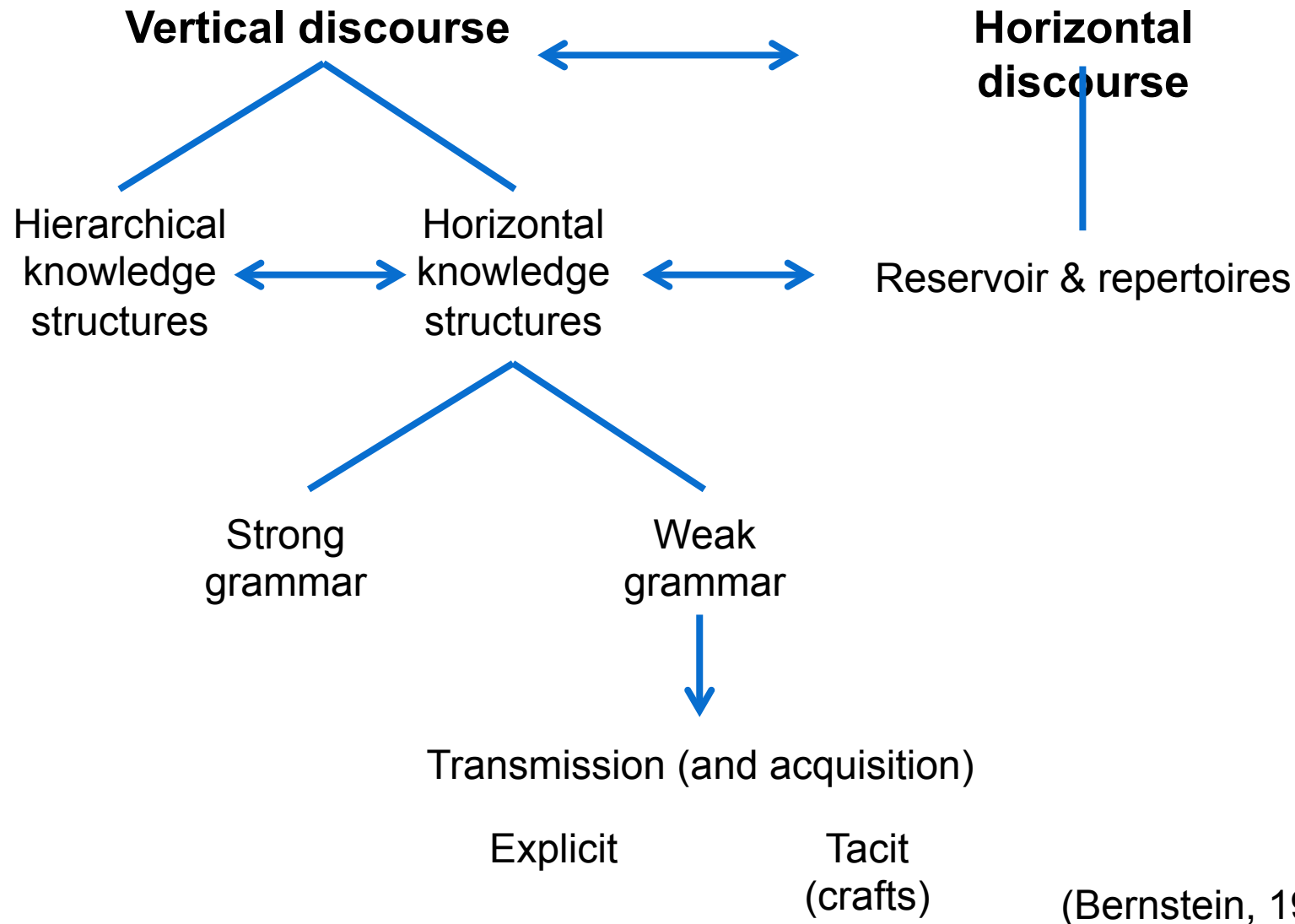
between:

- the field of **production** (where knowledge is produced);
- the field of **recontextualisation** (where knowledge is recontextualised into curriculum) and;
- the field of **reproduction** (where knowledge is taught)



Dynamic interaction of a vocationally or professionally oriented curricula

Bernstein's vertical and horizontal discourses



Bernstein's knowledge structures (1999, 2000)

Vertical discourse

- a coherent, explicit and systematically principled and symbolic structure that is hierarchically organised with procedures that are linked to other procedures hierarchically and not by contexts
- this type of knowledge is distributed in terms of 'recontextualisation'
- vertical discourse consists of hierarchically and horizontally organised knowledge structures distinguishes in terms of 'verticality' and 'grammaticality'

