

Curriculum Studies: What is The Field Today?

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Abstract

This article offers a reflection on a central question: what is the curriculum studies field today? To answer this question we need to consider the state of the field as a powerful and analytical instrument to frame the curricular movements, namely from the contributions of the different authors, whose texts have been a strong influence on the construction of the curriculum field.

Firstly, we identify some texts referring the state of the field of curriculum studies to then explore their connection with the historical periods in the field with, for example, the Tyler Rationale, Reconceptualization and Post-reconceptualization.

Secondly, by analyzing the main texts of the four most knowledgeable curriculum theorists – Pinar, Apple, Goodson and Young - we observe the state of the field by discussing the importance of their ideas for an understanding of the changes within the curriculum field.

Finally, we reflect, as others have claimed to do, about the worldliness of curriculum studies by focusing on its globalization and diversity, as two referents of the contemporary discourses about the curriculum. To synthesize our ideas we explore some notions of the curriculum and refer to questions related to the curriculum, such as the nature of the curriculum, elements of the curriculum and curriculum practices.

Introduction

In this article, we offer an account of the state of the field of curriculum studies in order to answer our central question: what is the field today? Talking about the various moments in the history of curriculum studies, we provide a summary of the work of several scholars, highlighting some of the tensions that have characterized the evolution of curriculum studies. We assume that readers of this article need to have some knowledge of the field, namely different intellectual trajectories of the most knowledge-

curriculum theorists. We assume the complexity of the curriculum studies and when we write about historical moments we don't enforce a linearity on the history of the field as when we consider two moments in the Reconceptualization. The article is a particular reading of what is ongoing in the curriculum field, namely when some words such as post-reconceptualization, internationalization, globalization, worldliness and cosmopolitanism are beginning to be used to describe both the complexity and diversity of the curricular questions. The article contains three points: 1) The state of the curriculum studies field as a means to understand "what is the field today?"; 2) Is the state of the field more confusing through the space of authors?; 3) The worldliness of curriculum studies.

1. The state of the curriculum studies as means to understand "What is the field today?"

Shaped by different faces (Mcneil, 1978; Vallance, 1982; Jackson, 1992; Pinar, 2004; Malewski, 2010a), the curriculum studies field is both a complex and controversial endeavor, which has been approached differently throughout recent decades. As any disciplinary field, the curriculum is profoundly embedded with questions about its epistemological nature that are always being analyzed in accordance with its relationship between theory and practice or, according to Alex Molnar (1992), between academic curriculum discourse and curriculum practice. Normally, the epistemological debate on theory and practice has been guided by paradigmatic analyses leading us to a dichotomous view of what counts as knowledge. For those who are working in the field, it will be acknowledged that there are both theoretical and practical approaches. A particular problem for curriculum studies has been the artificial division between the curriculum as theory and the curriculum as process, yet some curricularists such as Joseph Schwab (1970) and Lawrence Stenhouse (1983) have stressed the centrality of practice. As William Schubert (2009, p. 392) argues, "we must be willing to see contemporary curriculum theorists as scholars who sometimes need to distance themselves enough from practice and context to theorize both practice and context as curricula in a larger social sense."

Nevertheless, one of major concerns has been the *ahistorical* and *atheoretical* nature of curriculum (Ibid., p. 170) as the existence of curriculum implementation will only be possible in the continuity of its general didactics. Despite the curriculum, as an institutional text, probably being still too large to study, Pinar, Reynolds, Slaterry and Taubman (1995, p. 852) consider that "the theoretical wing of the field must not be ignored, as several synoptic textbooks continue to do."

As Reba Page (2009, p.9) states the central question of curriculum studies has been its identity:

"Curriculum studies seems to have always had something of an identity problem (...) The identity problem has also always been inflected by external developments, including broad societal shifts and, more recently, increasing intervention in curriculum by formal government (local, state, and federal) and by a growing number of informal interest groups."

Acknowledging that the curriculum field has been suffering a kind of identity crisis, Pinar, Reynolds, Slaterry and Taubman (1995, pp. 849,848,857) pointed out the problems and possibilities of the field "filled with a thousand of voices," marked by the "proliferation of discourses" and defined as an "energetic field," because the "curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation.", the field is no longer arrested and moribund, but rather a hybrid space with a relatively rapid shift from the Tylerian paradigm to an understanding paradigm, which is the same as saying that the field has moved from a

paradigmatic unity to particularism.

The state of the field is a theoretical task, namely when we are using the contributions of the different authors whose texts have had a strong influence on the construction of the curriculum field. In his “*Thirteen Theses in the Question of State in Curriculum Studies*,” Nathan Snaza (2010, p. 43) writes about the first thesis that “the question, *What is the state of curriculum studies?* cannot be answered, for we are only barely on the way to learning how to pose it.”

