

Ways to Think about a Changing World: What Transnational Curriculum Inquiry Says

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Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational.
Homi Bhabha

The book edited by Bill Green, Philip Roberts, and Marie Brennan provides a rich intellectual journey on different productions by researchers from different countries. Such contributions provide opportunities for deepening the most recent discussions in the curriculum field for researchers, teachers, and those interested in starting their studies. The work involves provocations presented as answers to the central question proposed by the organizers: What role does curriculum scholarship have to play in the strange and difficult times we find ourselves in? The unique perspectives presented by the authors make up, at the same time, the state of art and an agenda for the future of the curriculum field considering the challenges and issues of our times as paths for curricular studies.

The work comprises a whole set of tensions involved in the meaning of the name "curriculum" in the world, including the overload brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a conflicting scenario poses a challenge to the field of curriculum, in a scenario in which new educational dynamics are initiated and others are hindered by the impacts of the disease and by so many other demands of our times. In this sense, the organizers of the collection propose as a general problematization what the practice of the curriculum is, what is a curriculum, what it means to make a curriculum in a current situation with so many issues, opportunities, and challenges for reflecting on. The present nature of the work lends consistency to its provocative tone, considering that, in addition to the pandemic, there is a great number of social demands in effervescence, of struggles based on debates about race, coloniality, knowledge, identity, teacher education, among many others. Seeking to provide the reader with a dense dialogue on those central themes, the work is organized around four parts that focus on the themes of decoloniality, knowledge and nation, in addition to innovative interpretations of future challenges in the field of curriculum. In accordance with the structure of the 6th World Curriculum Studies Conference (December 2018), the collection is organized as follows: Part I - Decolonizing the Curriculum, Part II - Knowledge Questions and Curriculum Dilemmas, Part III - History, Nation, Curriculum, and Part IV - Curriculum Challenges for the Future.



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Despite the segmentation into parts, it is important to highlight the organicity of the work, signaling an interesting internal dialogue with regard to possible interactions between the chapters of the different parts. In this sense, the book is consolidated in an invitation or provocation to the reader in order to get involved with what has been produced about curriculum around the world and/or about how curriculum has been produced in what we call our world. It is an interesting resource for understanding the different questions that produce a curricular thought that is continually constituted by singular interpretations that converge in a transnational conversation about curriculum.

It is a work marked by different perspectives, diverse theoretical traditions, innovative approaches, alternative problematizations, and transnational interpretations that drive new interactions and an understanding of how the curriculum field has been redesigned in a changing world. It is through such intellectual dynamics that the book is energized comprising the thought of authors from Aotearoa, New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, England, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Singapore, South Africa, and the USA. Among the motivations for the work is the inspiration from a perspective of "Curriculum-as-international-text," whose focus is on a situatedness approach aimed at reflecting on how and in which part of the world curriculum is being talked about and thinking about the curriculum, which is assumed as a production mobilized in multiple spaces and places.

Part I begins with the chapter by Crain Soudien, which is called *Development, Colonization, and the Curriculum: New Directions for New Times?*, and focuses on the colonial character of the university in South Africa, as well as the questioning of its ability to meet the demands of black students and its commitment to social development and the fight against inequality. The purpose of the article is to critically discuss the current decolonial moment of higher education in South Africa. Specifically, it addresses the effects of decolonial theories on curriculum transformation, in addition to identifying four key positions in this political scenario, namely Transformation by Detachment, Transformation by Inclusion, Transformation by Enlargement, and Transformation by Critical Appropriation. In his approach, the author highlights relations with the decolonial movement sustaining critical perspectives on the arrogance that guides modernity, the premise of its inevitability, the imperial role of the university in South Africa, and racialization as the core for the formation of human subjects. It focuses on the thoughts of Sousa Santos, Essop, Prah, and Mbembe, among others. The chapter concludes by pointing out that decolonial contributions allow the recognition of racism as a signifier of imperial power and the idea of race as a means to maintain a normativity for the conception of what it is to be human, whose effects can be fought through an curriculum agenda that comprises contributions from Southern decolonialists.