Horizontal discourse

- 'oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered, and contradictory across but not within contexts'
- segmentally organised and segmentally differentiated
- the acquisition of this form of knowledge is associated with 'face-to-face relations', 'tacitly transmitted by modelling', 'contextually specific', 'context dependent' and 'embedded in on-going practices', usually with 'strong affective loading'

Maton's semantic codes (2011, 2014)

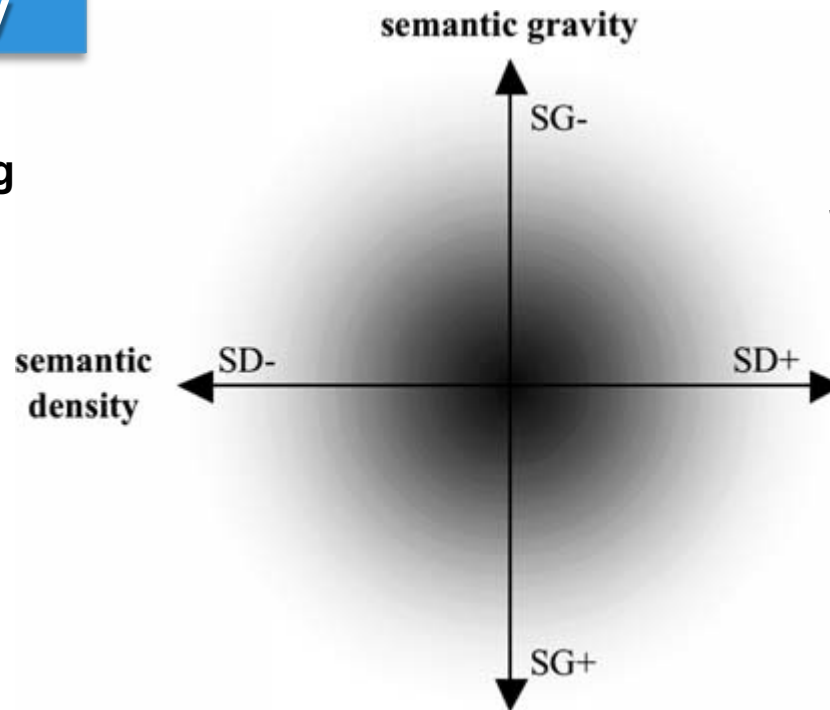
Semantic density

The degree of **condensation of meaning within symbols** (terms, concepts, phrases, expressions, gestures, clothing, etc.) Semantic density may be relatively stronger (+) or weaker (-) along a continuum of strengths. The stronger the semantic density, the more meaning is condensed within symbols, the weaker the semantic density, the less meaning is condensed. Semantic density describes the **internal relations** of knowledge practices.

