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Curriculum in the postmodern condition

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ABSTRACT
A contextualisation of the curriculum in the postmodern condition, however difficult, is imperative to understand current developments in education. This article investigates postmodernism's relationships with various aspects of modernism: aesthetic, historical and philosophical. Applied to arts education, post-modern philosophical concepts suggest that conventional approaches to curriculum development remain blind to their own assumptions of what constitutes knowledge or skill, how students learn and what they ought to learn. Established subject areas may well have broken down in social practice but are still perpetuated in curriculum theory and planning. We simply cannot predict with the accustomed certainty what our students will need to know and be able to do. Current ways of transmitting knowledge and skill in discrete units of sequence and content may well fail to serve our students' present and future needs. We must widen our perspective of what arts education could and ought to be concerned with to open the way for alternative ways for curriculum planning. Here, the arts and humanities are capable of providing alternatives: concepts, images, and intellectual tools for re-imagining our natural, social and technological relationships. In an age that is increasingly formed in and through global relationships, experimentation and creative conceptualising are crucial to discover new forms of learning and new forms of pedagogy.

I

To talk of the curriculum in the *postmodern condition* is to locate it within its appropriate contemporary historical and philosophical contexts. Efforts to characterise these contexts have, however, been fraught with all kinds of difficulty. Any attempts to provide narratives of world history, or non-ideological descriptions of the emergence of a distinct philosophical ethos are contestable and open to interpretation. Nonetheless, it .is important that conceptions of the curriculum be related to their historical and philosophical contexts. Indeed, such "reflexive contextualization" is especially important in an age of rapid and ongoing space-time compressions (see Harvey, 1989), in which space annihilates time. It is crucial that the curriculum both reflect its cultural age - its socio-historical context - *and* at the same time provide some critical purchase on these developments. These statements sound like the formulation of the truism: When it comes to curriculum philosophy, always historicize!

The problem with historicising curriculum is that it almost inevitably generates attempts to narrativize world history, to tell stories about "progress," "development," and "change." Typically, these stories have their own built-in ends or teleologies, which change according to who is telling the story, to whom, and for what political purpose. Even so, philosophers, sociologists, and

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historians widely agree that highly significant social, technological, economic and political change has occurred since the end of World War II. Moreover, they agree that this change in some way or other bespeaks a new sensibility and worldview: that these technological and socio-political transformations amount to a sea change. The terms "postmodernism" and "the post-modern" have, albeit grudgingly in many cases, become widely accepted as catchwords indicating this new sensibility, style, ethos, or disposition. We will argue that "postmodernism" is not concerned with venerating the old because it is closer to the sacred (religious origins and texts), nor with valorising the present simply because it is newer. Indeed, postmodernism is both critical of attitudes to time as human creations and agonistic in relation to its sources.

II

Philosophers generally define "postmodernism" by reference to its parent term, "modernism." Modernism has two uses. The first is *aesthetic,* referring to movements in the arts from around the end of the nineteenth century. The second use is *historical* and *philosophical.* Here it refers to "the modem" in the sense of "modernity": the age or period following the medieval period. The relationship between these two senses can be expressed simply by saying talk of modernism and the modem involves a self-conscious break with the old, the classical, and the traditional; asserting instead an emphasis on the new or the present. Furthermore, we might say it also involves the general belief or underlying assumption - contrary to classicalism or traditionalism - that the modem is in some sense *better than* the old since, in the sequence of historical development, it comes *later.* From a philosophical standpoint, then, modernism in philosophy begins with the Renaissance - with the thought of Francis Bacon in England and Rene Descartes in France.

In the first sense referring to developments in the arts from the end of the nineteenth- century, modernism is typically used to characterise the methods, style, or attitude of modem artists and, in particular, a style in which the artist deliberately breaks away from classical and traditional methods of expression based on realism and naturalism. In philosophy (and theology), modernism can be seen as a movement sustained by a belief in the advancement of knowledge and human progress premised on experience and scientific method. It is epitomised, perhaps, by Immanuel Kant' s "critical" philosophy and by the idea that advancement in knowledge comes with subjecting traditional beliefs to criticism.