The state of the art is not an inventory of the past but a complex analysis of what is changing in the curriculum field. It firstly includes a vision of the future that captures the changing discourses, to secondly promote a critical analysis of the identity of the field and acknowledge the common and different aspects among the various authors. As the curriculum studies field is filled with different voices and besides its inner controversy, William Pinar (2010a, p. 528) writes:

“The present state of the field seems sufficiently variegated to conclude what we curriculum studies scholars have in common is not the present but the past. Perhaps that is what curriculum history has emerged as key specialization. Despite its centrality in efforts to understand the present, curriculum history remains underdeveloped in a field traumatized by malevolent politicians and undermined by opportunistic colleagues.”

When analyzing the state of the field, we are questioning if the future of curriculum theorizing, lies in post-reconceptualization, which would lead up to the discourses in the following way according to Erik Malewski (2010b, p. 536):

“Post-reconceptualization rather than being a break or a shift in the terms for curriculum studies scholarship, seems to foreground new sensibilities within the field: (1) flux and change; (2) hybrid spaces; (3) reading differently; (4) divergent perspectives; (5) different contexts; (6) status question; and (7) understudied histories.”

William Pinar anchors the curriculum studies to a multiplicity of perspectives and to new forms of research. In his notes on the state of the field Pinar states: “unlike the early 1970s, the field is not moribund. It is intellectually very lively, complex, variegated. The field is threatened less by its internal complexity than by external political conditions.” (Pinar, 2007, p. XXV). Such threats are due to the political face of the curriculum, which is recognized by the governing powers in order to build their criteria of the curriculum development. Looking at its internal complexity, Pinar (*Ibid.*, p. XXV) recognizes that in the triumph of post-modernism over Marxism, the field fragmented into multiple specializations:

“Among the categories of post-1995 scholarly production are: 1) curriculum history, 2) curriculum politics, 3) cultural studies, 4) race theory, 5) women’s and gender studies, including queer theory, 6) post-colonial studies, 7) Jewish curriculum studies, 8) disability studies, 9) narrative (including autobiographical, autoethnographic, and biographic) inquiry, 10) complexity theory, 11) environmental studies, 12) psychoanalytic studies, 13) technology (especially computers), 14) arts-based research, and 15) internationalization”.

Discussing the theoretical sustainability of the field, William Pinar understands the curriculum as a complex conversation, identifying new and diverse discourses based on the reconceptualization and post-reconceptualization periods being particularly interfaced.

In effect, after its formative years (Seguel, 1996; Schubert *et al.*, 2002) the present of curriculum studies have been developed based on a relationship with the past, where the theoretical and practical perspectives need to be integrated largely on social, cultural and political circumstances and specifically on paradigmatic analyses. The diversity of the curriculum is one of the field's main characteristics, not one of its weaknesses. Furthermore, the focus on theory needs a critical analysis of the practical, particularly when we are deeply involved in complex curriculum discourses and, in the meantime, we are not looking for the stasis of curriculum practice that is frequently controlled by governmental power, which provides a technical decision on curriculum development. In this case, the critical analysis is "conceived itself as an agent of enlightenment in the historical process," and is deeply related to "social and political struggles" (Held, 1980, pp.399-400).

Tyler Rationale, Reconceptualization and Post-reconceptualization

If the field of curriculum "is characterized by a vigorous debate, energy, and a plethora of compelling arguments," (Lincoln, 1992, p.84) indeed, then we must also acknowledge that the control of curriculum is already visible due to its administrative nature.. However, curriculum studies have a deep concern within schools, which look at the context of curriculum construction from divergent perspectives, although political analyses have been emphasized in recent decades.

Writing about the nightmare of the present, William Pinar (2010a, p. 528) observes:

"The problem of the present is intensified by the field's historic preoccupation with "the school", too often severed from material specificity. Now an abstraction without concrete referents, "the school" functions as free-floating signifier of fantasy (...) The reduction of academic achievement to standardized test scores functions to obliterate the reality of individual teachers and students in actual schools. Knowledge is traded for "skills", another concept without content".

The instrumental influence became evident with Tyler - the giant of curriculum development - who to Philip Jackson (1992, p. 24) was the father of the *Bible of curriculum making*: "What kind of book, then, is it? Tyler does not say. Instead, he talks about what the book does or tries to do. He says it 'attempts to explain a rationale for viewing, analyzing and interpreting the curriculum and instructional program of an educational institution' (*Ibid.*, p. 25).

The Tyler Rationale represents the foundation of the field and its paradigmatic stabilization as curriculum studies (Pinar, 2008, p. 491) with a long and persistent influence on curriculum practices, reorganizing its institutional molds (Pinar, 2010d). Related to psychology and behavioral objectives in the ideas of Bruner and Bloom,¹ the Tyler Rationale is a normative theory prescribing the curriculum

¹To Edmund C. Short, What's worth Recalling?, 2010, p. 180, "curriculum theorists can see the folly of turning to the use of scientific theory where many of its assumptions have come to dominate curriculum policies and practices with a host of negative consequences and inappropriate justifications for actions taken by schools and policymakers based on these scientific/technological assumptions."

to teachers and students. Broadly accepted in the schools, the Tyler Rationale “became the doctrine in the curriculum development” (Klein, 2009, p. 119) as well as its “universal model” (Kliebard, 1970, p. 269).

