

Curriculum Studies in China and India

Summary

Context While the internationalization of the academic field of curriculum studies has been underway in many countries for decades, its institutionalization – in the establishment of an international association (www.iaacs.org) - and its theorization - (see Overly 2003; Pinar 2003; Trueit et al. 2003) - are relatively recent. Internationalization acknowledges the continuing salience of the nation as a specific site of scholarly production and engagement with schools (Radhakrishnan 2008, 234) despite its jurisdictional retreat vis-à-vis economic globalization (Strange 1996). I propose to study how curriculum studies scholarship in two nations – China and India – portrays locally and communicates globally the intellectual histories and present circumstances of these fields. Not only due to the historical and current political significance of these nations but due as well to the unique set of educational challenges that this historical and political significance confers, curriculum studies in these two nations promises to hold particular significance to scholars working worldwide. This research project will also enable scholars not only in Canada but globally to study and thereby participate in the emergence of a worldwide curriculum studies field with a vocabulary and intellectual agenda that incorporates and expresses both national and international curriculum questions and concepts.

Objectives The purpose of this project is to study scholarship in two nations – China and India – that documents the intellectual histories of curriculum studies in these two nations, analyzes its present circumstances, and engages in a focused event of internationalization: a dialogical encounter (conducted over the Internet) with three scholars from other countries concerning the intellectual history and present circumstances of these fields. The project’s main objectives are to:

- Advance knowledge in Canada and the world of these two nationally-distinctive fields of curriculum studies
- Document the overlapping of local and global knowledge in the intellectual histories and present circumstances of two nationally distinctive fields
- Document and evaluate the “complicated conversation” among Chinese and Indian participants with scholars from other countries regarding the intellectual history and present circumstances of these nationally-distinctive fields and the emergent worldwide field

Advancement of Knowledge The proposed research addresses fundamental questions concerning the intellectual histories, present circumstances, and the internationalization of two nationally distinctive curriculum studies fields. The results will hold special significance for graduate students and junior scholars who will conduct curriculum research and development in a field even more international than the one in which their senior colleagues now work. As well as advancing our understanding of curriculum studies in China and India, the proposed research promises to contribute to our understanding what is at stake in cross-cultural and international encounters among scholars as they labour to influence the worldwide field now emerging.

Detailed Description

Research Objectives The program of interdisciplinary research proposed here builds upon (a) my earlier research on the internationalization of curriculum studies (Pinar 2003); (b) my participation in curriculum studies globally, including convening an international conference (the 2000 LSU Conference on the Internationalization of Curriculum Studies was attended by representatives of 38 nations: see Trueit et al. 2003) at which the international association (www.iaacs.org) was conceived and of which I served as President during 2001-2007; (c) my earlier study of and participation the Reconceptualization of U.S. curriculum studies (Pinar et al. 1995; 2008); (d) my autobiographical research focused on intellectual life history (Pinar 1994, 2004), (e) my theorization of intellectual advancement through disciplinarity (Pinar 2007), (f) my recently completed study of cosmopolitanism (Pinar in press), and (g) from the preliminary findings of the present SSHRCC-funded project focused on curriculum studies in South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico. In each of these nations – although variably, according to individual – we studied scholarship self-consciously committed to social justice and only incidentally attentive to the intellectual advancement of the field.

Will this distinction surface in the proposed research? If so, will scholarly expressions of political activism be inattentive to the intellectual advancement of the discipline through which the activism is enacted? To what extent does inattentiveness to disciplinary advancement undermine activism? To what extent does activism undermine disciplinary development? Can internationalization – here conceived as the study of scholarship produced by nationally-distinctive fields as well as the communication of one's own field to scholars working in other countries – contribute to both activism and disciplinarity? Does disciplinarity – intellectual advancement through study of intellectual history and analyses of present circumstances – enable internationalization understood as the constitution of the global by the local and the complication of the local by the global? Can internationalization enable the intellectual labor of disciplinarity?

The project proposed here incorporates each of these strands but emphasizes the relations between disciplinarity and internationalization; it also represents a focused investigation in an area virtually ignored in the curriculum studies literature: scholars' disciplinary negotiations of intersecting forces of globalization and localization as they labour to make significant contributions to the intellectual advancement of their fields. The project's main objectives are:

- Bring worldwide visibility to the significant scholarship being conducted by scholars in China and India while creating collaborative research opportunities for Canadian curriculum studies scholars
- Addresses a persistent gap in existing research on the complex and reciprocal relations between forces of globalization and localization in individual scholars' efforts to make significant contributions to their nationally distinctive fields
- Documents the confluence of present circumstances – and their historical antecedents – in the scholarship of specific scholars working today
- Specify the complexity of internationalization by studying scholar-participants explaining what is at stake in their nationally distinctive fields in occasions of dialogical encounters with international consultants