The second chapter, *Smoke and Mirrors: Indigenous Knowledge in the School Curriculum* by Georgina Tuari Stewart explores the inclusion of Māori knowledge into policies and practices in Aotearoa, New Zealand. For the author, the theme is fraught with complexity and requires an approach centered on specific situations. In order to think about this scenario, it approaches the thought of Michael Young in order to challenge his conception of powerful knowledge, considering it illusory and capable of reifying knowledge in a binary way. In this sense, it develops an analysis of Young's most recent thought, highlighting limits in his conceptions about the relationship between curriculum and knowledge. For the author, Young's perspective is dissonant with the reality of multiple contexts and tends to reiterate technicist logics in the school by assuming ways of knowing as presuppositions prior to school culture and the demands of communities. On the other hand, it agrees with the idea that, even from a bicultural education perspective, the curriculum should be based on disciplinary knowledge, articulating systematized knowledge with knowledge produced in the



daily lives of students. Curriculum should be also capable of being understood in the school context.

The chapter *The Mestizo Latinoamericano as Modernity's Dialectical Image: Critical Perspectives on the Internationalization Project in Curriculum Studies* by Daniel F. Johnson-Mardones proposes a reflection on the possibility of building an interdisciplinary research field based on an intercultural dialogue beyond the limits of Eurocentric modernity. At first, it criticizes the modern educational project in view of the conception of the "Latin American mestizo" as a dialectical image. Then, it relates the critique of modernity to the decolonization project of the academic educational field taking into account the inclusion of Latin American thought in the discussion on the internationalization of curriculum studies. For this, it approaches the thought of authors such as Quijano, Walenstein, and Mignolo, among others, with the objective of thinking about the identity dynamics involved in what he considers as the "Latin American mestizo." Based on the singularities of this identification, the author proposes the liberation of Latin American thought from pedagogies of domination, venting as a possibility the idea that the hybrid construction that marks Latin American thought highlights the unique character of each tradition, culture, or investigative field. For the author, this helps to rethink a curriculum studies project as international, although not uniform, which can be sustained through constant conversations and dialogues.

The chapter 5, *Refusing Reconciliation in Indigenous Curriculum* by Kevin Lowe, Nikki Moodie, and Sara Weuffen draws attention to the reconciliation discourse involved in the rise of indigenous content in the Australian curriculum. For the authors, the treatment given to the representation of indigenous populations in the curriculum tends to focus on colonial purposes of exclusion from ways of knowing, doing, and being indigenous people in the school system. In this sense, they argue that one of the purposes of the increase in indigenous themes in the curriculum is to make the Australian common good known to the general population. They also emphasize that the identity logic of the Australian curriculum tends to separate indigenous knowledge from indigenous learners, while at the same time it presents perspectives such as maintaining the impossibility of sovereignty for indigenous peoples and the rescue of "futures" through politics of reconciliation. The authors conclude by stating that current Australian curriculum policies reiterate the logic that indigenous school success is separate from social justice and a rights-based agenda, which tends to reiterate processes of school exclusion.

Part II begins with the chapter by Zongyi Deng entitled *Bringing Content Back in: Perspectives from German Didaktik, American Curriculum Theory, and Chinese Education*, which focuses on the importance of knowledge for the curriculum debate, highlighting the current disappearance of the approach to the theme of knowledge in curriculum studies. For the author, current curricular trends have focused more on the discussion of generic competences for the 21st century, in addition to results to be achieved, than on knowledge. Such changes, according to the author, are also due to the influence of neo-Marxist, post-modern, and post-structuralist studies, which would tend to make knowledge secondary in the curriculum agenda. This would explain why curriculum theorists were being sidelined from curriculum policy making. The chapter draws primarily on the studies of Michael Young, as well as the contributions of American curriculum thought, German Didaktik and Chinese education. Based on these contributions, it concludes by inviting curriculum researchers to reflect on new ways to think about knowledge and content in curriculum production with a view to planning and teaching at school.

