

Curriculum Windows: Frames of Possibility

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The Backstory

To choose a teaching life, or to have a teaching life choose you, means entering into an intense and intimate act of relations. Individuals in the profession of teaching are drawn into relationships with learners, colleagues, content, and communities. And although the way in which we engage in these relationships is deeply connected to and fed by the river of our personal selves, the emotional currents of our teaching lives run just below the surface of our professional identities. While Thomas Newkirk (2006) acknowledges that some may consider it self-indulgent to focus on the emotional life of teachers, he also highlights what happens when we don't: especially when those emotions are negative, rage-filled frustrations so different from the triumphant stories of self-sacrifice and perseverance heralded by colleagues, administrators, and the media. Teachers who fail to meet the unrealistic expectations celebrated in the idealized cultural discourse of teaching excellence can be overwhelmed and silenced by feelings of inadequacy. In the face of narratives that portray no class too difficult to reach, no student beyond the uplifting reach of the teacher-saviour, teachers experiencing difficulty can be overwhelmed by the incongruity between their ideal and actual teaching selves.

I became a teacher by coincidence. It was happenstance that landed me a teaching job at the National University of Malaysia just one month after I completed my four-year undergraduate degree. While at the threshold of creating my professional identity, of striving to attain credibility without credentials, I worked tirelessly to approach the standard my tenured colleagues had already legitimately attained. Of course because I was 22 years old, I thought that was actually possible. Although I left that first teaching position not long after I gained it, I continued to seek out jobs as a teacher. I left the university for a Malaysian state college, then a language centre, and finally an international school. For the next thirteen years I would teach on two continents, in classrooms of children brought together by the pursuit of an international education.

For many years I failed to acknowledge the cracks in my own teaching. My students seemed happy, and their exam results pleased the parents. Whenever I encountered difficulty I used Newkirk's (2006) version of "teaching harder" to get me through, and scripted stories of my teaching self that highlighted my successes, hid my failures, and strived to fit the normative narrative of self-less, dedicated teacher. Then, after thirteen years of teaching internationally, I decided to return home. In my desire to maintain a public story that wouldn't shatter the glass of my neatly framed professional self, I chose not to narrate to myself or anyone else the frustration I felt at school. Instead, I left; returned to Canada. Went to graduate



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school. Moving on promised an alternative to the incongruity that invaded my every day. Later, when I encountered the work of Thomas Newkirk (2006), I began to understand I was not alone in this sense of incongruity, and through the work of Leah Fowler (2006) I found a theoretically informed methodology that not only named my “curriculum of difficulty” but showed me what to do with it.

Naming a Curriculum of Difficulty

In her 2006 work, *A curriculum of difficulty: Narrative research in education and the practice of teaching*, Leah Fowler shows how narrative research can lead to an ethical inner government of a teaching self. Fowler suggests that we can move through difficult curricular spaces by examining our curricular relations through narrative. Through a process of narration and analysis, we can move beyond difficulty by enacting intentional pedagogical movement. Through our willingness to story those narratives that run below the surface, we can safely illuminate the underside of teaching, and confront those experiences that are difficult to accept or know. By examining our untold stories, we can come to know our own epistemologies, and enter a space where more productive pedagogical relations are engaged.

Like many beginning teachers, I had entered teaching with a naïve lack of critical consciousness, imagining that I knew what that role entailed. When I moved from the role of teacher to administrator, I experienced what Fowler described as a “widening chasm between what I physically and emotionally experienced in the daily broken world of... school and the public rhetoric about our amazing successes” (2006, p. 14). The increasing contradictions unbalanced me; I felt weighted by a heavy sense of incongruity. There were many things I could not reconcile, including the failing grades of amazingly gifted students whose potential is simply not recognized by standardized exams, and whose self-esteem becomes battered by that discontinuity. According to Fowler, “The common questions asked by experienced teachers straddling fault lines at the borders of self and system in their professional lives call for a radical hermeneutics along with honest narration” (p. 17). Fowler’s claim that narrative work allowed her to revolutionize her teaching practices, “to experience a ‘coming home’ to myself” (p. 15) promised a way back to and through moments of difficulty, so that I could forge a path forward. To travel that path I needed to narrate and interpret my untold moments of difficulty. Seven orbitals of narrative analysis form the basis of the Fowler’s process of inquiry, and I explore six of them here.

