# Contemporary Analysis on Curriculum Theorists in Education

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I would challenge any scholar or group of students to create their own review project and inform the field about what has been missed or that should be covered better or more completely!

(Poetter et al., 2022, p. iv)

CURRICULUM WINDOWS REDUX: WHAT CURRICULUM THEORISTS CAN TEACH US ABOUT SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY TODAY, edited by Thomas S. Poetter, Kelly Waldrop, and Syed Hassan Raza (2022), brings curriculum theories of the 1950s to 2000s alive by reexamining them through the transformative perspectives of doctoral students at Miami University of Ohio. It is one of seven books in the Curriculum Windows Series, which engages the "window" metaphor to indicate that our life experiences impact how we perceive knowledge and that we look from both inside and outside our life "windows" to seek inspiration and positive change (Poetter et al., 2022). The 33 emerging scholars in this book contribute to curriculum studies and bring critical perspectives and hope for education by analyzing, connecting, and reflecting on essential curriculum books and their contemporary educational experiences.

This unique book not only reconsiders 32 essential curriculum books in the field, but also introduces new perspectives from 33 emerging scholars who examine the books by connecting the past with the present. This book is powerful because you learn that education can truly transform lives. It is a great starting point for scholars to engage curriculum studies because it provides a clear overview of the field through different lenses and helps readers to understand the important issues around it. This book can also serve as the starting point for a mini curriculum library by helping scholars to identify and utilize curriculum theories and books based on their needs. The 33 chapters cover everything from curriculum issues to teaching practices. Some focus on early childhood and K12 education, while others focus on higher education. The authors of this book connect their identities and experiences with the 32 curriculum books written by important curriculum theorists. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of curriculum studies.

However, readers of this book might feel overwhelmed by such a rich text since it has 33 chapters and reflects on 32 different curriculum books. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that there are numerous critical curriculum books in the educational field that are not included in

this book, for example, Gay's (2018) *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* and Schiro's (2013) *Curriculum Theory: Conflicting Visions and Enduring Concerns.* 

To help the audience better understand the contents in this text and effectively review the book, the following sections divide the first 32 chapters into three main categories based on their topics and focus: curriculum issues; teaching practices; and early childhood, K-12, and higher education. This book review ends with Williams' (2022) final chapter and a discussion about the main methodology of the book, *currere*, and how it can empower educators in their research.

# **Curriculum Issues**

Tammy Yockey reads Walker and Soltis' (1997) Curriculum and Aims and discusses the relationship between curriculum and its aims. Yockey (2022) stated that curriculum and its aims change based on students' needs at different times and that teachers have the responsibility to advocate for high quality curriculum that matches the intended aim. When curriculum opens a window for change, it is an opportunity for educators to hear students' voices and put students' "academic, functional, and emotional needs" (Yockey, 2022, p. 389) in the center when making curriculum decisions. An example is seen in the first chapter where Shanna Bumiller reflects on Dewey (1956) through a combined reprinting of The Child and the Curriculum (1902) and The School and Society (1899/1915). Bumiller uses the Shadow a Student Challenge and her own teaching experiences to reimagine education through the student perspective. This chapter argues the importance of breaking the cycle of Zombie education by connecting curriculum with students' experiences, creating students' ownership in learning, and transforming the learning environment. Educators can disrupt the traditional "surviving" style (Bumiller, 2022, p. 2) of learning and teaching by listening to students' voices and co-constructing knowledge with them.

Curriculum changes over time, but the fundamental principles from existing literature can still provide insightful guidelines to current practices. Brittany Buhrlage analyzes Tyler's (1949/2013) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* by connecting the book with Tyler's educational experiences and considering the importance of his work in curriculum studies. This part of the book starts with the historical context that Tyler lived through and how the Great Depression and World War II connect with Tyler's rationale, including the four fundamental questions in his curriculum development and instruction plan (Buhrlage, 2022). Despite the various scholarly analyses in the field addressing Tyler's focus on educational purposes and objectives, Buhrlage applies Tyler's curriculum elements to the current educational landscape and shares a few school practices through "the window Tyler presents," such as developing work study opportunities for students so that students have better options after graduation (Buhrlage, 2022, p. 26). She argues that Tyler's work is still significant in the curriculum planning process (Buhrlage, 2022).