"Postmodernism" likewise has two broad meanings, related to these specific senses of modernism. It is used in an *aesthetic* sense to refer to developments in the arts occurring subsequently or in reaction to modernism. Secondly, it is used in a *historical* and/or *philosophical* sense to refer to a period ("postmodernity") or an ethos ("the postmodern"). It could be argued that in its second sense postmodernism represents a transformation of modernity or a radical shift in the system of values and practices underlying modernity. This is, in fact, the way the Oxford English Dictionary defines postmodernism:

> **post-modern,** a. Also post-Modem .... Subsequent to, or later than, what is "modem"; spec. in the arts, esp. Archit., applied to a movement in reaction against that designated 'modem' ...

Speaking of the application of the term postmodern to the human sciences, Ermarth suggests that:

> Postmodernism can be recognized by two key assumptions. First, the assumption that there is no common denominator - in "nature" or "truth" or "God" or "the future" - that guarantees either the One-ness of the world or the possibility of natural or objective thought. Second, the assumption that all human systems operate like language, being self-reflexive rather than referential systems - systems of differential function which are powerful but finite, and which construct and maintain meaning and value (1998: 587).

Discussing its relevance to political philosophy, Lilly claims that postmodernism

> aims at exposing how, in modem, liberal democracies, the construction of political identity and the operationalization of basic values take place through the deployment of conceptual binaries

> such as we/them, responsible/ irresponsible, rational/irrational, legitimate/illegitimate, normal/ abnormal, and so on ... Postmodernists draw attention to the ways in which the boundary between ... [these] terms is socially reproduced and policed (1998, 591).

These scholars reflect the tendency - which has become a common strategy - to treat postmodernism synonymously with poststructuralism, or to use postmodernism as the all-embracing term. We believe, however, that poststructuralism should be distinguished from postmodernism. Although there are philosophical and historical overlaps between the two movements, it is important to distinguish between the two in order to appreciate their respective intellectual and cultural genealogies, their theoretical trajectories and applications. An important set of differences can be most easily understood with reference to their *theoretica objects of study:* "Structuralism" and "Modernism." What is often confusing is that some poststructuralist thinkers, such as Jean-François Lyotard, actively engage with the term postmodernism, while others, such as Michel Foucault, pretend they do not know to what it refers. Lyotard is, perhaps, the most famous of contemporary philosophers who refers to postmodernism in both an aesthetic and historical/philosophical sense. He is considered by most commentators, justly or not, as the pre-eminent non-Marxist philosopher of "the postmodern condition" (sometimes referred to as "postmodernity"). His *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), originally published in Paris in 1979, became an instant cause celebre. The book crystallised in an original interpretation a study of the status and development of knowledge, science, and technology in advanced capitalist societies. Arguably, no contemporary work in curriculum philosophy that aims at teasing out the significance of the "postmodern condition" can afford to ignore Lyotard's work, and it is to his analysis of the “postmodern condition" that we now briefly turn.

III

The Postmodern Condition was important for a number of reasons. It developed a philosophical interpretation of the changing state of knowledge, science, and education in the "most highly developed societies" (Lyotard, 1984: xxiii), reviewing and synthesising research on contemporary science within the broader context of the sociology of post-industrial society and studies of postmodern culture. Lyotard brought together for the first time diverse threads and previously separate literatures in an analysis that many commentators and critics believed signalled an epochal break not only with the so-called modem era but also with various traditionally modem ways of viewing the world.

The strength and originality of *The Postmodern Condition,* considered in its own right and on its own merits, is reason enough for educators to devote time and effort to understanding and analysing Lyotard's major working hypothesis: "The status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age" (3). He uses the term postmodern condition to describe the state of knowledge and the problem of its legitimation in the "most highly developed societies". In this he follows sociologists and critics who have used the term to designate the state of Western culture "following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and the arts" (3). Lyotard places these transformations within the context of the crisis of narratives, especially those Enlightenment metanarratives concerning meaning, truth, and emancipation that have been used to legitimate both the rules of knowledge of the sciences and the foundations of modem institutions.

