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## **Issues of Language and Culture in Translating ‘Curriculum’: An Analysis of Curriculum Publications**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the development of the Curriculum Studies field in Cyprus from the early 1980's until today, as depicted within Greek academic writing. Cyprus is a country characterized by conflict and dramatic social changes. We use curriculum and cultural studies lenses, considering the politics of publications and philosophical–epistemological questions, to explore the meanings of “curriculum,” and the directions of the field. We analyzed the content of 543 academic journal articles with qualitative methods. Findings indicate limited publications on curriculum/textbooks and a narrow understanding of curriculum, which limits the perceptions of teachers in a diverse educational context, and their civic responsibility. We discuss issues of translation of curriculum terminology and its recontextualisation in various cultural and sociopolitical contexts.

### **Introduction**

The objective of this paper is to examine the development of the Curriculum Studies field from the early 1980's until today, as it is depicted within academic writing in the Greek language. Particularly, the aim of the analysis is to map the themes or fields with which educational research has been preoccupied during the last 25 years in papers published in Greek academic journals, so as to locate the presence and scope of the Curriculum Studies field. The assumption underlying this aim is that academic publications in a language at a particular context represent the meanings ascribed to the term ‘curriculum’ as well as the directions the Curriculum Studies field is taking.

Studying in English-speaking academic institutions, located in the USA and the UK, and being familiar with academic literature and research around curriculum and Curriculum Studies in English, we were relocated as academics at the departments of education of two tertiary education institutions in Cyprus where the language of instruction is Greek. As we delved into the process of teaching curriculum courses to undergraduate and graduate students, we soon faced problems of translation, and by extent, questions with regards to the meanings ascribed to the term 'curriculum' in Greek (which seemed different to those encountered in the English literature), and by extent, questions on the scope of Curriculum Studies as a field.

In a country with a long colonial past such as Cyprus, a colony of the British Empire from 1878 to 1960, English has become unofficially a third language of communication (the two official languages of the Republic of Cyprus being Greek and Turkish). Education in Cyprus has been historically segregated with Greek and Turkish as the languages of teaching and learning in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot educational systems respectively. Therefore, teacher training is conducted in either language according to the educational system teachers are educated to teach. We begin to trace the development of Curriculum Studies in Cyprus in the early 1990's, when a number of events brought important changes in the educational sector (Christodoulou, et al., 2006; 2007).

With this study, which builds on our previous work and considers the many tensions that exist in the field (e.g. see Page, 2003), we examine the following:

- What is the volume of publications on curriculum in academic publishing in Greek?
- What are the scope, content and aims of publications focusing on curriculum? How has 'curriculum' been translated?
- Which directions do Curriculum Studies expand to in the Greek language?
- What can we learn by mapping the field of Curriculum Studies in Cyprus for the field internationally?

In light of the results of this study, we further attempt to address Pinar's (2006) question: "Can internationalization provide opportunities for the intellectual advancement of U.S. curriculum studies?" (p.1). By exploring the case of the Greek language and how curriculum has been historically construed in academic publishing in a language other than English during the last 25 years in the post-colonial context of Cyprus, this study may contribute to the broader effort for the internationalization of Curriculum Studies as a field. The translation of the term curriculum reveals the philosophical-epistemological assumptions of what curriculum research should entail, and what worthwhile academic knowledge on curriculum might be. We argue that these assumptions reveal the tradition of academia within the Greek context to be viewed as 'experts,' not liable to dialogue, critique, inquiry or alternative points of view.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Curriculum: Inquiry, Discourse, Debate, and Genealogy**

Drawing upon work within the field of Curriculum Studies during the last century (e.g. Dewey, Franklin, Mann, Bobbitt), and including the work of scholars (e.g. Blumenfeld-Jones, 2004; Page, 2003; Pinar, 1994; Willis et al., 1994; Schubert, Lopez-Schubert et al., 2002) and associations (i.e. AAACS, IAACS), we perceive curriculum as the “experiential journeys that shape perspectives, dispositions, skills, and knowledge by which we live” (Schubert, In Preparation) and not merely as school curriculum. For example, a shift in the scope and inquiry of AERA’s Division B: Curriculum Studies is evident. Curriculum scholarship is also devoted to understanding curriculum in different contexts internationally (cf. Pinar, 2003 for a collection of 34 such studies).

### **Language and Cultural Studies**

As we undertake the task of looking into curriculum publications we have to consider that diverse populations and cultures might or might not be included and represented culturally, or otherwise, in these publications; indeed this was one of the reasons why this study was considered as necessary, since Cyprus is at present absent from the international ‘map’ of Curriculum Studies literature. We used lenses from cultural studies to examine the issue of language and culture. Cultural studies is a process of producing useful knowledge (Johnson, 1986-87; Hall, 1990) about cultures, identities, and people who are marginalized, suffer, are in the mainstream or predominant culture, etc. They recognize that each culture should be studied from the point of view of all, rather than just from the uniform western tradition, and, particularly, to include the voices and identities of those who struggle and suffer the most (Edgerton, 1996). Such an approach would enhance our civic responsibility in places where schools, neighborhoods and communities are diverse and multicultural.

