

WELCOME TO THE NEW TAYLORISM!
TEACHER EDUCATION MEETS
ITINERANT CURRICULUM THEORY

TODD ALAN PRICE
National Louis University

Conflicts in Curriculum Theory: Challenging Hegemonic Epistemologies
João M. Paraskeva / Palgrave Macmillan US / 2011

João Menelau Paraskeva bangs a gong, strikes a radical chord in *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory: Challenging Hegemonic Epistemologies* (2011). What reverberates are the faint echoes of curriculum theory past, but also the loud cacophonous sounds, and puzzling noisy silences of the present. The future, if we are courageous enough to (re)imagine it—amidst this current nightmare of education in the present—is ours, but only if we embrace an entirely new way of thinking. We must *rethink* diversity in knowing, thinking and doing. In so doing, we will have created the opportunity to re-shape the faint echoes, loud cacophonous sounds, and noisy silences of curriculum studies and education into a *different difference*.

To be certain, Paraskeva asks us to be bold, and—gelling in the imagination, forming a cascading hermeneutic—calls for us to make meaning, not only through curriculum study, but by tapping the reservoir of life itself. Life will save education...life *is* education. Let's begin then with the critical essence of the Paraskeva discourse: immanence, revolution, and life itself:

... ICT needs to be understood as *poesis*. It plays in the plane of immanence. Being immanence “a life,” ICT is “a life.” A life paced by a *poesis* or a revolution? “Yes please,” in a full Žižekian way. ICT is a *poesis* that itinerantly throws the subject against the infinite of representation to grasp the omnitude of the real(ity) and the rational(ity), thus mastering the transcendent. (p. 178)

With this first of several sweeping articulations, Paraskeva crafts a picture of curricular theorists over the last century, struggling to make meaning. He imagines a “nomadography” ahead; an itinerant journey of wanderers trying to find our future(s). His writing is not trifling; the book’s aim is as mentioned exceedingly broad. Driving the reader through page upon page of history and narrative, Paraskeva fills a different prescription than the “tonic” that has been prescribed to ease education’s supposed malady, and exhorts us as curricularists to take the road less traveled. It is a clarion call that we dare not ignore.

In the essay that follows and through the sections therein—Welcome to the New Taylorism, White papers and a letter to the editor, and Curriculum Epistemicide(s) in Teacher Education—I argue that teacher education has been taken over by positivism, placed under audit by the Department of Education, and surveilled and monitored by professional teacher education accreditation agencies in collaboration with powerful foundations and their proprietary interests. It is an occupation hostile to intellectual work, leaving behind an increasingly smaller ‘social space’ for teacher educators and their teacher candidate students to move, let alone the decolonized curriculum future that interests Paraskeva and other like-minded curricularists. Indeed, the times are strange. It seems quite perverse when in an era of shrill attacks on public education, the profession itself responds with the call for greater professionalism; this type of professionalism emphasizes practice (not study) and relies on a multiplicity of rubrics using (often) frameworks (Danielson, 2009) that often lead to (wittingly or not) the deskilling and disempowerment of teachers and their faculty mentors. Our condition, if we are to place it under the scope of Paraskeva’s broad lens calls for a radical rethinking of the relationship between not only curricularists and teacher education, but within our respective curriculum fields in this, education’s season of great discontent.

Welcome to the New Taylorism

I offer that Paraskeva’s metaphor of “the critical curriculum river” is a generative one; it suggests our growth as critical educators and of curricular knowledge itself, bursting forth from an initial spring of activity into a steady current. The river is alive and fluid, becoming a stream and resulting in a literal flow of knowledge, awash with opportunity. This is quite inspiring and relevant to contemporary curricularists who over the years have been literally immersed in the ebb and flows

of texts and tracts, new ideas bubbling up like the tributaries that form the “eddies” that Paraskeva lavishly describes.