By "transformations" Lyotard is referring to the effects of the new technologies since the 1950s and their combined impact on the two principal functions of knowledge - research and the transmission of learning. Significantly, he maintains, the leading sciences and technologies have all been based on language-related developments - theories of linguistics, cybernetics, informatics, computer languages, telematics, theories of algebra - and their miniaturisation and commercialisation. In this context, Lyotard argues that the status of knowledge is permanently

altered: Its availability as an international commodity becomes the basis for national and commercial advantage within the global economy; its computerised use in the military is the basis for enhanced state security and international monitoring. Knowledge, as he acknowledges, has already become the principal force of production, changing the composition of the work force in developed countries. The commercialisation of knowledge and its new forms of media circulation, he suggests, will raise new ethico-legal problems between the nation-state and the information-rich multinationals, and will widen the gap between the so-called developed and Third Worlds.

Here is a *critical* account theorising the status of knowledge and education in the postmodern condition. It constitutes a seminal contribution and important point of departure to what has become known-in part due to Lyotard's work - as the modernity/ postmodernity debate, a debate that has involved many of the most prominent contemporary philosophers and social theorists (see Peters, 1995, 1996).

It is a book that directly addresses the concerns of education, perhaps more so than any other single poststructuralist text. It does so in a way that bears on the future status and role of education and knowledge in what has proved to be a stunningly prophetic analysis. Many of the features of Lyotard's analysis of the "postmodern condition" - an analysis now twenty years old - appear today to be accepted aspects of our experiences in Western societies. He writes in a now famous formulation of the *modern:*

> I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse . . . making explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth. (Lyotard, 1984: xxii)

By contrast, he defines *postmodern* simply as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). In *The Postmodern Condition,* Lyotard was concerned with the grand narratives that had grown out of the Enlightenment and had come to mark modernity. In *The Postmodern Explained to Children,* Lyotard mentions specifically

> the progressive emancipation of reason and freedom, the progressive or catastrophic emancipation of labour ... , the enrichment of all through the progress of capitalist technoscience, and even ... the salvation of creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love (1992: 29).

Grand narratives, then, are the stories that cultures tell themselves about their own practices and beliefs in order to legitimate them. They function as a unified single story that purports to legitimate or found a set of practices, a cultural self-image, discourse, or institution (see Peters, 1995).

Lyotard (1984), in his very first footnote, acknowledges the sources for his notion of "the postmodern": the sociology of post-industrial society (the work of Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine), the literary criticism of Ihab Hassan, studies of "performance" in postmodern culture by Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello, and M. Kohler's essay. These are useful sources to note because, taken together, they combine elements of the changing mode of economic and social organisation with changes in culture. Some sociologists have begun to talk of this transition in terms of "postmodernisation," similar to the way that sociologists of a previous generation analysed the transition from the traditional to the modem in terms of "modernisation."

If we take the definition Lyotard provided in his essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" (appended to the English translation of *The Postmodern Condition)* we would be driven to accept that postmodernism is "not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant. I have said and will say again the postmodern signifies not the end of modernism, but another relation to modernism" (1984: 79). What he is suggesting is that postmodernism as a movement in the arts is a continuation of modernism by other means - the search for the new and the avant-garde experimentalism remain. Postmodernism entertains an ambivalent relation to modernism, considered as a category in aesthetics. It defines a style, an attitude, or an ethos rather

than a period (that is, something that comes *after* modernism). In this sense, there are clearly many postmodernisms in the sense of defining a style in the arts, and although they may come and go, the *postmodern,* as an episteme, a philosophical stance, or historical periodisation, like the *modern,* is here to stay.

IV

Before relating this brief account of the postmodern to the curriculum, we can present the philosophical changes referred to by "the postmodern condition" as a cluster of concepts. These concepts are then related briefly to the curriculum.

