

Foreword to

*Currículum y Calidad de la Educación en Iberoamérica:
Enfoques Teóricos, Políticas Curriculares y Procesos de Cambio Curricular,*
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Scholars committed to curriculum studies – a field historically organized around specific national curriculum reforms and controversies – seek to study the research their colleagues are conducting in other countries. Such an internationalist commitment becomes problematic as post-pandemic deglobalization – prompted by supply-chain problems during China’s Covid lockdown, accelerated by geopolitical tensions, including a trade war between the United States and China, sanctions imposed against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine¹ – threatens the economic growth that globalization supported, growth that helped fund scholars’ travel to international conferences. Deglobalization is accompanied, perhaps even accelerated, by a right-populism often characterized, in part, by xenophobia, distressingly effective in exploiting citizens’ emotions, emotions already frayed by economic inequality, climate change, cultural shifts, and living online, submerged in social media bubbles. Rather than internationalism, a pronounced parochialism appears to be the era we’re entering, when many politicians and peoples demand an end to immigration, economic protectionism, including the institution of tariffs against imported products, destroying the globalized world order, retreating into a multi-polar political world.

These are among the geopolitical and economic conditions in which we curriculum studies scholars find ourselves, conditions reflected in a contraction of our attention from curriculum studies worldwide² to curriculum studies domestically, historically the focus of our respective fields, a legacy now also aggravated by a concurrent current against which swims the scholarly commitment to study curriculum scholarship outside one’s national affiliation. That is the triumph of the effort to understand curriculum politically, an event – decades in the making³ – which has intensified a disinclination that already structures an applied/professional field like education, namely scant concern for the intellectual advancement of one’s field. Faint before, such a concern fades altogether in the urgency of the present, especially when the present is partitioned politically, often in antagonistic binaries: progressive/reactionary, left-wing/right-wing. Such politicization of the field is not the case worldwide – certainly it’s not the case in autocratic countries where political dissent itself is suppressed – but it is the case in the United States and Canada, the former riddled with racism still, the latter preoccupied with the ongoing struggles of the

Indigenous peoples. The third country comprising North America – Mexico – is hardly immune to political polarization, but its cultural, including its linguistic, links with the peoples of Central and South America position its

curriculum studies field distinctively, somewhat apart from the politicized patterns of its primarily English-speaking neighbors to the north,⁴ however increasingly integrated economically Mexico is with both the United States and Canada.⁵

Deglobalization may not spell the end of the internationalization curriculum studies; it may merely redirect its emphasis, from curriculum studies worldwide to curriculum studies regionally where travel is less expensive and linguistic and other cultural ties facilitate conversation across national boundaries. While noticeable north of Mexico's border with the United States, such regionalism seems well underway⁶ in Latin America,⁷ with Mexican scholars prominent participants as well as scholars in the Iberian peninsula - as this present volume testifies. Frida Diaz Barriga Arceo is among the prominent participants, in Mexico and across the Western Hemisphere, a status that persuaded me to invite her to give the Presidential Address at an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies⁸ as well as to contribute to the *Curriculum Studies in Mexico* collection⁹ and to the *International Handbook of Curriculum Studies*,¹⁰ that latter invitation one I also extended to Professor César Coll¹¹ - considered by many the central curriculum studies scholar in Spain - who kindly met me over lunch in Barcelona to discuss the field there. These two distinguished scholars have assembled an extraordinary volume, one of inestimable significance, containing a series of important essays explicating the present situation regionally and nationally, explication conducted both analytically and historically, bringing to bear specific socio-historical shifts in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, México, Perú, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay. The parent countries are represented as well: Portugal and Spain.

Among the scholars contributing to this accomplishment are - in addition to Professors Diaz Arceo and Coll - several I know, regarding whom allow me to comment (in alphabetical order): Professor Concepción Barrón, whom I've enjoyed the honor of meeting on more than one occasion and who contributed a chapter to *Curriculum Studies in Mexico*¹²; José María García Garduño, a close invaluable colleague who kindly accompanied me to Mérida, interpreting my presentation there to the Spanish-speaking audience; he contributed to *Curriculum Studies in Mexico*¹³ as well as making possible and introducing my Spanish-language book publication¹⁴; Alice Casimiro Lopes, who kindly co-hosted me during my time in Brazil, contributing a chapter in *Curriculum Studies in Brazil*¹⁵ and who has served as editor of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*; Elizabeth Macedo, who, as a visiting scholar, spent a year with me at the University of British Columbia, who kindly co-hosted me while I was in Brazil, contributed a chapter in *Curriculum Studies in Brazil*,¹⁶ and served as President of the International Association for

the Advancement of Curriculum Studies; Daniel Johnson Mardones, whose Ph.D. dissertation defense I had the privilege of attending and who has published what must be considered a canonical text on the internationalization of curriculum studies;¹⁷ and Silvia Morelli, whose provocative study of curriculum studies in Latin America is forthcoming.¹⁸

As this magisterial collection confirms, curriculum studies is an interdisciplinary field: political, philosophical, sociological, psychological, literary (even at times poetic), scientific in its commitment to truth-telling. Like the discoveries scientists make, curriculum scholars supersede ideas that once made sense, attuned as we are to the existential moment we experience now, a moment infinitely variegated according to where and who we are, yes, our identities but also what we keep to ourselves, our private selves. Academic knowledge can help us understand what is at stake for us, as individuals, as citizens as well as communities and societies – in this present moment, wedged as it between the past and the future. Education becomes the very condition for staying alive in a world where ignorance can not only impoverish but kill. From the pandemic to politics, understanding is prerequisite for finding one's way in this world.