Now, what does reconceptualization mean?

The theoretical turn towards reconceptualization was a new movement in curriculum studies of the 1970s that was explicitly directed “against curriculum development as the *old stuff*” (i.e. the perspectives of Tyler and Bloom on curriculum development), according to Leonard Waks (2010, p. 234).

In the preface of *Understanding Curriculum*, edited in 1995, William Pinar recognized that the curriculum field was in a period of stasis and that there was a need to move it into new ways of understanding. The strategies for the understanding of curriculum imply an option within the field - curriculum theory is an interdisciplinary field committed to the study of educational experience (Pinar, 2004, p. 20). In the early 1970s the field was in crisis. The critical analyses of Huebner, as well as Macdonald, were crucial for recognizing the arguments of a new curricular agenda for curriculum studies that raised a challenge for the humanization of schooling. If Pinar is the most well-known of the movement, then *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* is the seminal text, edited by Pinar in 1975.

Reconceptualization was meant to include different voices associated not only with the wider movement of a humanistic nature and its hermeneutical roots, but also with the thoughts of the Frankfurt School, firstly introduced into curriculum studies by Huebner and Macdonald. Working on the shoulders of conceptual-empiricists, the reconceptualists were crucial for studying the curriculum from a viewpoint other than one of technical rationality, as well as for analyzing its social and personal contexts. For M. Frances Klein (2010, pp. 120-121), the reconceptualists:

“are a diverse group of scholars in curriculum development who want to conceptualize approaches to curricula in fundamentally different ways (...) the term, the reconceptualists, as applied to such a diverse group of thinkers casts a very wide umbrella over all of them.”

Answering the question “What is the reconceptualization?” William Pinar (1979, p. 93) stated that: “reconceptualization is a reaction to what the field has been and what it is seen to be at the present time.” The new state of the field is now less externally imposed criteria to become more open to a new understanding of what the curriculum is, whereby understanding is the strategic tool of curriculum theorizing that defines commonalities and substantive differences among group discussions. If there was no ideological or thematic unity among the reconceptualists, then, as Slattery (2006, p. 57) recognizes reconceptualization would represent an intellectual movement for the understanding of curriculum studies with a degree of unity that never existed:

“Every October, graduate students and faculty traveled together to a conference associated with the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, now JCT: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Curriculum Studies, held at Bergamo Center in Dayton, Ohio (...) It is important to note that a diverse group of scholars attended this conference, and they were united only in their opposition to the managerial and prescriptive nature of curriculum studies aligned with Frederick Taylor’s scientific management and Ralph Tyler’s principles of curriculum

and instruction. Thus, it is a misnomer to call these professors “the reconceptualists.” There was no ideological or thematic unity among the participants.”

Two main curricular issues were discussed in the meantime: the political and the personal or the first and second waves of the reconceptualization. Largely accepted but largely uncoordinated, this first wave reinforced the features of a social theory linked to Marxist or neo-Marxist perspectives, whose analytical icons are class, hegemony and ideology. The second wave of reconceptualization started with the expansion of discourses associated with autobiographical, psychoanalytical and deconstructional approaches (Schubert *et al*, 2002, p. 508).

Reconceptualization implies a new curriculum paradigm that follows critical theory in its numerous approaches and only this feature is a landmark question. The movement “was never prescriptive” and “is a critical exercise, descriptive rather than prescriptive, studying signs of educational practice to discover what might have been, what still may be” (Pinar & Grumet, 1981, pp. 30,38).

In spite of the criticisms of reconceptualization, the movement has had an indelible place in historical discussions concerning curriculum studies. The roots of reconceptualization were deep enough to allow the solid construction of a curriculum theory related to the paradigm of understanding. In other words, what reconceptualization brought to the curriculum field were “dynamic experiences of sharing emerging concepts of curriculum with a wide array of international educators rather than a remote event that occurred in the 1970s to be studied in a textbook.” (Slattery, 2006, p. 52).

In a brief synthesis,² the concept of reconceptualization applied by Pinar to the reconfiguring of the field of curriculum studies after its collapse in the 1960s, when curriculum development was no longer part of its province, moved them from a largely bureaucratic and procedural field to a theoretically sophisticated one devoted to understanding. He was the primary architect of the field’s reconceptualization during the 1970s.

The basic criticism of reconceptualization lies in the movement against traditionalists. Another is related to the fact that is a formal movement with a theory distant from practitioners. The beliefs about what is right or wrong were expressed when curriculum studies were a young field directly exposed to substantive differences. The field was always in conflict - at least as seen by traditionalists - between the territory of the practitioner and the ideas of the theorist along a tenuous line tying schools and universities.

