

Curriculum and Meaning

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Upon answering certain questions of Zizek, Laclau (Laclau, Ernesto; Butler, Judith; Zizek, Slavoj, 2000) affirms that gradualism implies a belief in a neutral administrative center, capable of solving social issues in a non-political manner. Those who bet on gradualism, believe they are participating in a social step that will necessarily evolve into a more advanced one, compared to the step in which they live, assuming the possibility of a progressive movement with a rational bias that confers a certain reassuring aspect to the desired goals. It is a logical way to think about the social that seems to assure a foundation for our policy options. It gives us the certainty of being on the "bright side".

I reckon that throughout the history of curriculum, the gradualist perspective is propagated in our discourses. We tend to seek both the accuracy of purposes - via goals or even via a *telos* of social change or the subject's identity formation (Lopes & Macedo, 2013) - as well as the accuracy of decision making criteria. These signifiers - accuracy, purpose, criteria - articulated to others, such as principle, foundation, project and planning, are used in the perspective of safeguarding quality, or democracy and social justice, or even the model of a desired society, in the many different theoretical perspectives and policies. In the most particular case of critical perspectives, such signifiers are also subjected to the idea that, through them, the curriculum can be made political. The accuracy, the purpose, criteria, principles and projects are no longer seen as neutral and technical, but rather subsumed to political deliberation. Policy, however, is subjected to a historical rationality and a project of social change, only able to be developed with a simultaneous transformation of the subject. This transformation is equally connected to the project of the desired change.

With this, a utopian *telos* begins an attempt to direct the curriculum towards the desired future. Every theoretical, practical, financial and emotional, personal and collective effort happens to be developed in this direction. Curricular proposals, projects for practice, guidelines and standards, as well as teaching models and social agreements are developed with the assumption of ensuring that future.

Incorporating post-foundational contributions into the field of curriculum has played a role in challenging such perspectives. With post-foundationalism, we react to the pure dispersion of post-modernity, to the fragmentation of pure differing, to anti-foundationalism that only leads to a position reflexively opposed to modernist foundationalism (Laclau, 1993; Marchart, 2007). Post-foundationalism leads us to work with contingent foundations, even assuming some level of temporary fixation of unstable foundations.

Policy direction changes and is disassociated from the teleological perspective, incorporating the dynamics of language, its flows, playfulness and unpredictability.



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In this sense, the ideas of precision, purpose, criteria, objective, foundation, project and guideline acquire blurred outlines and shades of gray, becoming vague and imprecise. To be vague and imprecise is not to be wrong or misguided, but to admit to living with ambiguity. And thus one tries to avoid a mystifying certainty that may refer to essentialism in its meaning. One also tries to avoid the mandatory rationality that is supposed to overcome the acts of power.

In my view, such perspective opens up interesting possibilities for our field, by working with the curriculum as a struggle for meaning. It deepens the connection between curriculum and power, between curriculum and policy: this process of struggle, there are no mandatory rules, criteria established outside the political dispute, of a supposedly unquestionable place. Not a center that emanates or sustains certainty.

We participate in this process in all contexts in which we operate and we create such contexts through our actions: as teachers in schools, as professors at universities, as researchers, as producers of academic and school texts, as editors of journals.

Other research issues are organized and may become the object of our attention. This journal - Transnational Curriculum Inquiry - aims to be an open channel for such issues and this editorial strives to be an invitation for curriculum researchers to submit their texts aimed at understanding the dynamics of curriculum. Texts aimed at questioning the discourses we produce. Here is our invitation.

Notes:

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