

Panel II
Curriculum Studies in Europe: Future Directions

Tero Autio (Tallinn University, Estonia)

Ozcan Demirel (Hacettepe University, Turkey)

Jesus Maria Sousa (University of Madeira, Portugal)

Moderator: Filipa Seabra (Open University, Portugal)

First of all, let me say that it is an honour for me to be sitting near such well-known and senior researchers in the area of curriculum studies, as they are Professor Tero Autio, from Tallinn University and Professor Ozcan Demirel, from Hacettepe University.

I would also like to thank Filipa Seabra, from the Open University, for moderating this panel, and the organisers of this Conference for inviting me to participate in the reflection about the Curriculum Studies in Europe and its future directions.

To share my vision (future vision) on Curriculum Studies with you, I need to go back a little bit in order to better explain my starting framework to it.

In fact, I am the Coordinator of a Research Centre in Education of the University of Madeira, the so-called CIE-UMa, located at the small island of Madeira (a European island despite the fact of being located in front of the northern coast of Africa).

And I cannot talk of curriculum studies in Madeira without mentioning this research unit.

Since its creation in 2003, we have been aware of our serious constraints not only due to our reduced size (eight hundred square kilometres and a population of approximately 270 thousand people), but also to our location in an island six hundred miles (nine hundred kilometres) distant from the mainland (if we think of Lisbon).

In order not to be swallowed by the great centres, our strategic plan had to pass by the decision of delimiting our research focus making the most of the synergies coming from normally dispersed areas of interest (sociology of education, philosophy of education, history of education, teacher education, etc.).

And at a time when in Portugal the alarm signs about the emerging crisis already started to be heard, with a surreptitious appeal for the merge and even extinction of research centres, we decided to create one and apply for its national recognition and consequent financing by our Foundation of Science and Technology (FCT).

To do so and prove we were in the right way, to deserve being financed, we also decided to establish just one research group (with around 10 members) and bring to it all the numerous foreign colleagues we were already used to work in previous projects:

People from the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), namely from its RDC 19, the Research and Development Centre on Curriculum Perspectives on Teacher Education, who are mostly Anglophone, or better said, whose language of communication is English, the BSE (Badly Spoken English), integrating members of Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Portugal of course.

People from the Société Européenne d'Ethnographie de l'École (SEE), mostly Francophone and Ibero-American. The late Professor Georges Lapassade was our Honorary President. But I refer to, for example, Driss Alaoui, from Reunion Island, Patrick Boumard from France, Fernando Sabirón Sierra, from Spain, and more recently Roberto Sidnei de Macedo, from Brazil.

And finally people from the Higher Education College of Santarém her on the mainland, with whom the University of Madeira had an agreement of cooperation.

There are also other special associate members, as for example, Sylvi Stenersen Hovdenak, full Professor at the University of Oslo, who was Basil Bernstein's student in the past,

Now the question is: how do Curriculum Studies appear within this story?

Despite being concentrated in one research group, this Centre has focussed from its very beginning¹ on two fundamental research lines (in **curriculum** and in **pedagogical innovation**) and one overarching line in **ethnography of education**, envisaged more as a research methodology. Each one of the fundamental research lines has had its own Master's and Doctoral study programme.

So I can say our specificity started to be designed here.

The co-existence of two research lines in one same research group, each one headed by senior staff (curriculum studies by myself, while pedagogical innovation by Carlos Fino), created conditions to the confront of perspectives, sometimes in convergence, others in conflict, thus opening a frank and provocative debate (in a positive sense) among its members in terms of research object delimitation, greatly helping us for the creation of the identity of curriculum in our centre.

It is no need to quote Tomaz Tadeu da Silva when he says: "I am what the other is not; I am not what the other is."² And when he explains that difference "is not established in an isolated and independent way. It depends from processes of exclusion, border watching, and division strategies. The difference is never solely and purely difference, but it is also and fundamentally hierarchy, valuing and categorisation."³ (Silva, 1997: p.25).

After this short introductory framework, I may now summarise our own perspectives in curriculum studies in five points, no matter the order of importance:

1. Firstly, we are interested in a 2 level approach of curriculum: a macro and a micro level. Contrarily to the aims of the technological curriculum model, according to the principles of tayloristic scientific management, which faced teachers as mere technicians, able to implement directives decided by those who are in power, we think that teachers are rather professionals, who also take political decisions, who know exactly what they do and why they do (or not do) what they do. In this regard, teachers should be theoretically grounded and their practice should be research-based. And this demands a systemic attitude, viewing curriculum in its interaction with other systems (political, ideological, economic, cultural, religious, etc.) at a macro level. For us there is no place for a

¹ There is now a third research line in Leadership and Educational Administration.