Surfacing through Silence

Naïve storying, the first orbital in Fowler’s analytical process, involves breaking silence. Fowler claims that by finding language to express a story at its elemental, pre-conscious level, we can break the barrier of silence and give voice to an experience of difficulty. Reading stories of difficulty is a way of recognizing shared struggles, but of keeping them at bay, safely contained in the words of another author. After reading Fowler’s introduction, and her internarrative “Home Run,” one of my own stories surfaced, and found its way into words. This naïve storying was an emotional surfacing: I was breaking silence on a story I had kept from my partner, my colleagues, and for many years even myself. As I finished the final paragraph of the draft that emerged and named itself *Pedagogy*, I felt drained, exhausted, exposed. In the mid-afternoon sun I closed the lid of my computer, fell onto my bed and into a deep, immediate sleep.



The intense emotional response elicited by the remembering and recording of an unacknowledged and unexamined difficulty finds an analytical home in Fowler's second orbital. The *psychological re/construction of difficulty* involves broaching the affective and cognitive aspects of the experience. Within the second orbital, Fowler directs us to the aspect of *affect*, so that we may focus on the emotional knot in the narrative, and assess the emotions in the story. In considering affect, we must return to the draft and ask what emotions are present in and elicited by the story. The emotions must be confronted and interrogated during the next part of the process—the *cognitive* component—where we ask what the emotions mean.

These questions lead to the third orbital, *psychotherapeutic ethics*, which requires that we confront our own “potential for harm in teaching” (Fowler, 2006, p. 30). When read against the first three orbitals of Fowler's analytical process, I can see how even in the pre-conscious breaking of silence, *Pedagogy* reveals the intensity of emotions that are created within pedagogical relations. I begin to understand that this story remained suppressed within a vault of silence because I was afraid to give voice to my anger, frustration, and shame. The orbital of psychotherapeutic ethics requires a deeper level of engagement than I am ready for. I know that I must return to it, but only once I have a more structured understanding of the experience I have chosen to narrate.

Narrating a Curriculum of Difficulty

Fowler contends that by capturing our stories in narrative, we can find a home for our difficulty. And so *Pedagogy* becomes a safe container, or “temenos” (Fowler, 2006, p. 15) for the conflict I experienced but could not convey. Separate from and yet a part of me, the story is held within the temenos and I can keep it long enough to study it, examine it, and find ways to re-craft it so that its power can be safely released. And so I enter the fourth orbital of Fowler's analysis, *narrative craft*.

Narrative Craft

Pedagogy

Jalal Benizi, age 16, pulled into the school driving a Mercedes S-class and wearing a thin suit of badass. He and his younger brother, Yassine, had passed shepherds and donkey carts as they slid in air-conditioned comfort up the mountain from Fez. They arrived with the story that their father had pulled them (pulled them? I wondered later) out of their schools in Holland and returned home. And here they were. Yassine joined the other student in Grade 7, my smallest English class. And Jalal joined my largest, Grade 10.

Our school sat at the edge of an extinct volcano in the Middle Atlas range, not far from the town's centreville. The school's peaks mimicked those of the Alps, in keeping with the French colonial chalets and cafés in town, and the elite university that was the collective vision of two princes: one Saudi, one Moroccan. Most of the day students were, like mine, children of academics at the university or the offspring of American and Canadian teachers at the school. The Moroccan boarders came mostly from merchant families in Fez or Meknes, the two cities down the mountain. In the interests of business, they had removed their children from the private French lycées to finish off their education in English. A considerable portion of our enrolment, considering that we'd just hit the one hundred mark, came from a single



family with interests in vineyards and vegetables. Each day drivers and maids delivered nine of their children and a flotilla of food in a convoy of Toyota 4 by 4s. The school's reluctant intakes were the handful of kids who had been expelled from everywhere else; after exhausting Arabic, French, and other international schools in the country, their parents had pleaded and paid, mostly paid, for their places with us.

Jalal and Yassine were different again. Having grown up mostly in the Netherlands they fell somewhere on the edges. They spoke Dutch, rusty Arabic, no French, and passable English. Yassine's humour and the protective ferocity of his older brother quickly found him friends. But Jalal flouted a wealthy menace that kept him at the edge—circling, waiting, watching. There was no need to penetrate the pack; someone would come to him.