Table 1: The Cluster Concepts of Postmodern Philosophy

Anti-foundationalism	Suspicion of transcendental arguments and viewpoints Suspicion of metanarratives Rejection of canonical descriptions and final vocabularies Perspectivism and multiplicity
Post-epistemological standpoint	Rejection of knowledge as accurate representation Rejection of truth as correspondence to reality Standpoint, non-foundational, or "ecological" epistemology
Anti-naive realism	Anti-realism about meaning and reference Non referentiality of language Suspicion of naturalising tendency in language Diagnosis and critique of binarism
Anti-essentialism and the self	Critique of the metaphysics of presence Questioning of the humanist subject Substitution of genealogical narratives for ontology Cultural construction of subjectivity Discursive production of the self Analysis of technologies of self
Analysis of power/knowledge	Exposure of technologies of domination Power as productive, dispersed, and related to knowledge Power as exercised through control of the body Panopticum and the institutional "gaze" "Modern" institutions as spaces of enclosure Open network and "the surveillance society"
Boundary crossings	Erasure of boundaries between literature and philosophy Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity

If we approach curriculum in a conventional way, we can think of programs of study in terms of dimensions such as content and skills, or bodies of knowledge and pro cesses of knowing. Any curriculum statement or theory must refer to *what* students are (expected) to learn and *how* they are expected to go about learning, *what* teachers are to teach and *how* they are to teach it. From a slightly different perspective, we may think in terms of curriculum as having to deal with both the *structure* and *content* of knowledge. In addition, of course, curriculum theory and curriculum planning must include a *normative* dimension, which provides reasons for what is included and excluded and for the kinds of approaches and processes to be taken. The key point to be made about the cluster concepts of postmodern philosophy is that they issue profound challenges to the ways educators have typically thought in the past and, to a disconcerting extent, *continue* to think about curriculum.

Formal educational theory, policy, and practice with respect to curricular content and processes, skills, and knowledge is comprehensively outdated. It assumes and builds upon *categories* and *modus operandi* that no longer apply. Although approximations to elements of postmodern philosophical insight are occasionally touched upon in notions of prioritising "learning how to learn" over "fixed bodies of content," the ways in which such ideas are taken up in curriculum development and classroom practice are typically superficial and under-informed. For example, the idea that *information* has somehow displaced *knowledge* all too frequently degenerates into flaccid forms of relativism or is reduced to inane cliched formulae such as the idea that the teacher's role has evolved from that of "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side." Although such notions have a basis in very real and significant conditions of change, they are less than adequate responses, and may well play into the hands of those who would do away with teachers and schools altogether (see Perelman, 1992) or otherwise whittle away at access to education as a vital dimension of the social wage.

Our cluster concepts provide a sense of how far our current ways of engaging with curriculum in theory, policy, and practice conflict *categorically* with the age. Educationists still widely think in terms of subject territories and continue to frame academic and professional training in such terms. Curriculum planning, policy development, and curriculum resourcing continue to be undertaken within familiar subject domains rather than in forms of collaboration and reciprocal informing that transcend traditional disciplinary parameters in fruitful and timely ways. A recent study (Lankshear et al., 1997) found curriculum and resourcing policies for technology being developed mainly in isolation from literacy. On what possible grounds, one wonders, could this be justified - at *any* time, let alone under present conditions? Likewise, what grounds are there in the so-called information age for continuing to stipulate subject content ranges for school year levels as closely as we typically do? Would it not make altogether more sense to encourage approaches that have learners, teachers, and other relevant experts, as well as members of the community, work together to generate, organise an~ analyse information? This would involve learners being apprenticed to expert - mature, "insider" - approaches to gathering, compiling, organising, analysing, storing, and disseminating information rather than "learning" from pre-packaged content.

The definition of curriculum as a structured series of learning opportunities highlights the constructed nature of the curriculum based on a conception of knowledge - its organisation into disciplines - and learning theory (Cherryholmes, 1988: 133). It also serves to draw attention to the curriculum as a values-driven *selection* of material or course content that operates to both include and exclude certain traditions of knowledge, particular perspectives, and sets of values.

