

International Handbook of Curriculum Research: A Book Review

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The *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* is a tremendous pioneering contribution to the internationalization of curriculum studies discourses. Its editor is the world-famous curriculum theorist and educator William F. Pinar. A leader of the reconceptualization movement of curriculum studies in North America during the 1970s, Pinar continues to be one of the most renowned and prolific curriculum scholars in the world. One of the key contributions of his scholarship is to understand curriculum as an international text and promote curriculum studies as a worldwide discipline. Internationalization of curriculum studies requires, and creates, spaces where curriculum scholars working around the world in their own contexts engage in what he calls “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2019) with one another. Such complicated conversation, structured by diverse cultural, political, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives, allows curriculum scholars to look at the curriculum and the factors that shape it (e.g., history, politics, economy, and culture) in deeper and broader ways. Pinar has contributed many books and articles to support the internationalization of curriculum studies. His edited volumes on the intellectual histories and present circumstances of curriculum studies in South Africa (2010), Brazil (2011a), Mexico (2011b), China (2014a), and India (2015), as well as the two editions of the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (2003, 2014b), are remarkably ground-breaking.

The second edition of the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*, the focus of this book review, has three parts. The first part is an introductory chapter by Pinar that helpfully introduces the readers to the purposes and contents of the book. The second part comprises five chapters by renowned curriculum scholars who consider the issues of the internationalization of curriculum from varied perspectives. The final part contains thirty-nine country-specific reports of curriculum research from thirty-four countries. To give readers an idea of the quality and breadth of scholarship in this volume, I will discuss the key ideas put forth in the five introductory essays.

Tero Autio’s chapter, “Internationalization of Curriculum Research”, critiques the neoliberal emphasis on instrumental education that forces standardization, measurement, and comparison on teachers and students and undermines the possibility of holistic and transformative educational experiences. Autio underscores the importance of progressive and transformative educational concepts including *Bildung*, *currere*, and ideas from the Eastern wisdom traditions to repair the damage done by economically driven instrumental approaches of teaching and learning. His work encourages us, educators, to consider curriculum and teaching to be deeply moral and subjective in their orientations rather than mere superficial and technical activities focused on testing and comparison.

Cameron McCarthy, Ergin Bulut, and Rushika Patel’s piece “Race and Education in the Age of Digital Capitalism” highlights the complexity of the present world marked by



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digital technologies, neoliberal market policies, and popular culture and the ways in which these together have changed the way we look at the notion of race, identity, and culture around the world. Given the intensifying complexity of social interaction, growing economic and political instabilities, and increasing individual and relational vulnerabilities, McCarthy, Bulut, and Patel call for imaginative ways of looking at the notion of researching race and culture as well as “renegotiate [ing], in fundamental way[s], what counts as ‘meaningful education’ for youth” (p. 42).

David Geoffrey Smith’s essay, “Wisdom Responses to Globalization,” provides another effective critique of neoliberal global capitalism and its negative impact on education as reflected in the so-called educational reforms that emphasize standardization, superficial skill-orientation, and online learning instead of deeper engagement and exploration of the global crises (see also Kumar, 2019). Smith underscores the importance of teaching and learning from the perspectives of wisdom traditions of the East and the West. These wisdom traditions collectively celebrate the unity of life and appreciate awareness and mindfulness as the ways to heal oneself and thereby one’s relationships with human beings and nature, which can pave the way for global healing (see also Kumar, 2013; Kumar, 2022).

Daniel Trohler’s chapter, “International Curriculum Research”, provides an intriguing analysis of the differences between curriculum research in the US and Germany, highlighting how history and politics give rise to unique constructions of curricular knowledge. Trohler makes two key recommendations for curriculum research: 1) He underscores the importance of paying attention to the larger social, political, and historical context within which curriculum is located rather than just focusing on the schools and the policies that govern them, and 2) He encourages curriculum scholars to appreciate the significance of comparing curriculum genealogies of different countries and contexts which would allow us to become aware of “ourselves as historical and cultural constructions” (p. 65). Such contextual and genealogical understanding is, indeed, central to deep curricular and pedagogical thinking and practice.