Jonathan Cooper uses the metaphor of climbing to the summit to write about the urgency and the struggle for a "learner-centric global curriculum" through connecting Kliebard's (1987/1995) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* with current curriculum issues (Cooper, 2022, p. 50). Cooper writes how this book offers many different perspectives about education by categorizing curriculum historians and theorists into four different groups and explaining how these four different pathways overlap with the present struggles in education, such as giving students more ownership and personalizing students' experiences in learning. Tracy Davis suggests an optimal worldview mindset, which applies a holistic and interrelatedness perspective, to fight

against educational inequalities, such as school funding, in order to bring in the community and ethic of care after reflecting on Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities*. Kozol's book reminds Davis (2022) of "how far we have not come," which includes still-segregated education, and asks us to do something different (p. 52).

For example, Marilee Tanner (2022) mentioned that "we need representatives for people of color in every facet of the educational arena" (p. 132) after reflecting on Delpit's (1995) *Other People's Children*. Delpit (1995) addresses the cultural struggles of minority students in classrooms due to "the code of the culture of power" (Tanner, 2022, p. 122) and "miscommunication between cultures" (Tanner, 2022, p. 126). Therefore, Tanner (2022) argues that it is essential for schools to have diverse representations, including among teacher bodies, and to involve everyone in the educational process to make the curriculum more engaging and relevant and reflect the values and interests of marginalized children in schools.

But how can educators make positive changes in education? Rhonda Phillips reads Meier and Wood's (2004) *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools* and analyzes how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act left both students and teachers behind. NCLB focused on "one-size-fits-all testing" (Phillips, 2022, p. 359), but it overlooked the inequity outside of school, such as child poverty rates and lack of health-care coverage. It caused a lack of trust for teachers, a lack of curriculum development, and a lack of diverse assessments to meet the needs of individual students (Phillips, 2022).

Melissa Wipperman's chapter talks about educational reform using Fullan's (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. Wipperman (2022) states that education needs changes and that changes can be approached or coped with more effectively by multilevel responsibilities, teacher-principal collaboration, cohesive structure with support systems, and a culture with the capacity for change. Elaysha Wright studies systematic oppression and racism in education using Laura's (2014) *Being Bad: My Baby Brother and the School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Wright decries how our current education system labels, dehumanizes, pushes against, and pushes out Black children through zero tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. Students need "faith, love, hope, energy, time, and a personal investment/commitment" from their educators (Wright, 2022, p. 212). Educators need to "meet children where they are" and practice culturally responsive teaching in order to teach students with different backgrounds and experiences (Wright, 2022, p. 213).

One of the authors, Kristine Michael, examines White privilege in education using Delpit's (2012) "Multiplication is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People's Children. Michael states that not only racism but also socioeconomic conditions impact students' educational experiences. It's essential for educators to be aware of the "multilayered challenges" and "how our view of curriculum is colored by our very personal experience with curriculum" in teaching and learning (Michael, 2022, p. 303). Tanya Moore reflects on Hunter's (1982) Mastery Teaching and indicates "there is no fix-all solution for all educational concerns" (Moore, 2022, p. 317). When educational change happens, Moore encourages educators to consider and determine the quality of the idea by investigating "the company or person promoting the strategy," "the feasibility of implementation," and "progress monitoring and timelines" (Moore, 2022, pp. 313–315).

Because of the equity issues in curriculum studies, Andrea Townsend advocates for a multicultural education that is rooted in social reconstructionism and views differences as strengths after reading Sleeter and Grant's (1988) *Making Choices for Multicultural Education*. The book identifies gaps among social sub-groups in our society and guides Townsend to address the purpose of public education as serving humans "by equipping them to think critically, problem solve, and

express their individuality without harm to their identity" (Townsend, 2022, p. 142). Townsend (2022) states that individuals with special needs, such as learning differences or poverty, need social reconstructionist curriculum for all students in order to desegregate education and celebrate students' different identities. Nathan Warner also studies multicultural education but from a different perspective with J. A. Banks'(1997) *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*. Warner considers multicultural education as part of the idea of freedom, justice, and democracy from the curriculum, pedagogy, and school environment lens. In order to fight against stereotypes, racism, and discrimination, Warner asks educators to support students, challenge traditional education through critical and transformative perspectives, and practice equity pedagogy, which needs "more scholarly educational leadership and a commitment to link scholarship with practice" (Warner, 2022, p. 157).