However, a malevolent anti-educational current, like a tide that has washed over the shore, is drowning education. The curriculum studies field with its advocates and theorists has struggled in meeting on the battlefield of ideas the maelstrom of standardization. I argue that, given our curriculum studies field’s seemingly endless grappling with identity questions, we are vulnerable amidst such a change in weather, the doubling down on the tide of accountability . . . to draw this river metaphor out somewhat further. To the point, curriculum studies has long tethered itself to the ship of teacher education (for some begrudgingly so), navigating choppy and turbulent waters in order to retain some legitimacy within “official” education circles. To serve teacher education on our part is a generous gesture . . . yet increasingly one-way; the response is not mutual and curriculum studies and curricularists could almost do better if we were merely reviled. Instead, we are largely ignored, hardly recognized for being even part of the educational furniture; thus has positivism and education reform so effectively marginalized our work and importance. This is clearly evident in what I call the “tyranny of method” which has so thoroughly won over the imagination of teacher preparation institutions across the land.

A case for this claim is made in pages 57-58 of the chapter “A simplistic tool for a lethal phenomenon,” where Paraskeva dismantles with considerable attention and interest the debilitating effect(s) of Frederick Winslow Taylor and scientific management. The historical information he (re)provides is fundamental for all curriculum studies doctoral students. Paraskeva surveys these materials as if revisiting the runes and presents them as episodic and germinal to the entire conflict of *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory* (2011). The birth of Taylorism, Paraskeva describes, has ensured that generations have been mis-educated. As George Counts once admonished, the Taylorism/social efficiency/capitalism paradigm—Paraskeva’s none too subtle paraphrase—“needs to be destroyed” (Paraskeva, 2011). Paraskeva next cites Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Philip Wexler, Herb Kliebard (1987), and to my estimation most tellingly Thomas S. Popkewitz, to describe how reform of teacher education under Taylorism has deleterious effects. Some of the more salient and interconnected examples of Popkewitz, Giroux, and Apple follow.

Paraskeva indeed bangs a gong and strikes that radical chord using Popkewitz, who in turn argues that teacher education facilitates filling school system(s) slots. Additionally, teacher education schools confirm an enhanced social status for a professional class of educationalists, the teacher education experts and the institutional elites who become sanctified and/or beatified [my choice of words], exclusively bestowed the privilege of determining *who becomes* or, more accurately, *what is* “a teacher.” More significant still, *what teaching means* is narrowly reproduced by what counts or is legitimated as authentic educational research:

Most research tends to view teaching as a problem of human engineering and teacher education as the most efficient way to provide new recruits with specific behaviors and attitudes of the people who practice teaching ... (p. 58)

Teacher education as a classifying system becomes reified, and lost are the social and political implications and meanings behind the institutional arrangements. Paraskeva adds to this critical point: *especially ignored are class relations*. This is a powerful, and to my estimation largely undertheorized or unacknowledged blemish on our work, that we ellipse the inherent contradiction(s) of professionalism whereby teachers in accepting the grand bargain, go on to lose their autonomy. This ignore(ance) of the grand bargain (feigned, I believe) accounts for the rise of a decidedly atheoretical, professional class of educationalists, not social meliorists per se.

Paraskeva retains the thread. He brings in Giroux who focuses on the contradiction or “deceptive paradox” (p. 58). Teacher education, having the responsibility of preparing teachers and then placing said teachers into schools, serves two masters. The first is the generalized notion that democracy depends on an educated, informed citizenry, and therefore in turn, educated, reflective and reflexive teachers are necessary to meet the civic needs of the student. Growing thoughtful students into engaged, responsive and intentional citizens ensures the general welfare of all. However, the other master, as outlined by Popkewitz, requires filling institutional buckets with a corps of instrumentally effective teachers for advancing the “ownership society” or in other words, industry. Students in this, the capitalist state, are reduced to human capital. These masters or missions—both deemed legitimate by today’s teacher education institutions—simply clash. It is of no great surprise that a system based on the functionalism of inputs and outputs, would demand that

teacher education institutions turn out teachers who then are expected to bring to completion students as products, ready-to-work on the assembly line (using the infamous metaphor drawn from the shop or factory), filling their assumed slot in the production factories.