Assess the impacts and potential of globalization, anti-globalization, and the internationalization of curriculum studies movement (institutionalized in the international association: www.IAACS.org) of two nationally distinctive fields of curriculum studies

Context and Theoretical Approach

Problem of Proximity Given the problem of “proximity” between curriculum studies scholars and government-mandated school reform (see, for example, Palamidessi and Felman 2003, 119; Sabar and Mathias 2003, 381), and global tendencies toward ahistorical, presentistic school reform (see Smith 2003; Pinar 2004; Taubman in press), basic research into the intellectual histories of nationally-distinctive academic fields of curriculum studies is urgently needed (Pinar 2007). Such genealogical (see Ransom 1997, 79) scholarship portray the fields’ histories of engagement with schools, with government, and with society and culture more generally, as well as their relationships to related fields of academic study in the university. These genealogical lines of inquiry will provide historical knowledge and historical consciousness (Seixas 2004), enabling understanding of nationally and-or regionally distinctive fields’ present circumstances and, perhaps, glimpses of their possible futures, futures simultaneously individual and collective, local and global. Such scholarship promises to produce the critical intellectual distance (Kögler 1999, 174; Anderson 2006, 1) necessary for scholar-participants to provide their various constituencies – first among them schoolteachers – understanding of their present circumstances.

Disciplinary and Intellectual Advancement Due to curriculum studies’ proximity to government and its agencies, and given the field’s historic fidelity to practice in schools, skepticism toward disciplinary seems widespread. Acknowledging the discipline-specific context – its intellectual history and present circumstances - in which one’s research becomes intelligible is one marker of disciplinary. To know a discipline obligates one to acknowledge the already-existing conversation in which one is presuming to participate. Rather than recode the specificity of the local into a standardized (often European and North American) language that effaces the local, those of us engaged in internationalization seek to incorporate local languages into common, perhaps, universal curricular knowledge (Anderson and Valente 2002; Messer-Davidow et. al 1993; Bender and Schorske 1997; Pinar 2007).

The First Phase We will study the individual scholar’s understanding and experience of globalization and localization not only within his or her scholarship but also within his or her nationally distinctive field by interviewing each individual scholar. We will focus on scholars’ subjective experience of their engagement in curriculum studies. What are the main points of the scholar-participant’s intellectual history, the key influences in her or his intellectual formation? To what extent did prior school teaching experience influence the formulation of a research agenda? Governmental priorities? Mentors? University projects? To what extent were international and global influences operative? By such questions we hope to contribute to understanding of the subjectivity of disciplinary (Simpson 2002).

The Second Phase After preparing papers detailing the intellectual history and present circumstances of curriculum studies in their respective country, scholar-participants will engage in conversation with an international panel of curriculum studies scholars focused on these histories and circumstances. This event of dialogical encounter – protracted over several months – will occur via the Internet. I choose the Internet to privilege print over oral exchanges for three reasons: 1) facility of understanding, as orally inflected “accents” complicate comprehension, 2) to contradict the primacy of the oral as the medium of dispute through an overemphasis upon conferences and an under-emphasis upon scholarly disputation and analysis in print, and 3) ease and expense (not transcriptions required) of documentation.

The Third Phase We will study the papers and the dialogical encounter with the international panel. What concepts proved central, and how were their meanings grasped and/or mistaken due to the specificity of national context? In the South African phase of the present project, for instance, we learned from the exchange how concepts common to the field – implementation, for instance – convey distinctive meanings given the specific history and present circumstances of post-apartheid South Africa. We learned how international influences – the scholarship of the British social theorist Basil Bernstein, for instance – were put to work in the service of specific theoretical and practical ends. We have learned how the legacies of apartheid have been reproduced institutionally and intellectually through the reinvention of concepts with commonsensical meaning. It seems probable that the dynamics of internationalization – as evident in the dialogical encounter between scholar-participants and the international panel - will prove distinctive to each nation.

The Fourth Phase A summary chapter of scholar-participants’ papers will be prepared, and Pinar will compose a reflection on the dialogical encounter, incorporating not only material from those exchanges, but from the papers and (when permission is granted) from the interviews with the individual scholar-participants. Scholar-participants will have the opportunity of the “final word” – commenting on the summary chapter and the overview as well as on the research project in its entirety - before the collection goes to press.

Methodology To examine the scholar participants’ scholarship, the interviews (conducted online by the PI and excerpted in his overview), and the exchange with the international panel, we will employ a hybrid version of established interpretive methods: 1) what the U.S. intellectual historian Martin Jay (1988; Pinar 2006) terms “synoptic content analysis,” 2) what Norman Fairclough (2003) describes as critical discourse analysis, and 3) what Britzman (2003, 32) characterizes more broadly as ethnography (see, also, Agar 1996): the study of “lived experience” and, more particularly, “how we come to construct and organize what has already been experienced.” Such a hybrid method is focused on thresholds of the local and the global in intellectual and subjective experience, themselves intersecting domains, enabling first-person portraits of distinctive scholarly engagement in both domains.