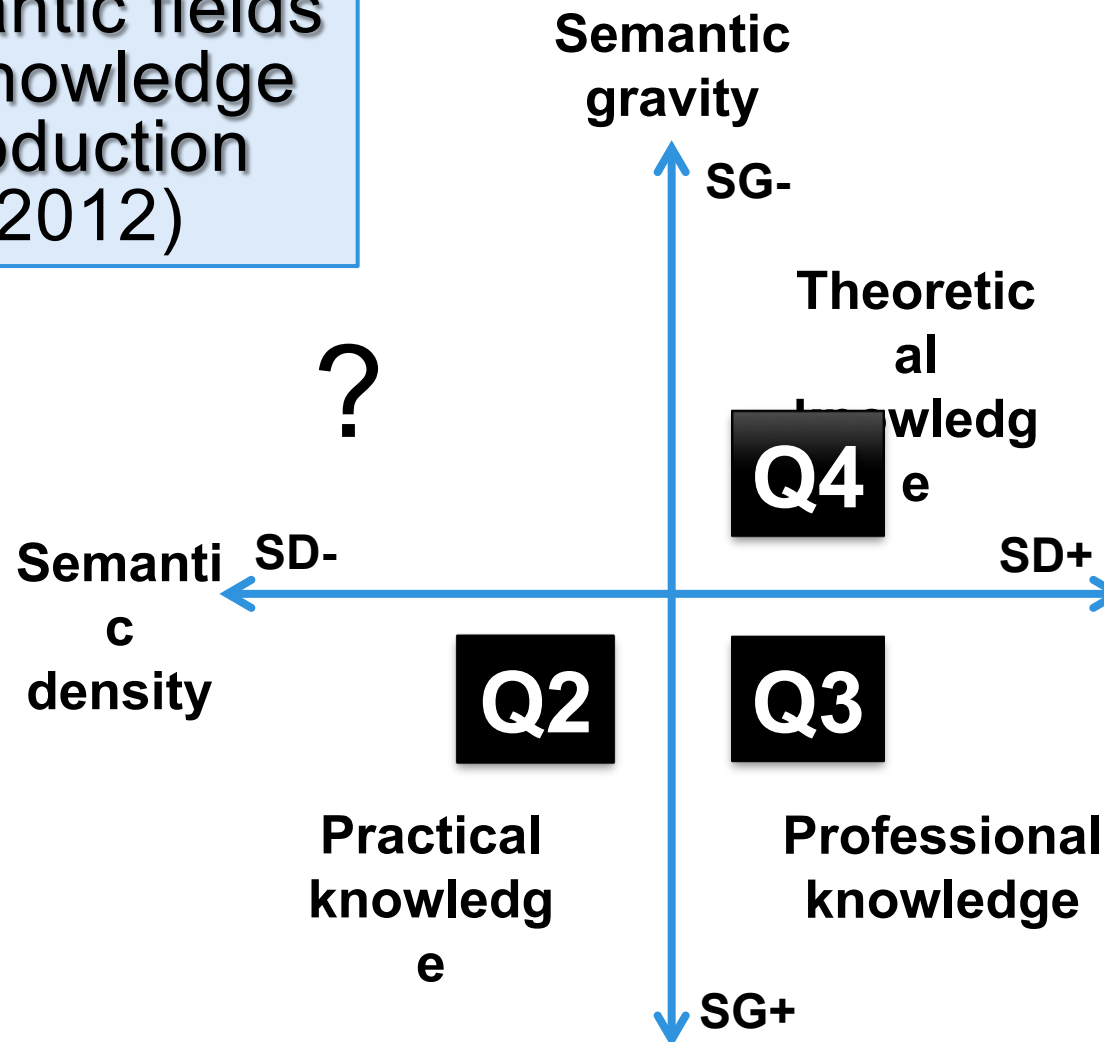
Semantic gravity

The degree to which **meaning relates to its context**, whether that is social or symbolic. Semantic gravity may be relatively stronger (+) or weaker (-) along a continuum of strengths.

The stronger the SG, the more closely meaning is related to its context; the weaker the SG, the less dependent meaning is on its context. Semantic gravity describes the **external relations of knowledge practices**.