Of course, a lot has changed since Henry Ford and the managers of mass production of the automobile began, hence the articulation of a “new” as in the “new managerialism” has been invoked. There is nuance in the school-as-factory and teachers-as-workers on the line picture, as Michael Apple points out, because—as discussed in the history of the critical curriculum river—reproduction theory is too simple and reductionist. Schools do more than merely reproduce workers for filling in the slots allocated to them. Indeed, Giroux’s resistance theory argues that what we need is a diverse set of concepts that “link as well as display power, ideology, biography and history.” Paraskeva catches this important concept when he cites Apple, who in an uncharacteristically hesitating prose, intercedes here:

perhaps the archetypical attempt by capital to control people’s work, [did] not come directly from dominant groups in an unmediated fashion. It’s been much more complicated than this and requires a more subtle appraisal of class dynamics both outside and inside education. (p. 140)

My takeaway from this insight is that gender, race, class, and other constructs, for example, intervene in the formation and expression of what comes to be called “teacher education.” Human agency does as well in ways that counter, run parallel to, conflict with (hence Paraskeva’s choice of words) or indeed often confirm and conform to the demands of industry in the 21st century

Taylorism does not go away easily and a resurgence is upon us. João Paraskeva provides a most powerful and relevant observation here, as he notes that Taylorism in teacher education, what I’m referring to as *the New Taylorism* is pervasive. While it is “more than that,” current education reform policy creates/socially constructs the conditions for an emergent managerial class: middle level management. “Same as the old boss” to echo the famous refrain, “new managerialism” under different more advanced conditions of teacher labor aspires to be like the old, and assert power and control over teacher’s work. As Paraskeva insightfully scribes, middle level

management is both coveted by workers and also serves well the agenda of the actual owners of production who are increasingly invisible to the public eye.

It is a fascinating classifying system for educational professional actors who rise to a level of power over the teaching and learning assembly line to exercise authority over the workers/teachers while nonetheless retaining the identity of a worker/teacher. In teacher education, this means the new managers/leaders are legitimated for having taught or run a school, for having been intimately aware of the teaching/working conditions of teachers, or having previously managed them, and for being fluent and versatile with academic discourse (although academic language of a fairly utilitarian kind). Moreover, this New Taylorism, Paraskeva declares, is the literal glue that sticks together the matrix of positivistic knowledge hegemony. My observations concerning, for example, the proliferation and growth of national teacher performance evaluations such as the edTPA—a teacher performance assessment that calls specifically for academic language and demonstration of differences in practice based on discourse and syntax—exemplifies this claim. Paraskeva is particularly lucid in drawing a picture of this, what I call, “New Taylorism” in his denunciation of “post-abysal thinking,” his most vivid depiction.

White Papers and A Letter to the Editor

Our personal stories as curricularists intersect with the political malaise associated with the history of the New Taylorism outlined above. The *simultaneous* attacks on public education and teacher education as forecast in, respectively, United States (1983), *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform* and Kean, Tucker, Fernandez, Kindem, & Pond (1987), *A Nation prepared*, reached a critical breaking point in 2006. With Spellings’ (2006) *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. higher education*, otherwise infamously known as the “Spellings Report,” the entire system, not only of teacher education, but of higher education was placed in literal detention. Subsequently, teacher education has become a monitored, surveilled, and occupied space, threatened with official federal takeover of the keys of the operations. To that end, the Department of Education demanded that higher education open up their books:

Accreditation, the large and complex public-private system of federal, state and private regulators, has significant shortcomings.

Accreditation agencies play a gatekeeper role in determining the eligibility of institutions and programs to receive federal and state grants and loans. However, despite increased attention by accreditors to learning assessments, they continue to play largely an internal role. Accreditation reviews are typically kept private, and those that are made public still focus on process reviews more than bottom-line results for learning or costs. The growing public demand for increased accountability, quality and transparency coupled with the changing structure and globalization of higher education requires a transformation of accreditation. (Spellings, 2006, p. 14)

Following this lead, a growing crackdown on teacher colleges seemed likely, and reemerged in the current era with two federal documents: *Our future, our teachers: The Obama Administration's plan for teacher education reform and improvement* (2011) and *Blueprint for Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence and Collaborative Teaching (RESPECT)* (2013). Teaching is lambasted subtly or otherwise for not being effective and professional enough, and with the Department of Education's proposed Teacher Preparation Program Regulations, the profession was placed under a looming greater audit with demands for greater professionalism. In a seeming contrast, teachers are professionalized further, but accorded less power as a profession. While acknowledged in *RESPECT* that teacher pay was less than other professions, and suggesting that an increase in professionalism necessitates greater pay per career path (bumps in pay for the master teacher and teacher leader tracks, for example), nonetheless and paradoxically so, only implied with vague considerations is any actual increase in power for the profession itself. What counts in these white paper scenarios is a teacher as transmitter of knowledge and skills, but those knowledge and skills are in turn reduced to information or data accumulation. "Reform" hence is largely a facade; we as educators work in the "nightmare of the present" where education is "dreamt of by others" primarily by politicians and accountants (Pinar, 2004, pp. 1-11). Again, Paraskeva complexifies. In his argument, the nightmare of the present, or presentism moves further still into a vacuous "momentism" where every moment must be accounted for.