² Original: *Sou o que o outro não é; não sou o que o outro é.*

³ Original: *...não é estabelecida de forma isolada e independente. Ela depende de processos de exclusão, de guarda de fronteiras, de estratégias de divisão. A diferença nunca é apenas e puramente diferença, mas também e fundamentalmente hierarquia, valoração e categorização.*

- simplistic and deterministic view any longer, in terms of learning depending on teaching.
2. Secondly, we feel the need to situate curriculum studies in the present times, in our contemporaneity (according to B. Sousa Santos, in the so-called paradigmatic transition of contemporaneity). And we recognise that curriculum is still marked by modernity, the same way as the public school is. We do not forget their strong connection (both of the technological curriculum model and the public school) with the factories' discipline and organisation, characteristics of the "modern times" of industrial revolution. And this demands the discussion of the concept of paradigm, in the sense Kuhn uses it, that is to say, a discussion about change as a paradigmatic rupture.
 3. Thirdly, this breakthrough is mainly due to critical reflections and analysis made from the times of Frankfurt School, in the thirties of last century, and which went on, greatly developed from Althusser's philosophical ideas of State ideological apparatus, with the French sociologists Bourdieu and Passeron's concepts of *habitus*, symbolic violence and reproduction, with Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and his optimistic view on education as a way of people's liberation, with Young's New Sociology of Education and the Reconceptualization Movement headed by Pinar, and the contributions of Apple, Giroux, Goodson, Tadeu da Silva, Moreira, and some Portuguese scholars as Pacheco, Leite, Roldão, and others, just to mention some. And this critical view is a must for our research line, since every Master and Doctoral student in Madeira necessarily has a subject of Critical Trends or Critical and Post-critical Trends in Curriculum in their study programmes. If we are not happy with the present situation at school, we need to know the underground reasons (the hidden curriculum) and their impact on the schooling achievements of our pupils.
 4. With all this theoretical framework, we consider that it is important to dive deep inside the practice at school, to really understand what is going on in the classes at school, envisaging them as cultural communities, in which their members, the learners and the teachers, are phenomenological subjects, with their own histories, own backgrounds and own cultural references. To really understand their culture, we need, as researchers, to describe and interpret it as natives of that same culture. It is in this aspect that we make use of the ethnography of education as a tool to get access to that community, through participant observation. That is why I have just read a paper in a thematic session, on "The ethnography of education as a new path for curriculum studies". It is not enough to look like a native, but it is necessary to be a native, or at least, to become a native. For this, we have to allow ourselves to be converted, to hope they (the actors) adopt us as if we are one of them. I believe I only know a given social reality in-depth if I am an insider. In our opinion, the ethnography of education helps the researcher of curriculum to apprehend it at a micro-level approach, that is to say, to look at the curriculum as a practice of social construction of identities.
 5. And finally, to end the description of our perspectives on curriculum studies in Madeira, we think that we have to step forward. What does that mean? As an attentive scholar of what is going on in our country, I dare to say (forgive me if I shock you) that we repeat *ad nauseam* what others have already said before. To be politically correct (in this case, academically correct) of course we must cite (take off our hat to) others. But what is the mission of a research centre unless to

create knowledge? And in terms of curriculum this is the major challenge. It is easier to regret the present state of school and of curriculum. But the question is: what can we do to overpass it? It is in this point that the research line of curriculum has benefited from the research line in pedagogical innovation, I have to recognize it. The new PhD study plan in the area of Curriculum now integrates a new subject called “Scenarios of Curriculum Innovation”. Taking use of the scenario planning methodology, we are trying to design not just one, but more than one single scenario for the future. That is why we use this word in the plural.

To finalise this short presentation, I wonder about your thoughts: Who does this? Has Madeira so many researchers to accomplish all this? The fact is that we are no longer restricted to the island: two Madeiran doctoral students are attending this event here, but most of our students are spread abroad, mainly in the north-eastern Brazil.

And we feel very proud to have the trust of the external advisory board⁴ on our work, when they referred in their last Report (2013) that “an elaborated ‘Madeira School of Thought’ in educational research might well follow and achieve international visibility.” Now you can understand how much I thank the organizing committee for giving us the opportunity of visibility in such an international event as this one is.

SILVA, T. T. (1997). GT Currículo, 20^a Reunião Anual da ANPEd, disponível em: <http://www.ufrgs.br/faced/gtcurric/tr978.html>

⁴ CEPAC (FCT, CIE-UMa Scientific Advisory Board)