The chapter 8, *Knowledge Beyond the Metropole: Curriculum, Rurality and the Global South* by Philip Roberts questions what kind of knowledge counts and how it can be involved in a more meaningful curriculum for students in rural areas. For this, he makes use of

contributions from Southern epistemologies in order to problematize curriculum research, with a special attention to spatial-epistemic justice for rural spaces. It assumes that there is a lack of recognition of the rural in contemporary Australian education, which leads to a marginal understanding of what rural spaces are and, consequently, to spatial injustice. It defends a conception of rural life opposed to the ingrained meanings of a metropolitan worldview. After stressing the different logics involved in the rural-metropolis relationship, it focuses on the case of the Australian curriculum to highlight the absence of the debate on knowledge, which is supposed to have been resolved. The author concludes by stating that the current curriculum privileges learning and acquisition of results, moving away from the nature of the curriculum and knowledge. Such current logics would operate the marginalization of different ways of knowing in favor of visions of progress marked by perspectives associated with the city, the global and the metropolis, leading to the aggravation of social-spatial injustice.

Then, the chapter *Curriculum Making as Design Activity* by Yew Leong Wong considers the debate on curriculum formulation taking into account the intellectual production of the field and proposes questions about how educators can develop and implement an effective curriculum. The text proposes the design methodology as a useful possibility for educators to develop curricula. In this sense, it discusses aspects, key concepts and social problems associated with the design field, relating them to those related to the curriculum field. For the author, in addition to design characteristics, curriculum development should include various aspects, such as structure, operational elements, student learning demands, teachers' professional development, experiences, meanings and beliefs. After understanding the elements discussed, the article presents sketches of curriculum designs that involve interpretive framing, design for deep meaning, and co-designing with users. Finally, these methodological possibilities are considered as a set of tools capable of supporting the work of educators in the continuous redefinition of their work in the school context.

Silvia Morelli's chapter, *Curriculum–Didaktik and Bildung: Is Language for Teaching?* draws attention to the relationships between the fields of didactics and curriculum studies aiming to think of them as a unique field of studies and reflecting on their contributions today. For this, the author proposes a discursive approach based on post-modern theorizations mainly related to Lyotard's thought in defense of a re-signification of such discursive encounters. Specifically, it focuses on the conception of *Bildung* to think of it from a perspective outside of modernity and facing the possibility of re-reading ideas such as content, schooling and knowledge in relation to the current educational demands. In her conclusions, Morelli argues about the importance that a perspective of knowledge today needs to consider its associations to culture, contexts, and identities constituted in them bearing in mind the constant production of new translations of what knowledge is. In this sense, everyday life, particular interpretations of the world, and personal stories constitute other narrative forms of knowledge.

Ending Part II, the chapter 11, entitled *Ethical Vexations that Haunt 'Knowledge Questions' for Curriculum*, by Lew Zipin and Marie Brennan, addresses the field of curriculum studies taking into account the tensions between knowledge, being and ethics and considering these three dimensions as intertwined in reflections on curriculum. For the authors, there is a strong current trend in defense of a return to the centrality of knowledge in the curriculum. However, they problematize this movement and propose that knowledge in the curriculum, as well as its purposes, should be considered in relation to ethical principles. Based on authors such as Nancy Fraser, they defend that knowledge is inseparable from values, that there is no good knowledge for everyone, and then question the field based on

concepts such as responsibility and justice regarding the way knowledge has been thought about in relation to the performance of teachers and students. They conclude, supported by Derrida's aporetic thought, by affirming the existence of an abyss between the defense of the redistribution of knowledge/codes of power and the recognition of people's diverse values and cultural representations. In this sense, they ponder the importance of teachers bringing these two attitudes together in a process of continuous negotiation within this abyss.