The cluster concepts of postmodern philosophy cut across modernist epistemological assumptions and learning theory based on these assumptions. They provide grounds for questioning the foundationalist conception of knowledge (inherited from Descartes and the Enlightenment) as well as the organisation and structure of knowledge as disciplines. The non foundationalist, post-epistemological, and non representational view, then, contains a deep-seated critique of modern views of knowledge and curriculum. Postmodern philosophy, with its anti-essentialism, also provides grounds for challenging conceptions of the self as a unified entity that is transparent to itself and the fount of all knowledge and moral action. Just as it disputes certainty and total faith in the ideal of the sovereign subject, postmodern philosophy at the same time creates doubt around the reality of the learning subject: the child, the toddler, the pupil, the student. This adds weight to the importance of genealogical investigations of subjectivities and representations of students, youth, and adult learners.

The postmodern critique of the modern constitution of the curriculum in terms of non foundationalism and anti-essentialism, and the recognition of the curriculum as particular historical constructions of power/knowledge, raise profound challenges to mainstream curriculum theory, policy, and practice.

V

Attempting to present a historical narrative of postmodernity is, perhaps, even more difficult than characterising the postmodern ethos in philosophical terms. Instead, we might construct "snapshot scenarios", based on some of the most important changes as societies shift from industrial to post-industrial, and then to information societies/ economies. They describe possible futures and alternative paths, as a way of thinking about and preparing for what comes later. Scenarios are not predictions but aim to perceive futures in the present by "asking important 'what if' questions". They can help changing the way people think about a problem and thus provide way/ of learning (Rowan and Bigum, 1997, 73).

In terms of curriculum we may ask: What kinds of things should we be learning and teaching now, in order to prepare learners as well as possible for handling what comes in the future, *and* to be able to act better now as well as later in order to create more viable futures? 'When we look at much current educational policy, planning, and curriculum development it is easy to see how the past is enshrined in guidelines and plans. Much unwarranted certainty is assumed and expressed about things relevant to the world in which today's learners will live. This assuredness and taken-for-grantedness about the relevance of particular forms of content, skills, worldviews, etc., is at odds with what we know and don't know about the future worlds of students (74).

Scenario planning can be used to challenge the mindsets that underwrite such certainty and promote "reperceiving the world" (76). As Cowan and colleagues put it, the process and activity of scenario planning is designed to facilitate conversation about what is going on, and what might occur in the world around us. Thus we might "make better decisions about what we ought to do or avoid doing" (1998: 8), "avoid situations in which events take us by surprise" and recognise "signs of change" when they occur. In assisting us to evaluate "continued use of different strategies under different conditions", scenarios can provide a means of organising our knowledge and understanding of future environments within which the decisions we take today will be played out (Rowan and Bigum, 1998: 76).

A key goal is to identify policies and decisions futures *now* that will optimise options and outcomes for a range of possible futures. Hence, scenarios must narrate particular and credible worlds, taking account of forces and influences currently evident and known to us, which are likely to steer the future in one direction or another. If, for instance, our concern is with designing current courses in art education for in-service teachers in training, we might frame the question of what learning and teaching of arts might look like in educational settings for elementary school-age children fifteen years hence.

Participants in scenario planning initially frame the question, then try to identify and think through important driving forces they see as operating. Next, they look for influences that seem more or less predetermined: that will play out in more or less known ways. Following this, influences about which we cannot be confident are identified: key variables in shaping the future that could play out in quite different ways. From this latter set, one or two are selected as "critical uncertainties" (Rowan and Bigum, 1997: 81): especially important factors in terms of the focusing question or theme that are genuinely unpredictable. The resulting possibilities become raw materials for scenarios: accessible, punchy and fruitful stories about which we can think, suggesting decisions and policy directions *now.*

Although the scenario snapshots we offer here have not been framed closely and formally within scenario planning forums - they nonetheless provide means of thinking about curriculum in the postmodern condition: about current curriculum policies, directions, decisions, guidelines, and classroom implementations. The snapshots demonstrate the extent to which much current curriculum work is oblivious to the currently available information and to future possibilities.