And someone did. After a period of hostile familiarity, Youssef was the first to make a move. He was a slight, bespectacled student whose fine mind had no problem housing both traditional religious sensibilities and an adolescent penchant for hash and poetic angst. The type of boy who might one day become a fundamentalist cleric or a radical academic; he could go either way. Youssef had also come back to Morocco from Holland, but with a family story that had stayed in the suitcases. School gossip wasn't silent on Jalal's return. The official line was Jalal's father had brought back his sons because he was reestablishing his business locally. Other sources suggested that mother had not returned, and that father or sons might have been troubled by the law.

As Youssef and Jalal became closer and words like dealer circled the air, people felt they knew what they knew, but let it go.

Jalal and I started out well. I'd met with him, did the right things, said I knew it would be a struggle for him to integrate into the class and find himself academically in a new environment. I felt that he was responding well, detected a trace of vulnerable appreciation that fed my desire to get through to him, to make a difference. He didn't participate much in class, and even when his desk was pulled up to the others he still seemed distant, apart. I felt his difference, made allowances, supported his difficult transition. I read promise in the homework he submitted late and smiled that I'd been able to get him to complete it at all. He smiled too, sometimes. Didn't throw fists or bang tables in my class. I took this to be progress.

Six months after their arrival, Jalal's brother Yassine was expelled, and I was again serving a party of one in grade 7. I hadn't had any trouble with Yassine, a goofy daredevil who seemed in need of mothering, but others had, and the final straw had been an act of attempted arson in the dorm, so off he was sent, to where I didn't know. With his brother's expulsion, the dark storm behind Jalal's eyes shifted and raged. He grew rigid, tensile, a steel wire pulled taut. The air around him hummed electric.

But I liked Jalal, just as I had liked Yassine. I didn't want Jalal to meet his brother's fate. And when the director called a meeting about what to do with Jalal, who had been trying less and less and missing classes more and more, I came to his defense. During the meeting, my optimistic and impassioned plea for lenience struck a chord with Mr. Timms, another teacher who had seen inside this stormy boy and held out hope of calming the waters. We argued that Jalal should stay, we'd try harder, and something could be done.

But the harder I tried the more hardened Jalal became. My hopes of inroads had been blocked and the rare smiles I'd been able to elicit had disappeared for good. The boy arrived late for class, threw his books on the desk, slouched into his seat and put his head down, on good days. On bad days he'd sail in, chin up, defiant, sit erect in his chair and pierce my



attempts at pedagogy. I stopped pulling a chair in close and speaking soft encouragements. He made me nervous now. I backed away, kept my distance and shivered with the cold wind of blame that blew around him. I hadn't done enough. And now it felt dangerous.

After school one day I tried to reach him. I wanted him see that I still believed he could do this but he had to work within the system and that I could help. On the day I'd asked him to come, he entered, eyes averted. He reached for the back of the chair I'd placed next to my desk and invited him to take. In a fluid movement he flipped it around and sat leaning into the chair back, elbows out toward the walls. Now he looked at me.

I began as I'd intended.

"How are things going?"

A shrug.

"I know things haven't been that good lately, and I wanted you to know I'm here to help. You can still make this work, Jalal. We can make it work. I know you've been having trouble with Mr. Porter."

Still nothing.

"But you know that there are other teachers who see beyond that. We know you have the capacity to see this through. We know you can do it, it's just that we'll need your help to get you there."

Where was I going with this? I sounded ridiculous. No wonder he didn't say anything-- he didn't need to. I could prattle on and on for the both of us. I held my breath and he raised an eyebrow to my silence. Maybe he didn't care. Maybe I was just today's entertainment. Maybe...

Suddenly, I wanted to slap him.

As he sat, mocking in his silence, my anger leaped out and tore at him. An animal unleashed. "You think I'm a bitch, don't you? You think I don't care. Well, I do. I fought for you when others wanted to throw you out, and I said you should stay. I said you deserved to stay. But do you? Do you? What are you doing to deserve to stay, Jalal? Tell me!"

The corner of his mouth edged into a smile.

"Tell me, Jalal. Give me something."

And the smile moved into a subtle smirk.

"Just go. Do what you want then. Get out!"

He rose from the chair, smoothed the creases in his jeans, and moved languidly toward the door. Shaking, seething, I slammed it behind him.

In the month that followed, I crept around him in the classroom; knew his sullen contempt was justified. He skimmed the edges of contact. Expertly completed just enough work on our Shakespeare unit to evade real interaction.