A further critique - in form of an angry silence - came from the neo- or post-Marxists to whom the field was constrained by the words of Foucault and by post-modern and post-structuralism projects that denied the primacy of political orientations. Although these critiques might be acceptable and positive, especially the later ones, to merely invoke a unifying movement with enemies would be to simplify the situation.

Post-reconceptualization

²Text based on the ideas presented by Pinar in his application for the Canada Research Chair and used by his permission.

For William Pinar, post-reconceptualization³ is a new period⁴ or a new era⁵ defined by the post-modern (one of several discursive efforts to understand curriculum for Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995) project of understanding.

He continued working towards an understanding curriculum yet through dominant categories such as the whiteness, race and gender of racial politics and violence. At the heart of curriculum studies in the post-modern era, Slattery (2006, p. 146) argued that “there is a commitment to a robust investigation of cultural, ethnic, gender, and identity issues,” as well as there being a celebration of the “uniqueness of each individual person, text, event, culture, and education”.

Woven in eclectic and wide theoretical approaches – “phenomenology, autobiography, existentialism, arts-based research, pragmatism, deconstruction, queer theory, critical race theory, post-structuralism, feminism, hermeneutics, complexity theory, and critical theory” (*Ibid.*, p. 190) - the field of curriculum studies runs broadly in post-modern, post-colonial, and post-structuralism movements, which in a way are close to “philosophical, psychoanalytical and cultural discourses or movements, but all within the context of an interdependent cosmological view.” (*Ibid.*, p. 186). Nevertheless, for Slattery, “the heart of curriculum development in the postmodern era is a commitment to a robust investigation of cultural, ethnic, gender, and identity issues” (*Ibid.*, p. 146)

Although some terms are used in curriculum studies with different meanings, post-reconceptualization reinforces and provides reconceptualization with new theoretical meanings.. The distinction between reconceptualization and post-reconceptualization, in my opinion, is tenuous since it implicitly reflects not only the tensions about what the field are saying us, according to different authors and perspectives, but also the waves of reconceptualization (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). Within the post-reconceptualized field curriculum theorizers, through research, came up with an answer for the legitimization of curriculum theory. As post-modern and post-structuralism projects at the same time, they recognized the multiplicity of voices. The political issue was not to be forgotten but instead relocated in a new approach:

“Through the reconceptualization, we continued the political work of the sixties. Many of us wanted to relocate the political to the subjective and the personal. I would say in retrospect we were both political, but at different sides of politics. I would say the political theories were also subjective theories, without realizing it, because they wanted a shift in attitudes and structures and practices, which required different subjectivities. We were both a little overstating the distinction between the subjective and the social, maybe.” (Pinar, Interview, 2009c).

Post-reconceptualization enlarged the second wave of reconceptualization, reinforcing as well the subjectivity of an interdisciplinary curriculum research: “We work to create views (in other words, montages) of especially interdisciplinary configurations not visible in the compartmentalized curriculum organized around the school subjects and focused on standardized exams.” (Pinar 2006a, p.5).

³For Marla Morris, Back up Group: Here Comes the (Post)Reconceptualization, 2005, p. 3, post-reconceptualization “is not Post, but (Post)” and “to be (Post) suggests that the movement has connection with what come before and is not chopped off from it entirely or divided by a deep chasm. We are intertwined with our intellectual ancestors no matter how much we think we are different from them.”

⁴The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America, 2001, p. 27.

⁵The Synoptic Text Today and other essays, 2006a, p. 5

If reconceptualization is remarkable in curriculum Studies since the 1980's, William Pinar never used the term post-reconceptualization with a meaning other than simply reconceptualization. He recognizes three chronological moments: curriculum development, reconceptualization and internationalization (Pinar, 2008).

As a theoretical approach, post-reconceptualization returned to the main question of curriculum studies - What knowledge is of most worth? (Pinar, 2006a, p. 80) – not as a sociological issue but as a methodological problem, so: “the new curriculum research and development must be “documentary” and “work like”, both carefully synoptic and “critical and transformative”, leading us – students and teachers – back to the original texts and forward to our ongoing subjective self-formation in society.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 10,13)

Is there a contradiction in this articulation between post-reconceptualization and curriculum development? I suppose not, as curriculum development is neither an exclusive field of practitioners, nor an exclusive field of traditionalists or of neo-Tylerians. Curriculum development is a moment of curriculum construction in a multiplicity of practices.

If post-reconceptualization is a new period or a misnomer (Reynolds, 2003, p. 86) certainly the understanding paradigm continued with the reconceptualists and the post-reconceptualists. It is always possible to say, according to the words of Pinar that “someday there will be a new paradigm, but it's not here, yet. No, we're still in the paradigm of understanding curriculum.”⁶.

