

Curriculum and Representation

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With the publication of this issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*, we bring the public three items that, in different ways, bring contributions to curriculum theory in connection with issues related to representation. In the first article, *The Impossibility of Representation: Semiotic Museological Reading of the Aboriginal Cultural Diversity*, the authors, Annette Furo and Ibrahim Awad, present a semiotic analysis of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and its celebration of Aboriginal cultural diversity. They question the representations of *Aboriginal Cultural Diversity* and how these representations are explored as reflections of reality. In this case, they argue that museums are important sites of critical curriculum studies. Through what they call 'semiotic pedagogy', they also argue that educators and learners should do critical reading about the exhibitions. The authors are thus questioning any and all pretense of an 'authentic' or 'full' representation of Aboriginal peoples, histories, and traditions.

In the article, *The Research-teaching Nexus in Higher Education Curriculum Design*, Joanna Annala and Marita Makinen pore over the question of representation from another perspective. With a focus in higher education, the authors bring the results of a survey on representations of the research-teaching nexus in curriculum design. The paper presents findings that indicate the split nature of representations. The view, in this case, is directed towards the tensions within the internally and externally driven curricular goals of higher education, and in the ways of understanding the role of research and teaching. Around the question regarding what the representations of teachers and students are about research in curriculum design, the authors explore other dimensions of representation. But they also look to be placed within the context of interpretation and raise questions about how curriculum becomes more complex if we consider the representations of teachers and students on research and knowledge, theory and practice, discipline, society, among others.

The article by Ana Maria Saul and Antonio Fernando Gouvêa da Silva, *The Legacy of Paulo Freire for Curriculum Policies and Teaching in Brazil*, discusses a distinct theme: the thinking of Paulo Freire and his power to analyze curriculum politics and Brazilian education, and why not in other parts of the world? With a focus on categories such as totality, emancipatory rationality, social and political emptiness, and democracy, the paper analyzes the current work of Paulo Freire to think about the field of curriculum policy. In this sense, even if not specifically analyzing the question of representation, the text contributes to the knowledge of discussions that pervade this theme. After all, politics is now one of the fields in which one seeks to overcome the approaches that comprehend representation as the possibility of transparency between representative and represented. Papers that address the question of rationalism in politics and incorporate a discursive



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orientation, capable of making politics an indeterminate space, marked by contingency, and therefore, the possibility of a radical democracy, are powerful to the inquiry of representation as transparency. In this way they are powerful in connecting politics and culture, and at this intersection, turning the topic of curriculum even more fertile.

Finally, in the paper *Daoism and Feminism Identity through Life Stories of Chinese Immigrant Women*, the author Xin Li inquires about a few Chinese immigrant women life experiences in modern China and during their early years of immigration to Canada. She also proposes a Daoist gender identity. Maybe, this identity is also connected with social representations.

We therefore propose, through discussions of these four texts which can be read in different order and from different perspectives, the possibility of problematizing the connections between curriculum and representation. From this perspective, we risk stating very briefly, provocatively, our understanding of representation. In a post-structural and post-colonial register, we have operated with the idea that every representation involves a process of translation, in which there are negotiations of meaning and are always supplemented. As it is possible to analyze from a discursive perspective, every signifier has a character of representation, and thus, every representation has a supplement character. There are no full presences or true meanings that can be stabilized in a given representation. Representations express a fullness that is always delayed, gaps we try to fill by interpretation, simultaneously constituting subjectivations and objectivations.

Disseminating this focus on curriculum studies, leads us to think about the possibility of deconstructing many of the fixed representations with which these studies are being understood. Deconstructing, in this sense, is not an attitude of denial. Deconstructing aims to potentialize displacements, reinsert the game of difference in discourses that we conceive as unitary, consolidated, definitive, always questioning our preconceptions. We think that one possibility to do this is to connect curriculum to representation never conceived as full and complete, a reflection of something that can, presumably, have real existence.

To the extent that this journal - *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* -, also aims to be a place where we explore the possibility of differing, we invite everyone to explore these perspectives forwarding your articles for a wider and more productive debate, always questioning curriculum theory.

Notes

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