My personal story emerges from within this proliferation of white papers and features a policy role. In this role, and relating to ICT, it is an interesting exercise, and greatly educational, to learn, and advocate for teacher education in a professional manner. Yet in the process—instead of organizing, building coalitions,

and striking back against the education reform movement whose aim is to dismantle not only the teacher education profession, but public education entirely— I’ve been reduced to writing letters to the Department of Education. In this somewhat quixotic effort, I have in one sterling example, asked for a relaxation of the onerous and continually repressive regulations placed on teacher preparation institutions. In a recent letter, cited below, I set about to list the major measures that ‘we’ in teacher education are already engaged in, and the efforts ‘we’ are making toward authentic reform of our collective profession:

- Our college accords with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements, meeting Carnegie hours and ensuring that direct instruction is equivalent across our courses, regardless of modality.
- We are Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accredited and continue to use assessment in a formative manner, to gather meaningful data, and improve our curriculum, course, and program offerings for our students (teacher candidates).
- We use the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) protocol for course evaluations. IDEA provides detailed information concerning faculty effectiveness in teaching and progress toward improvement in curricular development to the benefit of our teacher candidates.
- Our institution has invested in professional development relating to online course development, including:
 - Faculty Development Online Learning Community (FDOLC), our internal education and training for our own online teaching
 - Quality Matters (QM), online course peer review process to ensure quality instructional design
 - Engaging in a college wide initiative stemming from the results of a white paper on blended learning best practices across the institution

While the work feels somewhat feckless, it ultimately proved successful as a Congressional Review Action rescinded the teacher preparation program regulations. This easement of further surveillance, occasioned by my letter among others’ efforts, is part of my advocacy work in teacher education policy circles.

The advocacy part of my work is a genuine “value-added” when it comes to working not only with teacher candidates, but with doctoral candidates in our Curriculum Studies program. Nonetheless, I’m left with the impression explicitly drawn from what I’ve witnessed—and this is without hesitation or hyperbole—that teacher preparation is trapped in not only an audit culture, but an existential crisis. As a result, curricularists who work in teacher education institutions have a staggering challenge placed before them. Paraskeva makes this challenge quite plain throughout *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory*, and doesn’t mince words:

We need, according to the Deleuzean approach, to understand teacher education free from a representationalistic framework, which will allow young teachers to think in new ways and understand the productive and relational power of difference (Roy, 2003: cf. also Paraskeva, 2007). Indeed, it is difference rather than similarity that drives the whole process of changing. The challenge is to work within critical curriculum theory and practice to find mechanisms that incorporate teachers’ and students’ understanding of difference in positive ways (Roy, 2003; cf. also Paraskeva, 2007). What is at stake is the interface of identity and difference, and the need to challenge false assumptions like the existence of stable identities. (2011, p. 173)

Curriculum Epistemicide(s) in Teacher Education

The project of deterritorializing curriculum studies, teacher education, and education more generally is gaining increasing interest amongst curricularist and critical educator scholars, if not support. But to deterritorialize from what and for whom? Paraskeva demands an education “free from a representationalist framework.” Within this call for deterritorialization, James Jupp’s (2013, 2014) historicized curriculum genealogies provide needed perspective. Jupp’s genealogies push beyond territorial divisions between traditional curriculum development and more recent reconceptualist curriculum studies arguing that these double binds detain rather than advance meaningful, contextualized, historicized work in curriculum.