Table 2 Seven Snapshot Scenarios

Snapshot Scenario 1: Globalisation

World economic integration with technological changes in telecommunications, information, and transport

(Political) promotion of free trade and reduction in trade protection

Weakening of the nation-state and growth of local mafias, especially in Eastern bloc countries

Growing importance of the city (and hinterland) as the political administrative and governing unit due to decline of the state and growth of multinationals

Imposition of structural adjustment policies on Third World countries

Emergence of a one-superpower hegemony; but also the consolidation of China and world Islamization

Growth of religious and ethnic nationalisms

Increased gaps between richer and poorer, in terms of both economic and cultural/informational capital

Instability of the unregulated global financial system (financial collapse of the Asian "tiger" economies and economies of Soviet Union and Brazil)

Snapshot Scenario 2: Changes in Economic Processes

Shift from industrial to service and/or information economy

Increased importance of *property* in general, including the technology of reproduction, intellectual

property, and genetic engineering

Declining power of labour unions

Development of flex-time work arrangements (i.e., growth of part-time work) and the emergence of the "flexible worker"

Casualisation of work and increasing levels of unemployment, especially in the Third World

Transformation from late capitalism to transnational managerial and finance capitalism

Shift to "knowledge industries" and global information economies

Increasing substitution of capital for labour (and non reversibility of the substitution principle)

Growing importance of symbolic economies and the manipulation of symbolic systems and processes

Snapshot Scenario 3: Knowledge Production and Formation

Increased specialisation of academic fields, discourses, languages

Commercialisation of schools and universities

Commodification of knowledge

Shift from knowledge to knowledge management

Exponential growth of knowledge and emergence of the knowledge industries (quaternary, quintary - e.g., culture and ethics industries)

New legal, ethical, and political problems generated by language-based techno-knowledge developments over simulacra (e.g., patents, copies)

Growing differentiation of new knowledge groups and classes

Decline of state-centred knowledge institutions and the growth of private and corporate thinktanks, foundations, and institutes

Radical concordance and convergence of media and media ownership

Increased incommensurabilities, including languages, teleologies, and scripts

Snapshot Scenario 4: Mathematical/Physical Processes

Problematising of space-time and stable categorisations

Development of mathematics of non classical spaces (monster curves, fractals, catastrophe

theory, chaos theory, eccentric or abject spaces)

Inclusion of disorder in mathematics and physics

Development of intermaths

Development of postmodern science with an accent on local determinisms, paralogy, undecidability, incompleteness, and openness

"Many worlds" interpretation in physics

Importance of implicate order and dissipative structures

Conception of the participatory universe

Snapshot Scenario 5: Ecological Sustainability

Destabilisation of whole ecosystems, often eliciting managerial or fundamentalist responses

Development of apocalyptic and survivalist ideologies and subcultures

Increased reduction of DNA variability and increased toxicity of the planet

Massive plant and animal extinction

Deep pollution of local and usually urban environments

Increased "natural" catastrophes (e.g. flooding) as results of human interference

Growth of shack cities (barrios, favelas, colonias without sewage, water, electricity) and shack cultures

Massive depletion of world rainforest belts, clean water, and air

Development of germ banks andeco-banks

Experiments with human-made environments e.g., biosphere

Emergence of ecoterrorism

Strategic national biosecurity

Global viral environments

Snapshot Scenario 6: Info-Communication Processes

Movement from analogue to digital processing technologies.

Predominance of entertainment and edutainment forms over traditional news or "straight" information-based programming

World-wide growth of the Internet and darknet locations

Discursive development of communication subcultures based on the mode of reception

Totalisation of universal (computational) languages and simultaneous development of idiolects

Commodification of all semiotics and symbol creation

Microelectronic expansion of the virtual body, tending toward full seamlessness.