### **Publishing Empires and Politics**

Since we discuss publications, we refer to the way academic publishing shapes policies, sets standards and ways to go, as well as puts limitations and excludes or includes voices, in other words about the politics of publications. Thus, in different contexts, different emphasis is given, assumptions are made, and meanings are assigned to situations, peoples, events and words. For example, philosophical inquiries published in a particular language and country, are contextualized in ways that reflect the concerns, challenges and realities of the place. This is true for the term “curriculum,” too, as it includes philosophical inquiries and reflects cultural habits, norms, traditions and policies. Greek publications ascribe a partial meaning to the term “curriculum” and give a different direction to the field comparing to the English publications, as evidenced from the analysis.

### **Modes of Inquiry**

- We used qualitative methods of inquiry and content analysis to classify all articles published in two Greek academic journals: *Pedagogiki Epitheorisi [Pedagogical Review]* and *Epistimes tis Agogis (formerly Sholio ke Zoi) [Sciences of Education (formerly School and Life)]*, between 1984 to 2005 into themes or fields of educational research. Sampling procedures led to the selection of these two journals using criteria such as their long presence in academic publishing, their prestige and their widespread use in comparison to



others. *Pedagogiki Epitheorisi* in particular is the official journal of the Greek Pedagogical Association founded in 1981, thus representing the most recent and valid academic work written in Greek. In order to categorize each article we inquired:

- The words in the title of the article
- The text of the summary-abstract of each article
- The full text of the article
- The key aim or main argument of the article (which field of study was it contributing to?)
- In venturing into defining curriculum we faced problems similar to those faced by Schubert and his colleagues (2002) in selecting the literature they would include in their 100-year overview of curriculum books. If the answer to what curriculum is can be found from curriculum questions such as: “What is worthwhile? Who says? Why? How is it acquired? What are the consequences? Whose interests are served?” then whatever article provide perspective on these questions could be considered as a curriculum article. We therefore proceeded by categorising all published articles, rather than those most obviously addressing curriculum. Using both ‘traditional’ thematic coding as well as inductive and discourse analytical techniques, we categorised articles in the themes/fields shown below. This categorization purposefully coincided with, but was not limited to (since our perspective was a Curriculum Studies one), traditional classifications of fields of study within Educational Sciences. The codes/themes employed eventually are shown [here](#).

### **Data Sources**

We analyzed 290 articles published in the *Pedagogical Review* and 253 published in the *Sciences of Education* between 1984 and 2005. We investigated whether the description of each article enhanced reflection or used language pertaining to key concepts as included in Schubert’s 10 curriculum questions (Schubert et al., 2002; see also Christodoulou, et al., 2007).

### **Results and Conclusions**

The findings allow us to voice our concern over the scope of Curriculum Studies in Greek. Our study indicates that there has not been considerable publishing in the two journals on curriculum/textbooks (only 6 in *Pedagogical Review* and 12 in *Pedagogical Sciences*) in comparison to other fields of educational research. Also, within the curriculum category a broader understanding of curriculum is not validated by the articles we analyzed. Additionally, the curriculum field itself accepts particular curriculum paradigms and excludes others. More importantly, curriculum is merely connected to schools and to the traditional (pre-Reconceptualization) curriculum design. This works towards limiting perceptions of those who are called to create, enact, and experience curriculum in the future, in other words that of teachers in diverse educational contexts, in the politically sensitive context of Cyprus, where civic responsibility should be a priority.

As more educational scholars and education associations (i.e. the American Educational Research Association 2008 conference theme) call attention on seeing education and other social contexts as spaces wherein civic responsibility may be pursued and achieved,

researchers and teachers need to consider the spaces they observe, work, and live in. Cyprus is a context where national citizenship and identities have been the cornerstone of the political problem, which still divides the island in two. In the academic publishing examined in this study, the curriculum appears to exclude many perspectives that exist in the field, and to ignore concerns that exist in other parts of the world. However, it is critical for Greek-Cypriot prospective teachers to be equipped with diverse perspectives in a country of ethnic conflict, to accept and respect diverse populations that live on the island, i.e. Armenians, Maronites, Eastern-Europeans, Asians, Turkish-Cypriots, and others.

### **Educational and Scientific Importance**

This study is significant for those dealing with issues of curriculum and instruction, locally and internationally. Having shown some of the directions and limitations of the field, the paper indicates some challenges to be met, if the field of Curriculum Studies is to locally and, by extent, internationally be advanced. The main argument has been that Curriculum Studies need to address problems of translation of curriculum terminology in languages other than English; to explore how curriculum is perceived in a variety of cultural and sociopolitical contexts; and to inquire into issues of transplanting educational ideas from one context to another without adjustment and re-contextualisation. The study contributes to locating Cyprus on the map of international Curriculum Studies, thereby further diversifying its perspectives and contributing towards the internationalization of the field (see Pinar, 2006).

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