These 13 chapters holistically discuss student-centered curriculum related topics from different lenses, such as curriculum aims and principles. However, education transforms students' lives not only by centering their needs in the curriculum but also by empowering students to take responsibility for their learning. For example, one of the ways to empower students in curriculum studies is to motivate students to identify opportunities and "take actions that produce the power needed to influence organizational or community conditions that affect well-being" (Peterson et al., 2014, p. 633).

# **Teaching Practices**

Misty Cook indicates the importance of connecting school with students' lives and of teacher lore in education, which bridges school and community, places "teachers at the core of the curriculum rather than predetermined standards," and "emphasizes the experiential knowledge of real teachers in real classrooms" (Cook, 2022, p. 31). She draws these conclusions based on her own teaching experiences and Schubert's (1980) Curriculum Books. Cook (2022) also critiques standardized tests as the only means of assessing students' learning and teachers' teaching by reflecting on her experience as a high school student, where she discovered that skills that "cannot be measured in an objective way" are as important as academic skills (Cook, 2022, p. 36). Later, in Chapter 22, Louis Hacquard III also studies Curriculum Books but from a different lens. Hacquard (2022) indicates that it is essential for educators to go back and look in the right place in order to develop a curriculum for the scholars of the future. He further emphasizes that curriculum studies is not an isolated area of academic focus. To connect teaching with other disciplines, Debra Amling reflects on Duckworth's (1987) "The Having of Wonderful Ideas" and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning and shares the importance of connecting children's intellectual development with classroom practice. Amling (2022) asks teachers to be willing to cultivate and welcome children's ideas, provide a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children, and allow time for confusion, learning, and reflection so that students constructing meanings are the heart of the classroom.

Education happens in classrooms in many different ways. Britzman's (2003) *Practice Makes Practices* guides Ashley Warren to reflect on a few stories that happened in classrooms that led teacher candidates to question their own identity formation. Warren reveals the importance of being provided with a variety of opportunities in diverse situations during student teaching so that teacher candidates can better determine their identities as teachers and human beings. These opportunities will also help student teachers "test who they want to become rather than what

society has already dictated as essential" (Warren, 2022, p. 164). Through reflection on Britzman's book, Warren shares that only educators can assign meaning to our own teaching experience, and effective instruction needs teachers to "speak actively, teach actively, and care actively" (Warren, 2022, p. 168). Curriculum is also important for teaching practices. Erica O'Keeffe shares that curriculum has knowledge and power and that it reflects the community's cultural norms and values, with the support of Sears and Carper's (1998) *Curriculum, Religion, and Public Education*. O'Keeffe's teaching experience demonstrates "the influence of society on curriculum and curriculum on society" (O'Keeffe, 2022, p. 321). O'Keeffe (2022) also asks educators to transform curriculum to provide diversified and critical points of view for students to develop in-depth learning, especially when controversy happens.

In addition, Lauren Gentene argues that "teaching cannot be the center of our schools, learning must be" (Gentene, 2022, p. 78). She advocates for child-centered, student-owned, and balanced curriculum through effective personalized professional development for teachers and learning environments for students after studying Rugg and Shumaker's (1928) *The Child-Centered School*. Erin Owens studies the different versions of Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde's (1998) *Best Practice*. Owens (2022) learns that growth is experienced by all, including the authors of the book, and that's why the different versions of the book vary so much. This book provides seven structures for more meaningful engagements in classrooms, and it challenges Owens's belief in focusing on one single best practice as a curriculum leader by encouraging teachers to freely choose among multiple approaches to effective instruction. It is essential for teachers to transform into "researchers of practice" by studying and implementing more instructional strategies in education (Owens, 2022, p. 104).