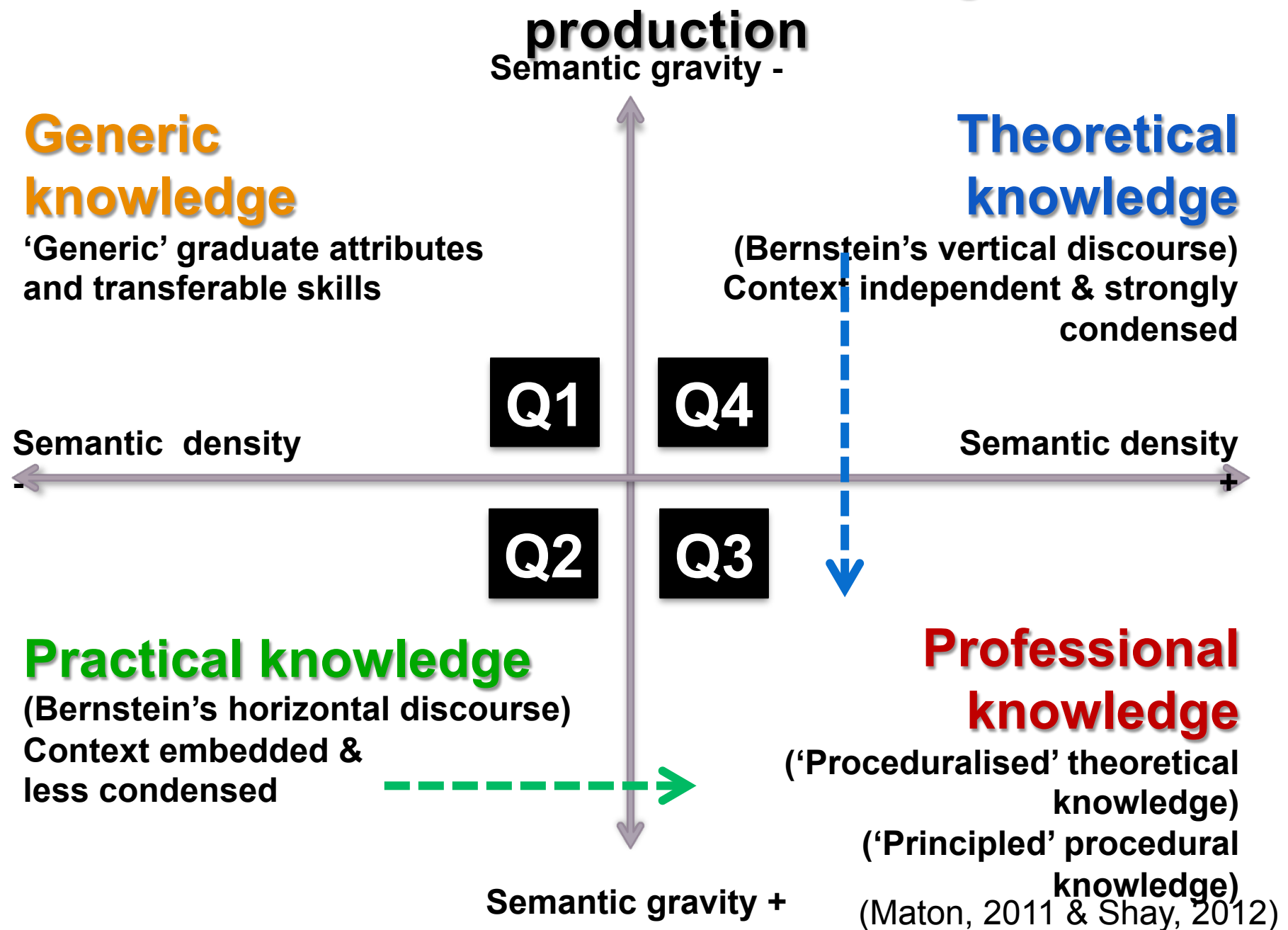


Shay's
semantic fields
of knowledge
production
(2012)



Adapted from Maton (2011) by Shay (2012)

Semantic fields of knowledge



Nursing as an academic field of study

(Shaw, 1995; Wall, 2015)

- Nursing, as both a field of study and profession, has a history of struggling to define its unique identity and body of knowledge.
- Nursing practice is based on the knowledge of nursing, which consists of its philosophies, theories, concepts, principles, approaches to inquiry, research findings, and practice wisdom.
- The notion of professional education in nursing became a reality during the mid-twentieth century, as nursing education moved in hospital schools of nursing and eventually universities.