The moment of understanding curriculum, different from a prescriptive moment, was born with reconceptualization in the 1970s but surely it did not die in the 2000s with the post-reconceptualization. If a reconceptualist theory did not exist, then the post-reconceptualist theory could also not be a fact. Patrick Slattery (2006, p. 190) used the term “reconceptualized curriculum theory” and Reynolds William (2003, p. 86) used “comprehensive theory of curriculum,” as fundamental matter of reconceptualization. Despite the terms used by authors, the field of curriculum studies has been and will continue to be surffed by different perspectives and struggles to express modes of theorizing and acting. The norm for curriculum studies is divergence, conflict and theoretical instability. The crisis identity is always a focal point, as quoted by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995, p. 849): “The curriculum field has been suffering a kind of identity crisis, and we wanted to help resolve that, by pointing the continuities, as well discontinuities, between the traditional and reconceptualized field”.

2. Is the state of the field more confusing through the space of authors?

After reading *Leaders in Curriculum Studies: Intellectual Self-portraits*, I tried to answer the question “what is the field today?” through some well-known authors. For Leonard Waks (2010, p. 234), “the leaders of the generation of educational scholars after 1960 often saw themselves as revolutionaries. They produced a “new” philosophy, a “new” history, and “new” sociology of education.”

The identity of the field has been built by authors such as Pinar, Apple, Young and Goodson⁷. [Being world-widely acclaimed authors, their theoretical perspectives and personal experiences are crucial to reflect on curricular issues. As curricular voices, these authors have promoted curriculum studies, although other authors outside the United States or outside England should be quoted.

⁶Text based on the ideas of Pinar presented in his application for the Canada Research Chair and used by his permission.

⁷Certainly, I'm paying more attention to William Pinar and Ivor Goodson because I wrote an essay about them (Whole, bright, deep with understanding. Life story and politics of curriculum studies. In-between William Pinar and Ivor Goodson, 2009).

For those who have read their texts, it will be easy to acknowledge the importance of their educational and curricular approaches. As curriculum leaders, Pinar, Apple, Young and Goodson have been paradigmatically thinking about the curriculum, as well as introducing new intellectual contributions. As Lincoln (1992, p. 83) acknowledges in relation to Pinar, they maintain “some control over the debate,” although the confused field derives from conflicting groups. For Michael Connelly and Shijing Xu (2008, p. 524), “some of the confusion noted by Jackson was related to the passion and intensity of feeling about the writings and positions of one person and group about persons and groups.”

In the past, Jackson (1992, p.37) described the field of curriculum as being confusing when he wrote: “The boundaries of the field are diffuse, so much so that one may wonder sometimes whether it has any boundaries at all. To some, that condition is troublesome; to others, it is exhilarating; to all, it can become confusing at times.”

Today in the early 2010s “the field might well look more confusing than it then did” (Connelly & Xu, 2008, p. 523) in the eyes of Jackson. Maybe it will be permanently confusing due to its internal disagreements and external marginalization.

This confusion that existed and probably will exist in the future arises from the different theoretical approaches in the curriculum field. Current curricular debates about curriculum are strongly related to the question *What knowledge is of most worth?* Not least, the ongoing debates explore the tensions between curriculum theory and curriculum development, especially when there remains a conflict between the more theoretical and more practical within the field. For example, M. Frances Klein (2010, p. 119) observes:

“they seemed to be engaged in developing alternative bases for engaging in curriculum thought while I was intensely interested in classrooms practices and the types of curricular decisions that were currently being made to affect what and how students learned and how those should be improved.”

The substantive change of the field that occurred with reconceptualization is perceived differently by Apple, Young and Goodson. Despite the theoretical similarities between Apple, Young and Goodson, who have the sociology of education in common, their main disagreement has brought Apple and Pinar together. However, Goodson and Pinar share the same perspectives about autobiographical methodology and the central place of history (Popkewitz, 2009; Baker, 2010) in the field.

Being a well-known author, namely when he writes against the neoliberal agenda, the work of Apple has been centered on the politics of curriculum, because “understanding education requires that we situate it back into both the unequal relationships of power in the wider society and into the relationships of dominance and subordination and the conflicts that are generated by these relations.” (Apple, 2010, p. 4).

Apple advances a political approach on the curriculum, which marginalizes understanding of the curriculum as a private and personal sphere. Focusing the “struggle both inside schools and in wider society,” (*Ibid.*, p. 5). Apple assumes that “a good deal of time” is spent “showing that it is social movements, not educators, who are the real engines of educational transformations.” (*Ibid.*, p. 6). In this case, he is a sociologist of the curriculum, who explores the dynamics of power embedded in social relationships and searches for the political answers to his main question: *Whose knowledge is of most worth?*

Being the “chief organizer” (Waks, 2010, p. 234) of reconceptualization, which for Michael Apple (2010, p. 5) is “a term with a very weak empirical and historical warrant,” although widely acknowledged by others, Pinar is an author whose accomplishment has been associated with curriculum understanding and particularly autobiographical understanding.