More importantly, as a class social worker, Rebecca Wilson studies Kohn's (1996) Beyond Discipline and questions the control and manipulation of educators in classrooms in order to overemphasize compliance, following instructions, and obtaining the correct answer. Wilson (2022) proposes building caring relationships with students through healthy and deep conversations so that educators and students can effectively co-construct meaning and knowledge in classrooms together. Furthermore, Thomie Timmons studies West's (1994) Race Matters and indicates "the urgent need for the White educator to actively participate with other like minded educators" (Timmons, 2022, p. 380) to confront truths, challenge and change racialized curriculum through honest open dialogue, and examine personal prejudices and institutional racial biases. Timmons states that curriculum as a racial text can perpetuate ideologies that put marginalized students at a systemic disadvantage, and White educators need to intentionally overcome such ideologies by identifying internal prejudices and addressing racial issues so that curriculum can empower "the greatness in all students while honestly reflecting the challenges and faults which would rather be ignored" (Timmons, 2022, p. 379).

Michelle Banks suggests a window of potential to keep education and knowledge alive after reading Whitehead's (1929) *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*. Educators can connect daily practice with hope and balance between freedom and discipline "through inquiry and discovery, guided by the parameters set by the standards and curriculum objectives" (M. Banks, 2022, p. 231). Banks asks teachers to educate "whole children," teach for "greater understanding and real application to students' worlds," create opportunities to support ongoing love and interest in learning, and keep students engaged and passionate about the "discovery of truth and knowledge" through the community of education (M. Banks, 2022, pp. 232–237).

While these 10 chapters focus on teaching practices in classrooms and advocate for a more critical learning environment for students, they do not introduce the importance of intersectional

pedagogy in teaching, which is needed to understand complicated and intersecting identities (Berry, 2014) of current students and educators before analyzing how to effectively teach and learn at schools. Moreover, intersectionality, as a curriculum theoretical paradigm, can inform best practices, community organizing, and advocacy strategies that "transcend traditional single-axis horizons" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 785).

# Early Childhood, K-12, & Higher Education

Kelly Wilham analyzes Paley's (1992) You Can't Say You Can't Play and argues that storytelling and story acting curriculum is critical for early childhood education in order to create an inclusive learning environment for the limitless growth of young children. This curriculum allows children to "construct meaning in their worlds, meaning that carries through into their adult lives" (Wilham, 2022, p. 184), and includes all the students in the cooperative learning process through play. Wilham also expresses concern that if the focus of Kindergarten education switches to preparing students academically and socially for first grade, it will close off opportunities for children to be developmentally ready. Another chapter considers the student motivation essential for K-12 education. Jeremy Froehlich critiques Gagné and Driscoll's (1988) Essentials of Learning for Instruction by sharing educational experiences from childhood. Froehlich's mother combated poverty through education, sparking his motivation. Therefore, Froehlich (2022) argues that student motivation comes not only from curiosity, achievement, or self-efficacy, but also external motivators outside of academics.

Another perspective on K-12 schools is from Jennifer Penczarski, a superintendent, who reflects on educational leadership, supervision, and teacher evaluation based on Sergiovanni's (1982) *Supervision of Teaching*. Penczarski teaches us that principals are leaders of leaders (teachers) who need to eliminate dissonance and create harmony between standards and requirements and the core beliefs of the community so that teachers can have a safe space to share their perspectives instead of using the "hierarchical chain of command" (Penczarski, 2022, p. 337). To balance the power of the K-12 leadership team, teacher unions offer another way for teachers to advocate for their needs. Kasey Perkins recommends that teacher unions not only stand up for teachers' rights, but also recognize and advocate for "the rights of the students they represent every day" (Perkins, 2022, p. 348). Perkins recognized teacher unions' significance in creating a socially just education system and combating the privatization of public education after reading Weiner's (2012) *The Future of Our Schools*. Perkins (2022) argues that a socially just union can collaborate with teachers, parents, administration, and other stakeholders to promote positive changes in education and lead to a democratic learning environment for all.