Undoing double binds and static dilemmas, Paraskeva’s ICT creates a needed tension, raising several other questions for the reader’s consideration. ICT paints a picture of an “educational and curriculum theorist as an epistemological pariah who

is challenging and challenged by a theoretical path that is inexact yet rigorous” (2011, p. 177). Such a theory:

provokes (and exists in a midst of) a set of crises, and produces laudable silences. It provokes an abstinence of theoretical uniformity and stabilization. The theory(ist) is a volcanic chain, who shows a constant lack of equilibrium, is always a stranger in his/her own language. He/she is an itinerant theory(ist) profoundly sentient of the multiplicities of lines, spaces, and dynamic becomings ... this itinerant theoretical path, claims a multifaceted curriculum compromise, and “runs away” from any unfortunate “canonology.” It is actually an invitation to ‘get involved with alternative readings that have been hidden, erased, or marginalized within the curriculum field’. Such itinerant curriculum theory is an anthem against the indignity of speaking for the other. (p. 177)

ICT, as I’ve outlined above, provides insight into the affairs of teacher education, providing the tools to unpack the meanings behind the official white papers regarding the imagined new teacher, or neoliberal teacher. To consider another kind of teacher is to engage in this type of deterritorialized inquiry, and this work represents an exercise that is well past due and entirely consequential to the relationship between curriculum theorizing and teacher education. If we recall, reconceptualist curriculum studies as a movement in the 1970s through the early 2000s, emerged out of a rejection of the notion that the sum total of inquiry into curriculum matters must be relegated and bound to the practice of schooling. Acknowledging, yet impatient with (now) territorialized reconceptualist curriculum discourses, Paraskeva avoids framing ICT as the new recipe for curriculum theorizing or curriculum framework. It is not a “how to” theoretical frame for theorizing or development, but it might be a guide to reimagining teaching, learning, and education. Working from outside of the (re)colonized New Taylorism of teacher training and preparation, ICT seems like a potential direction for curriculum study to decolonize itself from both curriculum development and reconceptualist curriculum studies, and—through shared labor—thrive again.

For the curriculum studies field to uncouple from teacher education and remove the chains that bind, scholars would need to re-examine philosophy, history, and politics, all of the disciplines. It is up to us the curricularists to shift the varied

foundations of knowledge with intention and assertion into a new place, a new space for knowledge generation, but even more for wisdom. And ICT welcomes anti-foundational theory(s), meaning that we need not merely change the wrappings on the package, but rather should reconsider what is inside and what are foundations of education, teacher education, and curriculum theory to begin with, and what and whose purpose do they serve? Perhaps ICT could be that educational protein, needed to nourish and sustain our strength and vigor, as we pick ourselves back up and move decisively and with resolve forward.

Could ICT provide for this? Paraskeva and his allies say yes. In what is to come in the next part of this compelling saga, Paraskeva (2016a) expands his arguments, initially raised with a red flag in *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory*, by exposing the veins of the Western Eurocentric curriculum canon. The next battle? To decanonize the field (Paraskeva, 2016b).

References

- Danielson, C., Moilanen, G., Adams, G., Danielson, C., & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2009). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Jupp, J. (2013). Undoing Double Binds in Curriculum: On cosmopolitan sensibilities in US curriculum studies. *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies*. 9 (1), Available here:
<http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/jaaacs/article/view/187721>
- Jupp, J. (2014). Revisiting Tyler's *Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. *Teachers College Record*. <http://www.tcrecord.org/books/abstract.asp?ContentId=17409>. (Retrieved on line 02-13-2014)
- Kean, T. H., Tucker, M., Fernandez, V. M., Kindem, G. A., & Pond, W. J. (1987). *A Nation prepared*. Research Triangle Park, N.C: National Humanities Center.
- Kliebard, H. M. (1987). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Paraskeva, J. M. (2011). *Conflicts in curriculum theory: Challenging hegemonic epistemologies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Paraskeva, J. M. (2016a) *Curriculum Epistemicides*. New York: Routledge.
- Paraskeva, J. M. (2016b) Opening Up Curriculum Canon to Democratize Democracy. In J.M. Paraskeva & Sh. Steinberg (eds) *Curriculum: Decanonizing the Field*. New York, Peter Lang, pp., 3 - 38
- Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum. pp., 1 – 11
- Spellings, M., United States. (2006). *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. higher education*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education.
- Teacher Preparation Issues, 81 Fed. Reg. 75494 (to be codified at C.F.R. Parts 612 and 686). *Teachers College Record*, Date Published: February 07, 2014 <http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 17409, Date Accessed: 2/13/2014 4:14:35 PM
- United States. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*.
- United States. (1991). *America 2000*. Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Education.
- United States. (2011). *Our future, our teachers: The Obama Administration's plan for teacher education reform and improvement*. Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Education.
- United States. (2013). *Blueprint for Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence and Collaborative Teaching (RESPECT)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Education.