By the time spring hit the mountain and the winter snows had chased themselves into the creeks that nourished the cherry blossoms in Sefrou far below, Jalal had received his final warning from the director. One too many chairs and rules had been broken. Too many fights, not enough homework. I argued again for the boy, and we reached a compromise: no expulsion, but no attendance. Jalal would have to do his work from Fez and send it with a driver. He could come back for final exams but write them in the director's office. Final offer.

May flew by, and I eventually stopped looking at Jalal's empty desk. The days were longer and brighter. There was laughter as we opened the windows and let the fresh air circle around us with its delicious promise of summer.



On the hot June day when Jalal came to write his English exam, I smiled, said I'd missed him in class and wished it hadn't turned out this way. A smirk of stone, impenetrable. I tried again, asked him if he felt ready for the exam, hoping still that my lines and lines of positive commentary on his sparsely filled sheets of loose leaf had helped in some small way.

To think that comments on syntax could be useful for us now.

I left the room. He wrote the exam. We moved on.

But still I can see the particular slant of sunlight in the classroom on the day that I slammed that door and sobbed. Cried until I couldn't, and sat staring through the open window, immobile. I cast my thoughts across the barren crags of rock that stretched to the muted peak behind the school. Felt communion with the soft rise in the fold of the mountain--the extinct volcano--dull, lifeless, emptied of its liquid rage.

Revisiting

Moving the story through the fourth orbital, narrative craft, was of itself a difficulty. I had worked and re-worked it as it was being written and before I first let it go. For this telling, and in keeping with the analysis that Fowler guides us through, I tried to refocus on the stylistic elements of the story and approach my experience from the angle of author-editor. In revisiting the piece, I was also reminded that “narrative includes not only the story, but also the teller, the told, the context and conditions of the story telling, and the reasons and intentions for narrating” (Fowler, 2006, p. 9). I had initially considered the components of story, teller, and told during the fourth orbital, but the last pieces, the context and conditions of the story telling, and the reasons and intentions for narrating, blurred into the next realm of analysis—*hermeneutics*—or the fifth orbital.

Interpreting

In the fifth orbital, Fowler suggests that the interpretive exploration of what the narrative is uncovering and revealing can help us to explore the subtextual meaning of the experience. And I am reminded that for my analysis to guide me in a trustworthy manner toward an ethical inner government of a teaching self, my narration must be honest and my hermeneutics careful, attentive, informed. In interpreting the narrative *Pedagogy*, I'm drawn to describe the process of reflective interpretation through two particular frames. The first is my own exploration of the questions the re-crafted story raises. The second brings other voices to the conversation in order to inform my questions. And through the hermeneutic process of asking and answering questions about an experience of difficulty, I move toward Fowler's sixth orbital, *curriculum pedagogy*, through a process of questioning and layering.

Questioning

In writing and reading, and in re-reading and re-writing this story, many questions arose. Fowler's three guiding questions: “What is going on? Now what? So what?” (Fowler, 2006, p. 26) were present with me throughout the fourth orbital, *narrative craft*, and I found myself answering these questions as I re-worked the narrative. Because I had come to know more about the orbitals than when I first broke silence, and because I had participated in the creation of the data, it was difficult to separate the writing and analysis portions of the research journey. In re-crafting the story, I was attentive to Fowler's question, “What is going on?” and



to her process, derived from Heidegger's central hermeneutic task of "uncovering" that which is not immediately apparent (Fowler, 2006, p. 124). I needed not to just reveal the experience but to recount it in a way that expanded on what I had uncovered by breaking silence in the first place. In going back to re-write sections of the story, I was answering the questions that surfaced.

Layering

As I rewrote, I attempted to close gaps in understanding, so that readers wouldn't struggle with the textual aspects of the story. But with Iser (1993) in mind, I also wanted to leave space for meaning to be made rather than controlled. I also looked for opportunities to layer meaning so that a close reading (Gallop, 2000) could reveal multiple interpretations. In reflecting on the process of moving the story through the fourth orbital, *narrative craft*, of working and re-working the story from the perspective of not merely a narrator but also an interpreter, I came to experience the process of writing itself as a hermeneutic endeavour. Through writing and re-writing I was understanding, explaining, and critically assessing experience—those interconnected goals of contemporary hermeneutics (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995).

The storying of this experience, *Pedagogy*, is an individual pane of pedagogical experience within the composite frames of a teaching life. I tell this story after my departure from the international school realm, and during my attempt to reconcile, ethically, my participation as an uncertified teacher of English in elite, international contexts. Gaining a hermeneutic understanding of my personal role in a power dynamic insufficiently addressed in the research literature is important. By asking "What is going on" I seek answers that uncover and reveal personal and systemic difficulties. Identifying and interpreting the personal can be a step toward disrupting normative discourse and to theorizing in alternative ways.

