

Globalization And Education: Integration And Contestation Across Cultures

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Chapter Six

Globalization and Curriculum Inquiry: Performing Transnational Imaginaries

Noel Gough

The act of curriculum inquiry, for me, usually begins from a position informed by narrative theory and poststructuralism, one corollary of which is that I rarely feel any obligation to start an essay by providing stipulative definitions. In this essay, globalization is not a subject and/or object to be constrained by definition, but a focus for speculation—for generating rather than prescribing meanings. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari's (1977, p. 109) orientation to the subject of desire, the question posed by globalization is not "What does it mean?" but rather "How does it work?" I am interested in what curriculum workers (teachers, administrators, academics, researchers) *do*, and *produce*, with the concept of globalization, and in working toward a defensible position on the concepts we create through our curriculum practices.

In the first version of this chapter (Gough, 2000), I quoted Henry and Taylor's (1997, p. 47) identification of two aspects of globalization—"the facts concerning transnational processes and communication" and "an increasing awareness of this reality"—and, as previously, I continue to focus here on the latter. There is, of course, no unitary "reality" of globalization, and I suggested that whatever "awareness" of globalization might then have been "increasing" was a somewhat inchoate apprehension of complex, multiple, proliferating, and immanent realities, overlaid (and further complexified) by our own reflexive "awareness" of the need to be—and to be *seen* to be—aware that globalization was, indeed, worthy of our attention. At that time I was drawn towards attending to those traces of globalization that Wilson and Dissanayake (1996) describe as a "transnational imaginary," namely, "the *as-yet-unfigured* horizon of contemporary cultural production by which national spaces/identities of political allegiance and economic regulation are being undone and imagined communities of modernity are being reshaped at the macropolitical (global) and micropolitical (cultural) levels of everyday existence" (p. 6, emphasis in original).

For those of us who identified ourselves as "reconceptualist" curriculum scholars in the wake of Schwab's (1969) immensely influential paper on curriculum as a discipline of "the practical",¹ a key imaginary informing curriculum inquiry during the 1990s was Pinar et al.'s (1995, p. 848) foreshadowing of the "*as-yet-unfigured* horizon" of curriculum inquiry in terms of generating and sustaining "complicated conversations":

Curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation. Curriculum as institutionalized text is a formalized and abstract version of conversation, a term we usually use to refer to those open-ended, highly personal, and interest-driven events in which persons encounter each other. That curriculum has become so formalized and distant from the everyday sense of conversation is a profound indication of its institutionalization and bureaucratization. Instead of employing others' conversations to

¹ Reconceptualist curriculum scholars shifted the emphasis of curriculum studies from theorizing curriculum development towards generating theoretical frames for *understanding* curriculum (see Pinar, 1975).

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