Nursing as a field of study focuses on the 'study of human health and healing through caring' – it is regarded as 'a practice discipline'.

When practitioners, scholars and researchers actively engage in creating dynamic and workable solutions to clinical and empirical problems of significance to the health of society, then integration of theory, research and practice may become a reality.

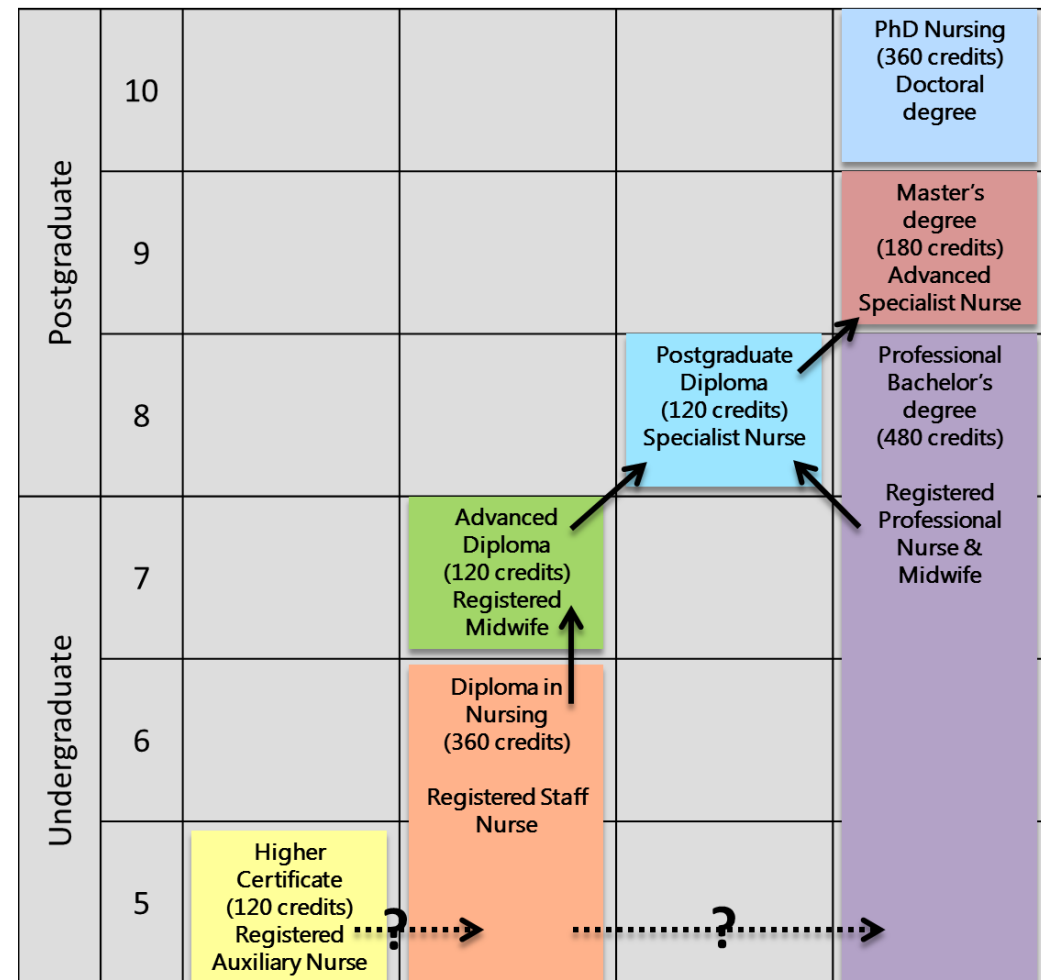
Indeed, the upcoming era of theory development and refinement from a rich tapestry of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies may fulfil nursing's quest for identity and self-acceptance as a practice discipline.