Then, Jason Fine uses a student's story to demonstrate the importance of cultures in Bennett's (1986) *Comprehensive Multicultural Education*. Fine (2022) mentions that it's essential to challenge cultural racism, be mindful and respect cultural differences, and connect with different ethnic groups and local resources when developing intercultural competence for educators. Later in the book, Kimberly Halley reads Darling-Hammond's (2010) *The Flat World and Education* and analyzes the intertwined relationships between poverty and education. To achieve equity in education, Halley (2022) emphasizes the importance of equitable funding and a balance between support and accountability for marginalized groups, including "poor and under-resourced children" (p. 274) in K-12 schools.

Mindy Jennings also talks about equitable funding by analyzing charter schools in K-12 using Fabricant and Fine's (2012) *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*. Jennings first introduces how charter schools intend to provide a better education for marginalized groups, then discusses how corporations begin to control charter schools in order to make more money "at the educational expense of children" (Jennings, 2022, p. 290). Charter schools lack funding oversight, which leaves room for corruption and switches the intention from serving students to serving their own personal interests. Hence, Jennings (2022) argues that we need to invest more in our public school system to make major improvements for all children instead of putting public funds into charter schools.

As for higher education, Craig Myers examines the balance between teaching and research and applies those reflections to K-12 teaching based on Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Myers (2022) asks educators to embrace three R's: rigor, which is to challenge students for further growth; relevance, which is to engage with the needs of society; and relationships, which is fostering connections to better meet the socio-emotional needs of students and provide more supports for academic success. Jaime Ranly also discusses the lack of real-world teaching scenarios in undergraduate education and the fact that "teachers are often unprepared for the realities of teaching" (Ranly, 2022, p. 109). After studying Goodlad's (1994) *Educational Renewal*, Ranly (2022), as a teacher mentor, urges us to transform the way we prepare and support new teachers by creating partnerships between school districts and universities through communication and collaboration.

Although these nine chapters offer specific analyses for different age groups, including early childhood, K-12, and higher education, they only center their arguments in the U.S. educational context. The lack of consideration for curriculum internationalization means the impact of global education, such as the "pressure for accountability in internationally competitive test results" (Carson, 2009, p. 146), is often overlooked. This can lead "educators to succumb to the institutionally internalized conceptions of curriculum as standards, leaving behind reconceptualist notions of the autobiographical nature of curriculum" (Berry, 2014, p. 4).

# Conclusion

At last, Tiffany Williams ends the book with hooks' (2000) All About Love and shares her stories to demonstrate how critical race feminist currere intersects with race, gender, and the curriculum. When understanding the socially constructed self through currere, it can "be used as a model for women of color to make meaning of their schooling and non-schooling experiences" and it offers a scholarly path to critical healing and critical self-love in order "to be free, to live fully and well" (Williams, 2022, pp. 402–404). In fact, every author in this book uses currere because their scholarship in curriculum studies involves reflecting on their own educational experiences. Each chapter provides a contemporary and valuable analysis on important curriculum texts in education. The readers of this book can gain a holistic understanding of the curriculum studies field and learn more about different perspectives on education.

This book is about power sharing and knowledge producing in that it empowers the 33 graduate student scholars. Graduate students are our hope and the center of future educational change. Each advanced doctoral class is a community of scholars. They have experiences, and their voices matter. Poetter and Googins (2017) stated the following:

Our lives become curricula, guided, influenced and honed by our sense of our relationship to a number of things in the world, including our relationship to practices, influences, and ideas, and especially to the world of the social where we are in relation to peers and other citizens engaged in projects for social reconstruction, especially toward equity and social justice, and especially in public education. (p. 9)

Every author of this book provides a rich text that centers the scholar, connecting curriculum issues in education with their social experiences (Poetter & Googins, 2017). The interactions of our past, present, and future are all curriculum, so we study them and engage with them. By standing on the shoulders of curriculum theorists, emerging scholars can add new knowledge to the current curriculum and instruction field. This book does not offer all of the critical curriculum theories and practices; for instance, culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) and intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013) are not addressed. Furthermore, most of the contents are based on the U.S. educational context. However, if you are looking for books to learn or learn more about curriculum studies in education and don't know where to start, I would recommend this book. It has a variety of relevant topics and multiple lenses of analysis for all the featured texts. When you read this volume, you can get an overview of each of the 32 curriculum books, contextualize them in the current educational environment, and decide which ones you are interested in exploring further based on your needs.

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