Writing about himself, William Pinar (2010a) considers having made seven contributions to curriculum studies thus far: the concept of *currere*; reconceptualization; queer theory in education; gender in racial politics and violence in America; curriculum development as an intellectual not bureaucratic undertaking; place as planetary and biospheric; and the internationalization of curriculum studies.

A greater deal of similarities can be found between Pinar and Goodson (Moreira, 2009). As J. Wesley Null (2008, p. 488) writes, the British curriculum scholar Goodson “has been particularly concerned with how curriculum – and specifically subjects like biology, geography, and vocational training – relates to reproduction of class inequalities.”

Goodson is certainly among those names, whose contribution to the emergence and consolidation of Curriculum Studies has been widely recognised.

With a PhD in History followed by five years of professional experience in secondary school teaching, Ivor Goodson (2010) understands curriculum as of social differentiation within the underlying ideas of the New Sociology of Education to which Michael Young is related, Goodson recognised that knowledge is also penetrated by power, having been influenced in this analysis by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, as well as recognising some influence from Marxist theory, despite affirming that he is not a Marxist.

When asked if he considered himself to be a Marxist or post-Marxist - a question now in vogue - his answer about the theory was that:

“it’s a very important tool, but it’s not the only tool. And it’s not the final answer. The final answer always is what the data is telling you and you can’t know the final answer before you ask the question. That’s the critical difference here. So Marxism is very important, so are other things, but it is not an answer that precedes the question.” (Goodson, Interview, 2009).

As he does not believe in what is structurally determined, he argued that the discussion can flow in several directions and that what is more important is to understand to what extent curriculum’s social construction is influenced by the professional lives of teachers. Therefore, agency is not in the school or in the classroom but in the teacher. Without plunging into practical fundamentalism this does not mean acceptance of the belief that everything in education should be about practical understanding and unrelated to context and theory.

By saying that his interest is to negotiate between structure and agency or in what he calls the “middle-ground,” Ivor Goodson is constructing an academic singularity as to what refers to the origin and construction of curriculum by making a bridge between the general aspects of cultural dynamics - which include educational inequalities (macro-theories) - and the interaction aspects within the classroom (micro-theories). Ivor Goodson has united theory and practice i.e. the macro and the micro, thus positioning himself at an intermediate level between the theoretical and the practical - a placing that allows for a specific understanding of the complex process that is the relationship between power and curriculum.

Like William Pinar, Ivor Goodson believes that there is an inter-relationship between both public and private spheres and that curriculum study must be socially and personally oriented, as it represents a possibility of training that is not prescriptive but in which the teacher plays a crucial role. He denies that there is a split between the political and the personal sides and argues that, if a split exists, it is negative for the field since curriculum study demands both sides to be addressed. He recognises that the personal side is essential, although he never wishes to lose the notion of the social side. Therefore, he attributes to the teachers a leading role in the analysis of educational and curricular reforms.

Michael Young - another British curriculum scholar - sets his contributions in the sociology of education and curriculum studies. His main contribution is rooted in the new sociology of education and in searching for answers to these questions: *What do we teach? What are schools for?* (Young, 2010, p. 219).

Known as the father of the “new” sociology of education, due to his book *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, published in 1971, Young provoked a paradigmatic change in the field. Despite his disagreement with Bernstein, he acknowledged that “It was Bernstein who taught me to think sociologically about education and who suggested that the curriculum could be a topic for sociological analysis.” (*Ibid.*, p. 223). This contribution can be analysed using two main assumptions that he proposed as the result of his research on curriculum, as he said (*Ibid.*, p. 219):

“The first arose from my initial recognition that knowledge is not given but a social reality. In other words, forms of knowledge always in some way have social relations embedded in them. The second assumption that I became aware of much later is that certain forms of knowledge, which I refer to as *powerful knowledge* have properties that are emergent from and not wholly dependent such as being a resource for reliable explanations; I have contrasted it with the idea of “knowledge of the powerful,” the more familiar sociological view that focuses on such questions *whose knowledge?*, and *who does it benefit?*”

Developing ideas from Durkheim, Vygotsky and Bernstein, Michael Young was the author of two important books for curriculum studies - *The Curriculum of the Future* (1998) and *Bringing Knowledge Back In* (2007) - in which he refers to the centrality of knowledge and his concern with the “boundaries between types of knowledge,” and the statement that “all knowledge is socially differentiated.” (Young, 2010, p. 228). When Young writes about *powerful knowledge* he wants to refer to the primacy of “theoretical knowledge” over “everyday knowledge,” thus expressing a move from social constructivism to social realism.