Shaw (1995:1654)

Nursing qualifications framework (2013)

(Blaauw et al., 2014)

- First university nursing degrees in SA introduced in 1956.
- Since 1986 Nursing Colleges are required to be affiliated with university-based nursing departments – placed within the higher education system.
- Nursing Education Qualifications Framework (2013) – Bachelor's degree in Nursing (rather than a nursing college diploma) to become a professional nurse.



Higher Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing

Minimum of 120 SAQA credits
at NQF level 5

Higher Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing

HEQSF

- 120 SAQA credits @ NQF 5
- Entry-level higher education qualification;
- **Primarily vocational**, with a strong industry-oriented focus;
- Basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques for HE;
- Emphasis on **selected general principles** together with more **specific procedures and their application**.

SANC

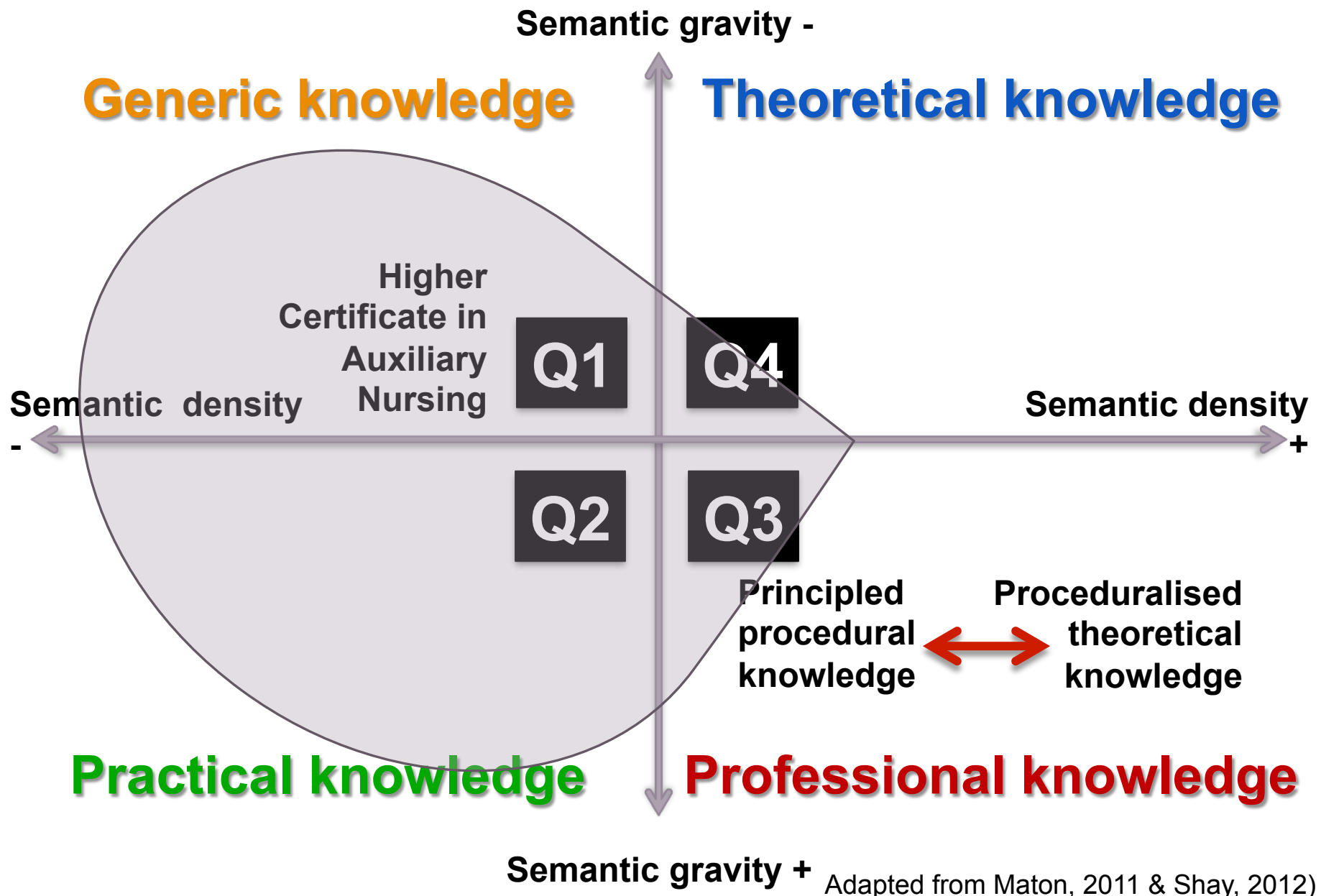
- 120 SAQA credits @ NQF 5
- Entry level qualification;
- Provide students with **basic knowledge**, affective, cognitive and conceptual tools and **practical techniques** for additional HE studies in nursing;
- **General principles, basic level of HE knowledge and competences** and their application in the