Phase One The first step is the identification of scholar participants who represent generational, gender, regional, and intellectual differences. Scholar participants will represent established intellectual leaders as well as junior scholars who are likely to provide intellectual leadership in the decades to follow. Research project staff members will interview those selected regarding their intellectual work in the various geo-political sites in which it is conducted: local, regional, national, international. From interviews we will gain glimpses of the subjective “state of the field” in China and India. During this period – approximately 6-9 months – scholar-participants will be preparing papers detailing the intellectual history and present circumstances of their respective fields.

Phase Two After submitting these papers to the UBC team, we and members of the international panel will study them. Members of the international panel will prepare questions they will pose to scholar-participants regarding the intellectual history and present circumstances of their respective fields. Like many scholars working worldwide, international panel members may have no expert knowledge of the nationally-distinctive field to which they have just been introduced. Their questions may well require scholar-participants to situate their narratives in a broader historical, cultural, or political context. Their questions may well require scholar-participants to pose their own questions regarding the question, requiring international panel members to explain their questions’ context within their own national settings. In the dialogical encounter, then, I expect to see a micro-enactment of the process of internationalization: “local” knowledge presented, questioned, explained, perhaps revised, requiring questions posed from other nationally-distinctive and/or “global” positions. What concepts emerge during the exchange? How do concepts translate from one individual to another, one national context to another? Do scholar-participants revise their own narratives for pedagogical purposes? Do other national narrative intersect or contest those rendered regarding China and India? What efforts are made toward “common ground,” and what concepts comprise that shared understanding?

Phase Three We will study the scholar participants’ papers, the interviews, and the dialogical encounter regarding their papers with members of the international panel, we will employ a hybrid version of established interpretive methods, including synoptic content analysis and critical discourse analysis. We will compose a paper summarizing the papers and the exchanges, concluding with next steps for the respective fields and for the internationalization of curriculum studies. Scholar-participants and members of the international panel will be invited to make critical comment. Pinar will then compose an overview of the project and its findings that will function as an introduction to the collection to appear in book form, both in English and in the language of the respective fields.

Phase Four Scholar-participants are invite to compose a “final word,” as they review the chapters, exchanges, summary chapters and Pinar’s overview. That the “final word” belongs to the scholar-participants themselves provides additional protection against being positioned as “subjects” in someone else’s “study.” As Hongyu Wang (2004, 77) points out: “mutual transformation ... attempts to bring forth the creative imagination of each party, depicting new sceneries of the self while contributing to the other’s own self-

creation.” Complicated conversation is itself a self-reflexive process of academic culture creation through democratic dialogue and negotiation.

Benefits of the Study In its tendencies toward standardization, globalization threatens indigenous cultures and national histories as it privileges the economic as the prism through which curriculum questions are filtered (Saul 2005). These phenomena - and anti-globalization nativist reactions they trigger – constitute the complex conditions in which school curriculum development and research proceed in the present day. These phenomena are peculiarly and significantly evident in China and India, in part due to the complexity of their national and international histories and circumstances. Moreover, I select these two because each promises to play key roles in the internationalization of curriculum studies. The potential for collaborative research projects with Canadian scholars is strong. After this project (if it is funded), I will seek funding for another three-year project in which scholars from other countries – among them Russia – will be invited to participate.

Communication of the Results The commissioned papers, descriptions of the conference and summaries of the interviews will be published in book form, both in English and in the native language of the participants. As noted, Palgrave Macmillan will publish *Curriculum Studies in South Africa* (from the previous SSHRCC grant), with contracts for the subsequent volumes to follow, enabling dissemination of results worldwide. Conference presentations will punctuate this dissemination through scholarly publication.

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Description of Research Team, Student Training, and Previous Output

A: Research Project Team

Working as a research team will provide critical checks on tendencies toward ethnocentricity, calling to each other's attention cultural blind-spots while emphasizing the centrality of humility in understanding others' cultural complexities and engaging in intercultural dialogue. The extended team – the panel of international consultants – will

work in critical dialogue with each other and with us to ensure that the complexity of inter-cultural and international academic encounters is reflected in the research process and outcomes. I will coordinate the research activities of the post-doctoral fellow and two Ph.D. students in all phases of the research, stressing thematic and methodological issues at every stage of the research process.