Distancing himself from Pinar, due to the personal and social as spheres of the study of curriculum studies, Young argues that the theoretical framework is still late modernity not post-modernity, which is identified by the notion of Weber of the “unfinished project of modernity.” As Michael Young (*Ibid.*, p. 228) states: “if we accept that this “unfinished project” is the only alternative to Lyotard’s post-modern relativism, this places a heavy responsibility on those of us involved in education. Sociology of education and curriculum studies should be critical resources for this modernizing project, as they were to Durkheim over a century ago.”

Drawing on the belief of powerful knowledge as a construct against relativism, Young provides a knowledge’s critical analysis by focusing on both the boundaries between types of knowledge

and the social approach to knowledge that is more independent of subjects and of technical contexts. Acknowledging that the social is a part of a subjective theory, Pinar believes that “when ‘the social’ predominates, agency fades, the victim of the epiphenomenal status ‘the social’ assigns to the individual.” (Pinar, 2009b, p. 194).

3. The worldliness of curriculum studies

In an introductory essay about curriculum in theory, William Schubert (2008, p. 391) writes that “personal theory and critical theory constitute alternatives to analytic theory and normative theory, which have dominated much of past curriculum theory.” If “the Tyler Rationale is out-of-date and if we have little or nothing to replace it with” (Lincoln, 1992, p. 184), the theoretical possibilities opened up inside the field can therefore be discussed.

New discourses on curriculum studies are often linked to the understanding and are visible in the different analyses about what happened to curriculum after the Tyler Rationale paradigm. After this paradigm and the paradigm related to reconceptualization, William Pinar (2008, p. 491) identifies the internationalization of the field from 2000 to the present.

Since Michael Young (2010, p. 228) compared the field in the 1970s and 2010s, he has been convinced that “the broad field of curriculum studies is quite different (...) one difference is its growing internationalism”. Such growing has been characterized in the framework of globalization and diversity – the two main pillars of internationalization. On the one hand, globalization can be referred to as a process of homogenization of the politics of curriculum (Clarence, 2011).

Answering the questions *What good is an international or a global perspective on curriculum? What is actually going on? Are curriculum and instruction in fact becoming more similar around the world?* Anderson-Levitt (2008, p. 364) observes that “although there is a vague commonality among curricula around the world, intended curricula of the nations that achieve the highest scores do not resemble one another in their details, and the curricula differ even more when enacted in classrooms.”

In fact, globalization is a process of convergence of purposes that use a common vocabulary about curriculum reforms due to the centrality of knowledge and the fostering of national identity, which is more and more defined by transnational agendas. This contradictory idea is shaped by national governments, because “the idea of core subjects may seem obvious and inevitable,” (*Ibid.*, p. 354) and among them prevails a “convergence toward a common elementary core.” (*Ibid.*, p. 356). Despite there being one same common structure in both schooling and classroom, there is diversity in what is the curriculum-in-action, as decided by teachers and students in specific contexts since “what actually happens in classrooms varies widely around the world.” (*Ibid.*, p. 363).

It seems obvious that homogenization operates at the level of the intended curriculum while, on the other hand, at the level of the enacted curriculum, there is diversity. This statement provides a conceptual framework about globalization if we are researching, as asserts Janet L. Miller (2005, p. 20), the possibility to create new spaces of discussion and theorizing on curriculum studies cannot rely on a center-periphery model of world culture or of curriculum studies. This proposal is explored by Noel Gough⁸ (2000, p. 329) arguing that “the internalization of curriculum studies can then be understood as creating international “spaces”, in which local knowledge traditions in curriculum inquiry can be performed together, not as local representations of curriculum translated into a universal discourse.” Consequently, internationalization does not mean globalization, as it can be described as a global and

⁸See also, Globalization and School Curriculum Change, 2003

local conversation (Pinar, 2006a, p. 163) and provides “scholars with critical and intellectual distance from their own local cultures and those standardizing processes of globalization against which numerous national cultures – and the school designed to reproduce those national cultures - are now reacting so strongly.” (Pinar, 2010b, p.1).

Given this idea, and as writes Terrance Carson (2009, p. 156), “the field is already unavoidably implicated in worldly circumstances, but unlike the convergences of economic globalization, the internalization of curriculum studies is not necessarily a uniform field. Curriculum maintains its roots in local, national, and cultural specificities, but these now exist in relationship with unfolding world circumstances”.

Through theorizing about internationalization, Pinar advances the worldliness of a cosmopolitan curriculum, as a primacy of the particular. Curriculum as worldliness is both possibility and practice, as it “cultivates comprehension of alterity, including that self- knowledge that enables understanding of others,” (Pinar, 2009a, p. 7) and promotes a dialogue in the words of Janet L. Miller (2005, p. 14):

“Some of us are proposing constructions that possibly could challenge present tendencies toward separatisms, balkanizations, and colonizations, both within and beyond US borders that threaten, through their reiterative practices, to (re)produce the very effects that they name. Some of us are suggesting that the field itself still might productively locate resistance and the possibilities of connection and transformation within competing curriculum discourses.”