Bill Green's Chapter, *Curriculum History and Progressive Education in Australia: Prolegomenon* opens Part III of the book with a focus on understanding the history of curriculum as a broader context of transnational research. For the author, attention to culture and education is important, however without disregarding issues such as internationalization and cosmopolitanism. In this sense, it points out that issues such as neoliberalism or progressivism need to be engaged historically, but also geospatially and comparatively. To think about such tensions, Green approaches the history of curriculum in Australia in its relations with international production. In his interpretation, he appropriates the thought of Derrida and Foucault to think about the discursive production of the curriculum. From a historical perspective, he draws attention to the influence of progressive conceptions on the Australian schooling process. Among his conclusions is the defense of meeting national cultures and local contexts, while reiterating the understanding of transnational research in this scenario. The articulation of these dimensions in a discursive perspective makes it possible to complement and enrich local research on schooling and curriculum development without losing sight of factors such as uneven development, coloniality, governmentality, and geography.

The following chapter, *Curriculum and Literacy Policies in a Context of Curriculum Centralization: The Case of Brazil*, by Rita de Cássia Prazeres Frangella, draws attention to the scenario of curriculum reform in Brazil considering the discourse of teacher education as a means to improve the quality of national education. In this sense, the author focuses on teacher education not as a topic related to reform and the curriculum, but as a moment of curriculum production. For this, she approaches discursive theoretical conceptions related to the thoughts of Derrida, Bhabha, and Laclau through which she argues for the conception of curriculum policy as a discursive production. Specifically, she focuses on the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC) to discuss the interactions such policy constitutes with broader political contexts. The author concludes by stressing the ambivalent nature of the policy and points out that if, on the one hand, the right to continuing education for teachers is affirmed, on the other hand, it aims to control the process of meaning and regulate school practices. She ends by reiterating the perspective that, in addition to attempts to control, the curriculum is produced through uncontrollable translation processes in multiple contexts.

Michael Corbett's chapter *Relocating Curriculum and Reimagining Place under Settler Capitalism* draws attention to the debate about placeless curriculum and schooling developed from within the local education movement and considering criticisms to that movement. For his approach, the author draws on the works of Kincheloe, Pinar, and Reynolds. He takes on the perspective of a sociologist and rural education researcher to think about the field of curriculum. Theoretically, he appropriates contributions from Homi Bhabha with the aim of approaching culture and/in space with a view to a discussion about place and curriculum. Corbett concludes by stating that the challenge for the curriculum today is to develop relational understandings of culture, communication and materiality, which requires an understanding of new imaginaries, worldviews and new histories. This proposal aims to reiterate the importance of dealing and reflecting in and with the spaces in which we operate, with their challenges, singularities and relationships with broader contexts.

The chapter 15, *Reconceptualizing the Multilingual Child: Curriculum Construction in Luxembourg*, by Sabrina Sattler, addresses the issue of identity in the curriculum with the aim of understanding which conceptions of identity are inscribed in the curriculum and how they affect its creation. Taking the case of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the author draws attention to the intimate relationship of identity with institutional multilingualism. She discusses the process of cultural standardization, which has taken place through educational planning, considering it as a cause of changes in linguistic identities. In this sense, she highlights the impacts of such changes from the point of view of cultural history, highlighting two important national educational laws for primary education, one from 1912 and the other from 2009, with the purpose of demonstrating changes in the conceptions of linguistic identity. She concludes by considering that the two legislations can be considered milestones in the production of a collective linguistic awareness and that, currently, within the scope of the mixed culture project, the concept of a trilingual child as something natural is supported. For the author, the political tension around such a conception tends to be based on the argument of equal opportunities for all children, an idea that is associated with knowledge of languages.

The chapter *Distal Confabulation and Transnational Literacy: Complicating "Complicated Conversation" in Curriculum Inquiry*, by Patrick Roberts, opens Part IV of the collection by addressing the tension between the engagement of the intellectual field and the reality of "post-truth" politics in the United States. Such policies would consist of resurgent discourses of white nationalism, militarization of immigration policy, gun violence, abuse of campaign funding, erosion of voting rights, increase in hate speech in mainstream politics, and the destruction of environmental and consumer rights, among others. In order to think about such conflicts, the author approaches transnational studies in curriculum seeking to problematize the limits of Pinar's conception of curriculum as a complicated conversation. In this sense, he appropriates the metaphor of "distal confabulation" to defend it as a powerful approach to understanding the degradation of the public sphere, replacing cosmopolitan conceptions, often represented by Pinar's conception, which tends to suggest forms of stubborn blindness to an Anglo-Eurocentric expectation of reasonable and mutually understandability, which is always distal and imaginative as to the truth itself.