In my hermeneutic re-reading and re-writing I inevitably ask Fowler's second question: Now what? And I return to the writing with that question in mind. I deliberately layer hints of the school's social-historical context into the story. I do this because there needs to be attention not merely to the consequences of me as an individual teacher caught up in the normative discourse of teacher-saviour. There must also be space to interrupt and interpret the imbalanced power structures that made my white Anglo presence in that middle-Atlas Moroccan context possible. I interpret Fowler's radical hermeneutics as a call to craft a narrative that is honest in its unveiling of the surface level curriculum of difficulty between a student and teacher, but also in the deeper systemic and ideological tensions that run within systems of privilege. In my journey toward an ethical inner government of the teaching self, the process of writing and interpreting leads me toward a desire to participate in inquiry that interrupts the normative ideology of international education. In arguing for the ethical dimensions of pedagogy to be attended to, Soltis asserts that:

there is also a need for exploring the critical-normative ideological context of pedagogy, a need for bringing about its demystification and bringing to critical awareness the most fundamental embodiments of power in the historical sociocultural world we all share. (1984, p.9)

To be ethical, I need to be guided by a critical consciousness that allows me to examine not only my potential for harm in relation to one student, but to address my own complicity in the reproductive systems of power that divide and marginalize our sociocultural world.

Incorporating Other Voices

To inform my critical consciousness, I turn to the voices of others who have addressed the difficult issues that *Pedagogy* contains. The issue that surfaces upon first reading of *Pedagogy* is the conflict between the teacher and Jalal. While the narrator doesn't experience the kind of conflict that other teachers face with him, she doesn't experience the kind of success she aspires to either. The teacher subscribes to one of the dominant cultural myths of teaching, that it is her individual mandate to control the class and students within it (Britzman, 1986). In *Pedagogy*, the interpersonal conflict originates in relations of power; the teacher's desire to control and Jalal's lack of compliance. When the narrator argues that she and Mr. Timms will try harder to get Jalal to comply, the reader must question whether this is a genuine plea on behalf of the student. Perhaps the teachers' unwillingness to let go is grounded in cultural notions of teachers as "dynamic, charismatic agent of change" (Newkirk, 2006, p. 160). The teachers' reluctance to admit defeat is potentially rooted in the individualist mythology which ensures that "Despite the reality that teachers share collective problems, in this individual world, asking for help is viewed as a sign of weakness" (Britzman, 1986, p. 445). The narrator's feeling that she must intervene in order for Jalal to succeed is an example of Britzman's assertion that a teacher's sense of competence is closely tied to her ability to exert control and influence. Within her work on cultural myths and teaching (1986), and the terrible problem of knowing thyself (Britzman, 1992), Britzman argues for biography as a way of eliciting critical insight into the teaching self. And van Manen reminds us how individual moments of relational difficulty can potentially shatter the panes of our pedagogical frames:

For many teachers their sense of self as teacher is easily called into question, especially when they encounter 'difficult' youths or when they become unsure whether what they teach and how they teach is still appropriate for their students. (1994, p. 140)

By calling together these voices I hear both a way of and a reason for critically narrating difficult moments from a teaching biography. I am brought to Fowler's next question in this endeavour: So what?

Curriculum Pedagogy

Once opened to honest narration and hermeneutic understanding, our stories reveal our selves more critically and more powerfully. A deeper reading of the story *Pedagogy* reveals the hidden difficulty of critical consciousness—the chasm that opens when we recognize incongruity within our teaching lives. As I re-read the story, I recall how absurd it felt to be teaching Julius Caesar on the side of a mountain in Morocco, but how easily that incongruity was elided because this was how I earned my income. What other incongruous power dynamics, other than teacher-student, are represented by this situation? How can examining the narrative point me to a deeper understanding of my own epistemology and the larger issues



of curriculum? Through the process of asking and answering questions about an experience of difficulty, I have entered Fowler's sixth orbital, *curriculum pedagogy*.