Higher Certificate in Auxiliary Nursing

Exit level outcomes (SANC requirements)

- Apply **basic knowledge** of anatomy, physiology, biophysics, pharmacology and microbiology in the provision of nursing care.
- Communicate effectively in a variety of ways in a nursing context.
- Use the scientific nursing approach to address the **basic needs of individuals and groups in various health care settings**.
- Demonstrate appropriate methods of interacting sensitively and professionally with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Maintain professionalism in nursing practice within the ethical and legal framework.
- Participate in addressing the needs of individuals and groups in a community.

Forms of knowledge in Nursing curriculum



Diploma in Nursing

Minimum of 360 SAQA credits
at NQF level 6 with 60 credits
at NQF level 7

Diploma in Nursing

HEQSF

- 360 SAQA credits @ NQF 6
- Vocational orientation, which includes professional, vocational and industry specific knowledge that provides sound understanding of general theoretical principles as well as a combination of general and specific procedures and their application.
- Application of knowledge and skills in the workplace context.

SANC

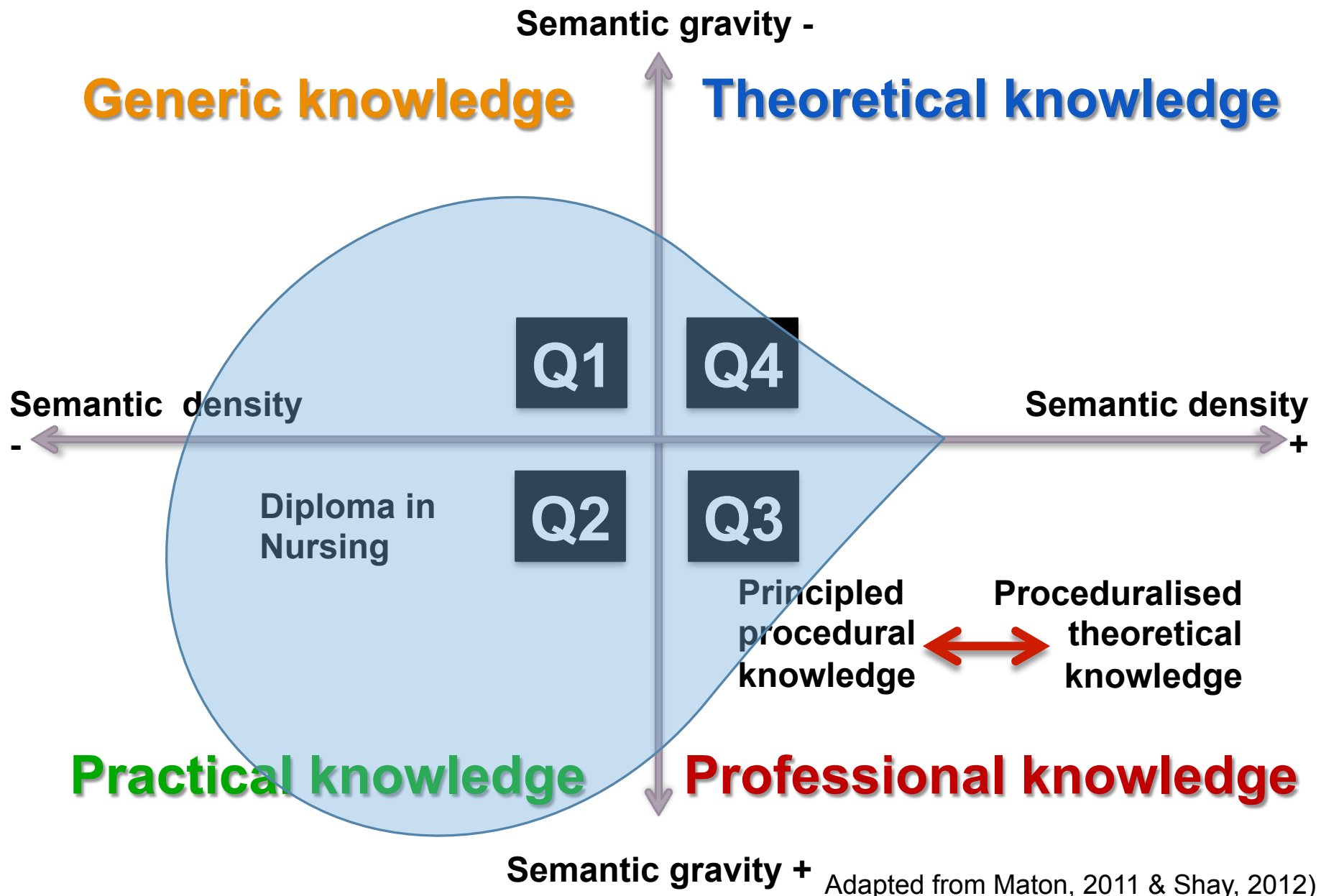
- 360 SAQA credits @ NQF 6
- Function as clinically focused, service orientated, independent **Registered Staff Nurse**, who is able to render nursing care as determined by the appropriate legislative framework within a range of health service setting.
- Develop a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to make a meaningful and sustained contribution to health services.
- Operate effectively within range of health service settings with an equity, justice and service orientation.
- Develop a range of transferable skills for application in other professions, disciplines and general life.

Diploma in Nursing

Exit level outcomes (SANC requirements)

- Apply knowledge of natural and biological sciences in the practice of nursing;
- Apply knowledge of psycho-social sciences in the practice of nursing;
- Apply knowledge of pharmacology in nursing practice;
- Provide nursing care throughout the lifespan in various healthcare settings;
- Render nursing care within a legal and ethical framework;
- Use and maintain healthcare information systems for nursing practice;
- Manage a healthcare unit by implementing the management process;
- Provide reproductive health care to promote and maintain optimum health of individuals and families.

Forms of knowledge in Nursing curriculum



Bachelor of Nursing

4 year professional degree

Minimum of 480 SAQA credits
at NQF level 8

Minimum of 132 credits at NQF
level 8

Bachelor of Nursing

HEQSF

- 480 SAQA credits @ NQF 8
- Different purposes – entry-level vocational or professional preparation or specialisation for Bachelor's degree graduates or diplomats by offering an intensive, focused and applied specialisation which meets the requirements of a specific niche in the labour market.
- Aimed at continuing professional development - inculcation of deep and systematic understanding of thinking, practice, theory and methodology in area of specialisation