Curriculum is key. Children must be provided opportunities to understand what they are experiencing, what they see others – especially their parents and extended family members as well as playmates and neighbours – are experiencing, what is reported in newspapers and other sources of news, what the weather is telling us about pollution, drought, and temperature extremes. Curriculum is not only a conveyor belt to prosperity, it is the complicated conversation through which children can study what prosperity means, what study can mean for them as persons. That conversation is not only among the children and teachers, children and children, children and parents, it is among all of us, those living, those who have died (especially those ancestors who died for us), those yet to be born. That complicates considerably the conversation that is curriculum, even if teachers do everything in their power to simplify it, to make the project of understanding accessible to children who infinitely varying circumstances and abilities.

To study, support and participate in this process requires the usually university-based academic field of curriculum studies to likewise engage in its own self-study, leading, on occasion, to shifts in paradigm. In my youth that meant moving beyond the misnamed Tyler Rationale¹⁹ that reduced curriculum development to a procedure – objectives, design, implementation, assessment – to understanding curriculum as it is experienced, subjectively, socially, politically, culturally. Today it means grappling with technologization,²⁰ a phenomenon underway for at

least a century but now accelerated due to profiteering and pandemics. While procedure is hardly irrelevant, forcing curriculum into one mold ensures the key curriculum question – what knowledge of most worth? – will be ignored or posed inappropriately. The rejection of proceduralism opened the curriculum to reconceptualization according to the particularity of the moment, the place, the persons studying it. That this collection can do for you: encourage you to reflect on the curriculum concerns raised in the collection, providing concepts and expressions that inspire you to articulate your own lived experience, your own moment, where you live, what you hope for yourself and the children you teach.

Curriculum studies is the “big-picture” field in the vast academic field of education, a field examining not only single subjects but the curriculum overall, especially as the curriculum is informed by culture, politics, and society. Even in Canada – absent national curriculum reform, a country where education remains under the jurisdiction of the provinces – there is a distinctive multi-national ethos (Anglophone, Francophone, Indigenous, Métis) whose representation in the field I am now committed to chronicle (www.curriculumstudies.ca). Without attention to singularity – what the Canadian political philosopher and theologian George Grant termed particularity²¹ – there can be no comprehension of alterity. Attention to particularities is no recent idea in Canada. Several of the country’s greatest political philosophers have affirmed the primacy of the particular. John Watson, for example, was suspicious of post-World War I proposals for world government – what became, much more modestly, the League of Nations - as he deemed the independent identity of each state to be needed for the good of humanity, as each has its unique contribution, its (in his words) “special mission.”²² A generation later George Grant worried that technology would institute a universal and homogenous state.²³

Associated with modernity itself, and with the United States as modernity’s most “expressive manifestation,”²⁴ technology has become not just one *mode d’être*, but the *only* way of life on earth. No longer prostheses, technology is now become internalized, one instance of which is instrumental rationality, humanity’s determination to dominate nature, including human nature. Canada’s possible “collapse,” Grant warned, “stems from the very character of the modern era.”²⁵ That era, the so-called age of “progress,” was co-extensive with the rise of capitalism and science. As science achieved hegemony, Grant felt sure “there [would be] no place for local cultures”²⁶ that is to say, for local or Indigenous or national cultures.

Not so in Latin America – as this collection testifies. This is a seminal synoptic text – both textbook and reference work - that someday soon, I suspect, be deemed a canonical volume. Again, my congratulations to Professors Arceo and Coll - to everyone involved.

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Endnotes

¹ There are others of course, including the October 7 terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas - and Netanyahu's genocidal retaliation. I use that word advisedly: see Neier 2024; <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/02/world/europe/israel-defiant-gaza-war.html>

² <https://link.springer.com/series/14948>

³ I summarize its ascension in the U.S. field: Pinar 2023, 185-193.

⁴ At first glance Mexico's northern neighbors might seem bonded by English, and to a considerable extent they are, although Canada is officially bilingual, and Canadian nationalism as well as American exceptionalism (specifically its national narcissism) undermines efforts to encourage binational curriculum studies dialogue. Maybe my Curriculum Studies in Canada project – www.curriculumstudies.ca - and a recently published co-edited volume – Phelan and Pinar 2024 – will help these two nationally-focused fields notice each other more formally.

⁵ <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cusma-aceum/index.aspx?lang=eng>

⁶ <https://sites.google.com/facso.cl/congresocurriculolatam2023/antecedentes?authuser=0>

⁷ While Canadian scholars are sometimes aware of scholarly developments in the United States, American scholars tend to be less aware of developments in Canada, an asymmetry I am hoping both my Curriculum Studies in Canada project – www.curriculumstudies.ca - and a recently published co-edited volume – Phelan and Pinar 2024 – will help reconfigure.

⁸ https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230337886_4 see also:

<https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/jaaacs/issue/view/182733>

⁹ Arceo 2011.

¹⁰ Arceo 2014.

¹¹ Coll and Martín 2014.

¹² Barrón 2011.

¹³ Garduño 2011.

¹⁴ Garduño 2014.

¹⁵ Lopes 2011

¹⁶ Macedo 2011.

¹⁷ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781351254069/curriculum-studies-international-conversation-daniel-johnson-mardones>

¹⁸ <https://www.routledge.com/Postcritical-Theory-and-Curriculum-in-Latin-America-Didactics-Bildung-and-US-Hegemony/Morelli/p/book/9781032757025>

¹⁹ Pinar 2015, 99-108; see also Burns 2023.

²⁰ Pinar 2022.

²¹ Pinar 2019, 4.

²² Sibley 2008, 100.

²³ Pinar 2019, 131.

²⁴ Grant's phrase: see Pinar 2019, 97.

²⁵ Pinar 2019, 97.

²⁶ Ibid.