Drawing upon the international wisdom traditions and non-violence activism, Hongyu Wang’s piece, “A Nonviolent Perspective on Internationalizing Curriculum Studies,” calls upon the discipline of “curriculum studies to embrace nonviolence as an educational vision” (p. 67). Nonviolence as a way of being supports dialogue, communication, and connection which we desperately need in our uncertain and violent world (Krishnamurti, 1973). Considering nonviolence as the core of education has tremendous promise to cultivate ethical, globally-minded, and compassionate individuals who can challenge the comparison and competition-driven neoliberal ethos of education in our contemporary society.

These five essays are followed by thirty-nine country-specific reports of curriculum research from thirty-four countries. While it is beyond the scope of this review to summarize and comment on each of these chapters here, I must point out that all of these chapters are written in a very accessible manner that allows the reader to get a good glimpse of the historical evolution and contemporary circumstances of curriculum research in these unique political, cultural, and economic contexts. Reading these essays, one realizes how differently curriculum is understood and conceptualized around the world and, yet, at the same time, one notices the forces that influence curriculum globally, namely, neoliberalism, government control of education, and colonial and imperial impositions on what knowledge is of most worth (see also Kumar, 2019).

Overall, I think the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* makes the following key contributions to the field of curriculum studies worldwide:

- 1) It establishes curriculum studies as a worldwide discipline that respects differences and allows diverse perspectives on curriculum to interact with each other.



- 2) It allows curriculum scholars from around the world to share how the curriculum is viewed within their and their colleagues' national boundaries and how their specific context shapes the notion of the curriculum.
- 3) It provides a panoramic view of the diverse kinds of research taking place around the world. It makes scholarly work available for curriculum scholars so that they may become apprised of what is happening in other parts of the world in order to reflect on their own particular circumstances and find similarities and differences which can allow them to engage with each other.
- 4) It underlines how capitalism-driven economic globalization and neo-liberalization have become common around the world through their emphasis on the commodification of education and reliance on standardized testing, comparison, and competition, all of which are anti-educational notions that undermine academic freedom, creativity, collaboration, and holistic development.
- 5) It shows how curriculum in the majority of the countries around the world is controlled by dominant political, economic, and social ideologies and how colonialism and imperialism continue to affect educational systems in many countries through either imposition of colonial viewpoints or the import of educational notions from the West.
- 6) It allows curriculum studies scholars to see which philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and practice-oriented perspectives are being employed to conduct curriculum research around the world which can, in turn, provide inputs for their own research program.
- 7) It respects diverse intellectual and wisdom traditions from around the world and thereby promotes collegiality, dialogue, and connections among educators internationally.

My own recent book, *Curriculum in International Contexts: Understanding Colonial, Ideological, and Neoliberal Influences*, which was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019, draws upon and contributes to the internationalization of curriculum studies discourses – which is the core purpose of the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*. My book draws on two decades of my engagement with various international themes in social studies and curriculum studies including my work with William Pinar at the Centre for the Study of the Internationalization of Curriculum Studies (now closed) at the University of British Columbia. *Curriculum in International Contexts* explores the ways in which political, cultural, historical, and economic structures and processes shape curriculum and teaching globally. It discusses how colonialism, ideological control of teaching, and neoliberal global capitalism perniciously control the process of curriculum development and teaching in diverse international settings, as is also explicit in the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*. Like the *International Handbook*, my text underscores how intellectual movements such as Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism influence curriculum theory in diverse geo-cultural settings. In my book, I also identify and discuss four theoretical responses – Indigenous, critical, autobiographical, and meditative – that can provide thoughtful perspectives to challenge negative influences on curriculum including neoliberalism, colonialism, and ideological control of teaching. Being a study of diverse cultural and political conceptualizations of curriculum, and the interconnections among them, my book further contributes to the internationalization of curriculum studies discourses.

I think Pinar's work on internationalization of curriculum studies in general and the second edition of his *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* in particular, which have impacted the work of numerous scholars like myself and have supported the creation of curriculum studies as a worldwide discipline, is a tremendous contribution to the field of curriculum studies. It is an indispensable scholarly work for educators to move beyond the limitations imposed by standardization, testing, and comparison. It is an invitation to consider curriculum, teaching, and learning as critical, creative, and transformative processes.



Notes

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