

# Curriculum, policy, practice

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Investigations into curriculum practices have always had great prominence in the curriculum field, to the point where the notion of curriculum in action has become one of the most powerful concepts in curriculum theory. From the phenomenological approaches, through the work of Paulo Freire and the concept of *currere* by William Pinar, to the most current discussions that focus on school daily life and teaching knowledge, curriculum practice is based on questioning the prescriptive approaches to curriculum. Given this tradition, emblematic studies, so as not to use the word classic, in the most diverse theoretical approaches, tend to focus on curriculum in action as almost synonymous with curriculum endowed with the most meaning, *the part of curriculum that really should be considered in research and in school*.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why policy studies have not developed a more consistent dialogue with curriculum practices, and its broader emphasis is on the education field beyond school. To the extent curriculum studies as political text assumed Marxist theoretical approaches (Pinar *et al*, 1995), they became characterized by ideas of centralized power in the state apparatus established to regulate practices. With this, policy assumed a link to institutive rationalistic concepts of a set character of policies over practices. In this way, policy would be a set of rules, in given socio-economic relations, resulting or not from a social consensus or a hegemonic process, capable of materializing in institutions that define subjects' way of acting or being. The instituting and even subversive dimensions would be designed in the field of social practices that would exert a counter-hegemonic action. Based on this dichotomy that deepened the separation between the ontic and the ontologic, it was no wonder that curricular policies and curricular practices were interpreted as distinct and unrelated dimensions.

When an eventual relationship was made in this field, it often assumed an orientation of approaches from correlating theories, in which curricular practice was a reflection of a broader framework, a space of implementation or resistance. In this regard, curricular practices had their productive and creative dimensions denied.

Many studies have been conducted in this perspective with a view of questioning texts and policy guidelines, but research was not always developed about the practical dimensions of policies beyond the attempt of making them a space to corroborate constituted theses based on a wider social structure.

The broadening dialogue between the curriculum field and cultural studies, post-colonial and post-structural, as well as the accelerated process of changing social-cultural landscapes, with the narrowing of inter-relations between different cultures, has contributed in part to the overcoming of this interpretive model. For example, theoretical and methodological changes widespread in studies of educational and curriculum policy, with the arrival of every way with which we operate being around the signifier globalization (Lingard, 2009), has helped to change the relationship between policies and curriculum practices. With global cultural flows, the deterritorializations and disjunctures (Appadurai, 1996), classifications and



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stratifications give way to a lexicon that tries to make us understand what always moves, showing itself to be fluid and indeterminate. In this way, concrete certainties, fixed and deterministic structures that sustain the arguments of separation between policies and practices are shattered.

Not only in recent years have we seen a significant expansion of research on policies, but we can also identify more and more studies that propose establishing further relationships to curriculum that enable us to understand their current state, noticeably more fluid and dynamic. Approaches such as policy cycles by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992), the incorporation of discursive approaches to policy analysis (Bacchi, 2000; De Alba, 1999; Fendler, 2006; Lapping, 2005; Lopes, 2007; Macedo, 2011a; Ruitenberg, 2010), and the very reconfiguration of rationalist senses of practice and policy have led to questioning the unproductive separation of these two curriculum dimensions. This scenario has also led us to question the usual separation between formal curriculum and curriculum in action (Macedo, 2011b). Curriculum is complex; it becomes a text that not only integrates levels of proposition and action, written and carried out, but proposes thinking about curriculum without these divisions that try to stabilize its multiple language games.

When turning our attention to the writing of this presentation of the second issue of 2011's *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*, we are led to these reflections by virtue of the texts included in this issue, in various ways and from very different traditions, operating with the signifiers, *practice* and *policy*, on records that seem capable of contributing to this wider debate.

In the text, *Citizenship education and curriculum policy in Brazil: facing challenges and prefiguring changes*, of Angelica Araujo de Melo Maia and Maria Zuleide Costa Pereira, the authors analyse the signifier *citizenship* and its relationship to human rights and culture, with special attention to the articulation between citizenship and multiculturalism. With focus on texts of Brazilian curriculum policy, taking as an analytical sample the Complementary Document to the National Guidelines for the teaching of Sociology in secondary school (PCN +), Angelica and Maria Zuleide propose an understanding of citizenship as an everyday practice, based on Gert Biesta.

Tasha Ausman, in the text *A Curriculum of Cultural Translation: Desi identities in American Chai*, examines narrative articulations in the film *American Chai*. This movie is understood as a complicated conversation (Pinar) in relation to the sociocultural constructions of bi/cultural-identities within Indian diaspora communities. Analysing the first-generation Indo-Canadian (desi) identities, the author discusses a way to reconsider these narratives as a curriculum of cultural translations. The author connects identity, culture, curriculum and pedagogy and he proposes us to deconstruct desi movies and to work through a curriculum of cultural translations.

Maria de Lourdes Tura, in the paper *Curricular and Educational Practice Policies*, presents an ethnographical study made in a Primary Education school of the municipal public system of Rio de Janeiro. In this paper, she argues that the educational practice recontextualizes different curricular proposals and then produces a hybrid culture. Your focus is the Municipal Education Department's discourse on quality and efficiency. This discourse is considered as imposing a new institutional culture, new profiles of activity and new subjectivities.

The fourth text is *Deconstructing a Curriculum of Dominance: Teacher Education, Colonial Frontier Logics, and Residential Schooling*, written by Bryan Smith, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, Sarah Berry and Kevin Spence. This paper the lived experiences and knowledges of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals living



in Ontario, Canada. They focus on the present absence of certain Aboriginal narratives in relation to the 'fort' of Canadian history and argue that, as socially justice orientated teachers, we must continue to challenge the re-inscriptions of a curriculum of dominance.

The four texts open up possibilities for powerful readings, distinct theoretical perspectives, for us to examine the relationship between policy and practice. We can think in another language that contributes to our questioning of binarisms, our deconstructing of stabilized and established concepts of curriculum, and perhaps considering other possibilities, policies, and practices for curriculum.

## Notes

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