B: Research Apprenticeships: Training of Students

The research project proposed here entails the employment of a diverse range of research techniques with which students need to become familiar in order to function effectively as researchers working collaborative and ethically in a culturally complex and politically fractured global village. In particular, it is crucial for students to understand the contributions of key curriculum studies scholars worldwide if they are to participate in a highly sensitive and nuanced dialogue with scholars working in nationally distinctive fields with specific histories and present circumstances. Student research assistants will be trained in a range of research skills: to conduct interviews, study transcripts and scholarly texts, and to assess issues specific to those national cultures and to the worldwide field now emerging. There will be numerous conference opportunities worldwide to report their findings.

Interviewing Students will be trained in the formulation and conduct of semi-structured and intellectual life history interview techniques. Throughout, training will stress the centrality of ethical and cultural considerations and respect for scholar participants' preferences and values.

Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques Students will be trained in the construction and employment of theory-based categories in order to analyze manuscripts and other transcripts.

Multimedia Artifacts and Internet Tools Students will be trained in the use of computer workstations equipped with multimedia software settings, desktop publishing tools, in order to author multimedia artifacts designed to represent various aspects and phases of the research process.

Conference and Workshop Presentations Students will be provided with opportunities to present research findings and local, national, and international conferences and workshops.

Authorship of Articles for Submission to Peer-Reviewed Journals Graduate students will be continuously involved in the production of manuscripts intended for academic audiences. Appropriate for a collaborative research project, authorship will often be shared and training will include systematic attention to questions of intellectual property, ethical professional relationships, and intellectual advancement of the curriculum studies field.

C: Description of Previous and Ongoing Research Results Previous research – funded by SSHRCC – focused on curriculum studies in South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico. The

South African collection – in its final phase – is under contract with Palgrave Macmillan, the scholarly imprint of Macmillan, one of the world’s major publishers. The Brazilian papers are now – fall 2008 - with the international panel; questions are to be posed this winter. The Mexican papers are now being submitted. What have we learned thus far? In each of nations, scholar-participants came to curriculum studies in order to express civic commitments focused on the public school as a public institution. Intellectual interests in curriculum studies (and education more broadly) were not factors. While the usual vocational routes were indicated in many interviews – an initial interest in serving as a public school teacher, for instance, and specific mentors who provided encouragement and, on occasion, funding opportunities – what was striking, and may well be distinctive to curriculum studies, is the strong presence of a social, even political, aspirations in scholar-participants’ engagement with curriculum studies. Given this configuration of motive and intent, the intellectual advancement of the field has not served as a widely shared concern of participating scholars. Despite this reality, scholars acknowledge the significance of an intellectually sophisticated curriculum studies field if civic commitments are to be expressed with discernible effect.

The problem of proximity remains a powerful problem, if experienced variably not only by scholars by nation, but variably by individual scholars within individual nations as well, suggesting a circumstantial, even biographical element to what had seemed before this project to be a structurally enforced – and possibly standardized - intimacy between education professors and ministries of education. That variation acknowledged (and documented in the study’s findings), and despite the dramatic shifts in curricular orientation in South Africa after democratization, the structural relationship between university-based curriculum studies and the S.A. state remains, another scholar-participant argues, unchanged: it remains reproductive of state ideology.

The intellectual histories of curriculum studies in South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico (all papers have not yet arrived from Mexico) are inextricably if distinctively linked with the singular political histories of each nation, as each field’s conceptualization exhibits influence by and commitment to national emergencies, enduring problems, and aspirations. Despite an apparently common vocabulary, scholar-participants in South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico employ this vocabulary – such as “outcomes-based education” - inflected with the distinctive history and politics of their respective national cultures. Outcomes-based education in S.A. was a Post-Apartheid response to racial inequality, and only secondarily to vocational agendas, whereas in Brazil outcomes-based proposals were primarily about economic globalization. The appropriation of neo-liberalism for social justice has undermined the democratic project, one S.A. scholar-participant argues.

During exchanges with members of the international panel – a Brazilian scholar working in Rio de Janeiro and a Chinese National working in the United States – distinctive features of the S.A. field were explained and comparisons with the Brazilian and Chinese fields suggested. Explaining the distinction between “knowledge mode” and “knower-mode” curricular orientations in South Africa, for instance, prompted questions (raised by the Chinese scholar working in the U.S.) that caused the S.A. scholar to reconsider the coherence of the distinction. Another S.A. scholar concluded that there is less disciplinary dialogue in S.A. than in Brazil, due, in part, to an underdeveloped sense of a disciplinary community. Basil Bernstein’s work remains influential in S.A.

(not at all in the U.S. and to much greater extent than in Brazil). Influential in both Brazil and the U.S., Deleuze's work is now used in S.A. to rethink the "policy-practice gap," now appreciated in a non-linear fashion, acknowledging teachers' adaptation of – resistance to – policy.

I will report these and other findings at the third international conference on curriculum studies to be held September 7-11, 2009 in South Africa.