Greater automation and autonomy of "intelligent," seventh-generation robots for all tasks, including translation

Growth of "resistance" technological subcultures (e.g., hacking, cracking, pirate radio and television, phone phreaking)

Snapshot Scenario 7: Cultural Changes

Interpenetration of traditional spheres and models of public and private relationships in areas of the sexual, the civic, the social, and the institutional

Emancipation increasingly tied to communication and communicative strategies

"Transgressive" sexualities and problematisation of gender within queer/theory/feminist rebates

New forms of hybrid art-tech/tech-art

Cultural and ecological tourism as a museum-preservationist model of nature and culture

Importance of the simulacrum and all simulation and modelling processes

Body-cyborg interactions and compilations/combinations

Importance of cybernetic epistemologies

Emergence of virtual cultures and subcultures

Growth of diasporic populations

Renaissance of ethnic traditions and knowledges

Growing importance of displaced populations and refugees

While the cluster concepts developed from our philosophical account of postmodernity provide a basis for critiquing and reconceptualising curriculum, these snapshot scenarios provide useful tools for reconsidering curriculum in theory, policy, and practice. They augment our philosophical perspective in five key and interrelated ways.

First, we can use them as analytical tools for comparing current curriculum theory and practice with the circumstances and demands of the postmodern condition. To the extent that they capture conditions and circumstances - and their implied requirements for effective living and participation under present and foreseeable future conditions - they provide a kind of checklist against which to assess curriculum regarding the extent to which it reflects the themes captured in the scenarios.

Second, they augment the cluster concepts when reappraising the disciplinary and subject-oriented nature of curriculum theory and practice. To what extent, in other words, can the issues and demands identified in the scenario snapshots be framed, understood, and addressed (conceptually, theoretically, and practically) by the kind of learning enabled by existing curricula?

Third, they might help to select and structure components of an embryonic experimental curriculum for the upper secondary school or university. From this standpoint, the scenarios can be used to identify foci, problems, issues, and themes that collectively might well give shape to a coherent program of study for students in higher levels of formal programs. The sorts of foci, issues, and themes involved would, once unpacked, provide guidelines for structuring knowledge and inquiry, generating relevant information and appropriate methodical tools of inquiry, as well as criteria for using them well.

Fourth, were we not to wholly - or largely - abandon more traditional subject/ disciplinary approaches, the scenarios could help identify a series of themes to be developed and explored via traditional subject areas as a way of weaving together an interdisciplinary study.

Finally, the scenarios provide working hypotheses for anticipating or thinking about the future of the curriculum: What would the curriculum look like if we developed each of these scenario snapshots in terms of appropriate pedagogy, techniques of inquiry, and thematic emphases;

conceptions of resources and learning technologies; ideals of expertise and of authentic practice, and so on? For example, if we were to take up the options in the first snapshot scenario and begin to rethink how we might reposition the curriculum to take account of developments referred to under the label of globalisation in a way that promotes a critical view we might arrive at something like the following as an agenda for a curriculum for alternative globalisations.

Table 3 - An Agenda for the Curriculum of Alternative globalisations

Promoting and developing a global social contract	Promoting sustainable development
	Promoting ecological standards
	Consolidating the democratic-process
	Enhancing development of international labour markets
	Promoting world trade union rights
	Monitoring the social dimension of global and regional trade agreements
Promoting and encouraging global governance	Building standards of global governance
	Protecting the public institutions of civil society
	Developing transparency and accountability of international
	forums and world institutions
	Developing approaches to institutions of an international civil community
	Encouraging greater North/South dialogue and better world representation
Promoting and developing cultural globalisation	Promoting cultural diversity and exchange
	Developing genuine multicultural structures and processes
	Promoting and enhancing the notion of cultural rights
	Protecting indigenous property rights
	Promoting political and cultural self-determination

The arts and the humanities are crucial to the promotion of this agenda. They enhance self-understandings according to transformed global environments. Reconfigured through the development of new media, they help us to critique and deconstruct both narratives of the nation-state and images and discourses surrounding globalisation and the construction of the so-called New World order. The new arts and humanities provide us with concepts, images and intellectual tools for re-imagining our relationship with Nature, for encountering other cultures, and for examining the genealogy of human rights. These processes will help us to rethink the notion of the global citizen. Curriculum philosophers, especially in the arts where postmodernism as both a movement and a condition has had huge impact, must be brave enough to experiment with new forms of organisation of learning, new modes of delivery, and new pedagogies. Only then can they enable forthcoming generations of students to learn to negotiate their way through a maze of technical, political, social and economic transformations that are occurring with great rapidity and sometimes without precedent.

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