The worldliness of a cosmopolitan curriculum, as William Pinar writes (2009a, p. 8), at first “implies that general education is more than an introduction to “great works,” the “memorization of “essential” knowledge, or a sampling of the primary disciplinary categories (three units in social science, three in natural science, etc.)” and, at second, acknowledges the personification of the individual: “understanding the subjectivity of the internationalization of curriculum studies accompanies my efforts to understand the field’s intellectual history and present circumstances, as the individual personifies that history and those circumstances” (Pinar, 2010b, p. 5).

Moving curriculum to a new place, cosmopolitanism “is a name for an orientation toward self, others, and world”; “is a name for an outlook toward the challenges and opportunities of being a person or community dwelling in a world of ongoing social transformation; it is “a way for life in which persons one participants in pluralistic change rather than passive spectators, or victims, of such change” (Hansen, Burdick-Shepherd, Cammarano & Obelleiro, 2009, p. 587).

Final words

Curriculum is a complex endeavor suffering in a permanent discussion both about its theoretical state and the relationship between curriculum theory and curriculum development. The metaphor used by Joseph Schwab (1970) - the moribund curriculum - has been rejected like other metaphors or images reviewed by Philip Jackson (1992), namely *confusion, conflict, amorphous, elusive, in disrepair, driven into disarray, suffering from severe disorientation, ill-defined epistemology*.

The study of curriculum studies should not be approached in terms of what does not work in

the field but as what is differentially analyzed and discussed by conflicting groups that make it theoretically dynamic and powerful. This is not a weak but rather a theoretical empowerment.

After the out-of-datedness of the Tyler Rationale some curricular scholars in the field hold a strong conviction of curriculum as a conversation. Other curricular scholars stress the primacy of the social and political by rejecting the subjectivity of the curriculum. The contrast between curriculum becoming increasingly separated by post-structuralism and by post-modernism is a contrast associated with theoretical differences, as well as personal divergences.

Running as a river (Reynolds, 2003; Paraskeva, 2004), the curriculum is a local, national and international conversation, whose words are used by those who directly and indirectly are making the curriculum in context. The key problem of the curriculum is the contrast between theory and practice. The field theoretically runs toward diversity, while at the same time the curriculum practices are controlled intensively and persistently by administrative agendas; namely, when *social engineering* (Pinar, 2004) is sufficiently strong inside schools.

As Madeleine Grumet (1988, p. 122) writes, “the problem of studying the curriculum is that we are the curriculum.” Certainly we are apart in terms of our answer relative to the main issue of curriculum studies - *What knowledge is of most worth?*

Acknowledging that curriculum is complex, any state of the field is only a particular moment with one date for theorizing about how the present is being intersected by the past – our historical condition – and present - our personal and human proposal. Shaped by different perspectives, it will be recognized that the neo-Tylerian approaches are coming back. Curriculum studies will always have an identity problem. What is certain is that it is not a problem of a poor or weak theory. The ongoing theoretical approaches in the field are solid arguments for both understanding its complexity and the contexts in which we are the actors. In this case the state of the field is a powerful analysis of what we can do and think when we are the curriculum. Maybe, it can help us ask, related to curriculum studies, the following: “What is worthwhile? What is worth knowing, experiencing, needing, doing, being, becoming, overcoming, sharing, and contributing?” (Schubert, 2009, p.176).

As we cannot provide the answers but only an understanding process, the words we can now exchange together will be responsible for what one day our students will retain about their past, like William Pinar (2010b, p. 144) said about his own schooling: “I received a solid introduction to the various school subjects, taught by often animated and dedicated teachers.”

Working in opposition to the words of Jackson,⁹ the curriculum studies field exist and does not look gloomy at least in other countries outside the USA. Consequently, when we write about the epistemological state of the field, we are learning how to understand that, as Nathan Snaza (2010, p.43) observes: “the question, What is the state of curriculum studies? cannot be answered, for we are only barely on the way to learning how to pose it.” The state of curriculum studies help us find the complicated answers to what is the field today.

Known as a review literature, the state of the field comprises a wide vision of what is happening in the field and the emphasis on theoretical analyses. Besides, its diversity cannot be considered as an epistemological crisis. To conclude, and stressing an argument to be considered advanced by Gaztam-

⁹ See Philip Jackson, *Conceptions of Curriculum and Curriculum Specialists*, 1992, p. 4 : “I myself wondered (only half in jest) whether there is a thing as a “field” of curricular studies after all”” The picture of what is happening at the level of theory building and of making pronouncements about the curriculum in general looks gloomy indeed” -

bide-Fernández and Thiessen (2009, p. 14): “whether the field is characterized as continuous or fragmented, coherent or chaotic, stable or uneasy, there is no doubt that curriculum studies is a healthy and productive scholarly field”.

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