In chapter 17, *Curriculum for Teacher Formation: Antagonism and Discursive Interpellations*, by Veronica Borges and Alice Casimiro Lopes, focuses on the Brazilian context of teacher education from a discursive perspective supported by the thoughts of Derrida and Laclau. In this sense, the authors draw attention to the continuous disputes over meaning in curriculum policy, with special attention to the meanings mobilized by the productions of the National Association for the Training of Education (ANFOPE) from the 2000s, as well as highlight articles that address signifiers such as teacher professionalization, teaching professionalism, teaching work, teaching profession, teaching occupation. Throughout the discussion, they draw attention to key ideas that circulate in the discursive field under analysis, such as "reflective teacher" and "the teacher as an agent of social change", in their expectations of controlling the subject/teacher. They conclude by considering that the dissemination that guides the discursive dynamic challenges the expectation of control of the subject in politics, which makes any struggle for control of the other vain, while at the same time they emphasize the dispute over the meaning of teacher education as a permanent horizon.

The chapter 18, *Curriculum Design in the Anthropocene: Challenges to Human Intentionality*, by Lucinda McKnight, problematizes curriculum design under different logics and theoretical perspectives and questions what exists beyond planning for the production of better humans. Thus, she explores the history of the curriculum designer, drawing attention to



issues of interest to curriculum research. In this movement, she addresses the thoughts of Rosi Braidotti on the post-human and of Karen Barad on the belief that humans can find the material universe halfway. The articulation of such contributions aims to provide interpretive possibilities on theory and practice in curriculum production, taking into account the opportunity to think of new curricular perspectives in terms of new materialism and post-human studies. The author concludes by defending that the figure of the designer remains in the curricular thought, but that it starts to be conceived as part of several agencies no longer guided by technical or scientific univocalities. She emphasizes that post-humanism and the new materialism, with their rejection of binarisms and Cartesianism, help to reconceptualize the curriculum in a perspective of plural production.

The chapter 19, titled *From the Fossil Curriculum to the Post-Carbon Curriculum: Histories and Dilemmas*, by John Morgan, closes the book taking as inspiration the thought of Timothy Mitchell, from which he speculates on how the fossil fuels era led to a “fossil curriculum”. Thus, also considering the school context, it problematizes developmental logics separated from an ecological reflection in their relations with the curriculum. Specifically, he draws attention to the relationships between society and nature considering them as means by which different perspectives have been constituted in the curriculum. He also analyzes the curricular implications of contemporary discussions on the subject, with special attention to the Marxist view, which tends to defend the analytical separation between society and nature, and constructionist studies, which seek to consider such dimensions as entangled. After mapping this discussion around the topic, he concludes by pointing out the importance of reflection and investment in more studies on the transition from a world based on fossil energy to a post-carbon society considering the implications of such changes on what is taught at schools.

At the end of the trajectories constituted by the work, it can be concluded that its content reiterates the importance of the transnational curriculum inquiry, the primordial role of the IAACS in this sense, and the constitutive plurality of the curriculum field. Divergences, convergences, and interpretative alternatives cross the collection, especially the wealth of different contributions brought by the authors involved, as well as (part of) the breadth of curricular thinking today. I think that the invitation to which the work is intended is audacious precisely because it provokes the opening of channels and conversations on such different themes and approaches lined up under the noun “curriculum”. The invitation to interact with this name is, at the same time, an invitation to its re-signification, to the translatory and constitutive interlocution of other narratives, landscapes, theories, and meaning contexts of what curriculum is, how we can produce it, certain that its meaning rests on a furtive horizon towards which we move with every reference we make.

Notes

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