SANC

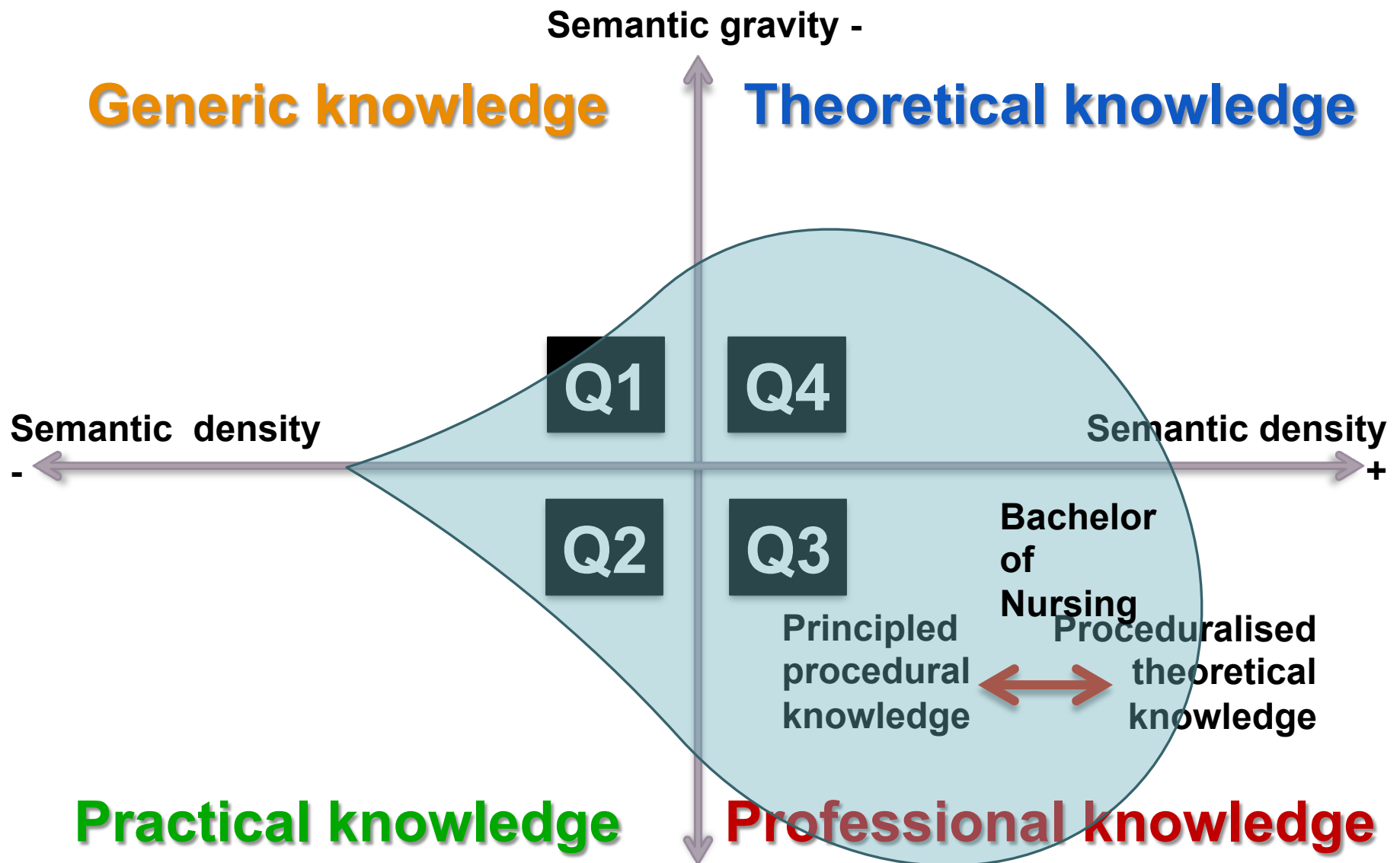
- 480 SAQA credits @ NQF 8
- Function as competent **professional nurse and midwife** within a range of health care settings;
- Apply knowledge of theory of biological and natural sciences, psycho-social sciences and pharmacology in the provision of comprehensive nursing and midwifery care;
- Develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to make a meaningful and sustained contribution to health services.
- Develop a sense of equity, justice and service ethics that will ensure that they work in a responsible and accountable manner, irrespective of their chosen workplace.
- Apply a wide range of transferable skills for application in other professions, disciplines and general life.

Exit level outcomes (SAQA registration document)

Bachelor of Nursing

- Apply knowledge of biological and natural sciences, psycho-social sciences and pharmacology in the provision of safe nursing and midwifery care, throughout the life span, in a variety of health care settings and communities in response to population needs.
- Apply knowledge of theories, models and techniques in the practice of safe clinical nursing and midwifery that is responsive to the needs of the individual, family and community, in accordance with national legislative and policy frameworks.
- Utilise research in investigating nursing, midwifery and health-related problems.
- Identify and address ethical and legal issues based on critical reflection within the legal framework.
- Manage a health care unit and health facility.
- Access, produce and manage information effectively to a range of audiences.
- Apply learning strategies effectively to address personal and professional needs of the individual and others in a self-critical manner.

Forms of knowledge in Nursing curriculum



Semantic gravity + Adapted from Maton, 2011 & Shay, 2012)

Conclusion

- Nursing curricula should not be regarded as the 'training of workplace tasks and roles within units of competency' (Wheelahan, 2010).
- Need to recognise the importance of disciplinary knowledge and to give prominence to core disciplinary knowledge elements in each programme, yet not at the expense of the development of practical expertise.
- Development of articulation pathways between qualification types is a challenge, compounded by the fact that each of these qualification types also have a legacy of 'old' qualifications that will have to be accommodated.
- It is important to foster links between classroom-based teaching (theory) and clinical practice (hospitals) to strengthen the development of professional identity.
- More research is needed different forms of knowledge within Nursing curricula and the complex interaction between these.

**Any
questions
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