In the penultimate orbital, I must address the narrative in terms of its implications. The incongruity raised in *Pedagogy* becomes part of the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004) that curriculum compels us to engage in. As I move through and between the orbitals, I come to understand this recursive analytical process as a way of re-piecing the fragments of a shattered teaching pane, or wiping away obscuring layers of dust, or of moving to another pane in order to see vistas beyond more clearly. If each narrative becomes a translucent pane within the composite frames of a teaching self, I can come closer to seeing what lays beyond the window of a storied self. Seeing ourselves in this way moves our visions forward: it recognizes that consciousness is complex and although it "cannot be pinpointed as existing at a particular location, we nevertheless continue to describe a cohesive feeling of consciousness as we develop the narrative that describes our existence" (Sumara, Luce-Kapler, & Iftody, 2008, p. 234). Individual sites of consciousness, the carefully constituted panes of narrative, can help us frame an integrated critical consciousness that is simultaneously reflective and visionary.

Interplay

Naming and working through a narrative of difficulty has implications. Reflecting on my storied self analytically moves me closer toward an integrated consciousness by positioning me within a research agenda that incorporates my teacher, researcher, teacher-educator, and academic selves. Our personal stories are shaped by the times in which we live, and whom we live among. Within individual narratives, our lives are influenced by the setting in which our characters are drawn. This sketching of self is socially mediated by the global economic and educational flows that influence the movement of families, students, and teachers. The circumstances that allowed me to engage in a profession without any formal credentials reveal a site of incongruity implicit in the sociocultural world of *Pedagogy*. The recognition of English as a commodity for social mobility globally (Lowe, 1999) and the predominantly Anglo-western hiring practices of international schools positioned me within the global narrative. I became an international school teacher, like more than 215,000 others at over 5,000 international schools worldwide (International, 2008; ISC, 2009). And, with time, what I did was who I had become.

And I am not alone. Recently, the number of Canadians seeking jobs as teachers at international schools has grown (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). In Ontario the number of new graduates seeking employment as educators abroad may reflect the constrained employment market in the province; only 36% of newly certified Ontario teachers secured full-time positions in 2008 (McIntyre, 2009). Limited local employment prospects indicate that for many Canadian teachers, going abroad to teach may be a necessary reality. How will their own sense of who they are be shaped by what they do? Who are these Canadian teachers who go, have gone, or may go abroad?

So far, these stories have not been told; we don't really know. We know that literature on the experiences of international school teachers is limited, and Canadian perspectives are significantly under-represented (Canterford, 2003). Any kind of data specific to the number or characteristics of Canadian teachers abroad is difficult to obtain, as there is no specific governing body responsible for overseeing this multi-billion dollar industry (MacDonald,



2006). Detailed information about staff nationalities is either not collected by organizations which specialize in teacher recruitment for international schools, or it categorizes teacher recruits as American, British, Host National, or Other (Canterford, 2003). The designation of Canadians as “Other” is symbolic of how Canadians fall outside the research categories and perhaps find themselves in places of incongruity.

My individual narrative serves as an entry point for understanding my own epistemology, but it also compels me to move beyond the self, to ask questions of others so that the stories of other Canadians are revealed and considered. Moving my story beyond the personal and engaging my experience with the “contingent, contextual relational networks in teaching and learning” is the heart of Fowler’s sixth orbital (Fowler, 2006, p. 13). I understand it to be crucial for the ethical inner government of my teaching self, and for moving me toward a wider-reaching, visionary, critical consciousness. In telling my own story, I am brought to ask critically reflective questions that may reveal other instances of incongruity. How do Canadian teachers see themselves, as individuals and Canadians, abroad and at home? What stories do they have of the journey? What role do they have in creating the curriculum stories of others around the world, as they are sought out, hired, and transported across the globe to be conduits of curriculum? How, as well, are we perceived? These seem interesting questions to ask in light of the complex visions of schooling held by various educational stakeholders and policy makers. If curriculum is so easy to deliver, if it is simply the specification and delivery of measurable outcomes, international schools could simply import and deliver the curriculum. But they don’t. In the international school arena, teachers play a unique role in the curriculum stories of learners; they interact with other elements to characterize the curriculum they convey. In international contexts, this characterization is cultural; teachers can be perceived to be cultural representations of the curriculum they deploy. The interplay of character and context sets the mood for the curriculum story that gets told. It’s a mood affected by milieu, and attentive to the soft and subtle strains of the plots and subplots that unfold. Exploring curriculum through a storied approach can bring the meaning of individual experiences to the global narratives within which we shape our lives. We will need to look through many windows of experience in order to see clearly who we are. And we should continue to ask the question who are we? Since, afterall, we are always becoming.

Notes

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