

Curriculum as Cultural Practice: Postcolonial Imagination

YATTA KANU

University of Manitoba

The opportunity to take familiar curriculum concepts/ideas and re-imagine and re-articulate them in ways that facilitate the development of new habits of mind is exciting for me for a number of reasons. First, it brings to the forefront what I have been “preaching” in my academic work for some time now, namely, that alternative sites for curriculum theorizing could be generated from already established curricular metaphors/concepts and their reflections in practice. Second, the move itself is a recognition that multiple modes of theoretical representation emerge from genuinely valuing alternative insights and perspectives grounded in a dynamic variety of human experiences, thereby adding richness and complexity to curriculum and curriculum discourse. Third, it is an opportunity for me to closely examine a popular and taken-for-granted curriculum metaphor—“curriculum as cultural practice”—and demonstrate how, historically, it has been mediated through a colonial imagination “contrived to the disbenefit of the other” (London, 2001, p. 45). The intent here is to re-imagine and re-theorize this metaphor and its function in a postcolonial context. This third reason subsumes the first two and will be explored more fully as a focus of this paper. I will begin by articulating the senses in which the terms “postcolonial” and “imagination” are used here.

The “postcolonial” yokes a diverse range of experiences, cultures and problems, resulting in a looseness in meaning that has confounded many and triggered considerable debate over the precise parameters of the field.

Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies
Volume 1 Number 1 Spring 2003

Locations from which the “postcolonial” has been interpreted and explored in the recent past have included not only the period after independence which marked the departure of the imperial powers from their former colonies but that before independence—where the focus is on the formation of the colony through various mechanisms of control and the various stages in the development of anti-colonial nationalism—and even the period prior to colonization in which the cultural productions and social formations of the colony before colonization are used to better understand the experience of colonization. Furthermore, “postcolonial” sometimes includes independent colonies that now contend with neocolonial forms of subjugation through expanding forms of capitalism and globalization, and minority populations in First and Third World countries experiencing repression and exploitation. What these locations have in common is that they signify a position against imperialism, and while this paper admits of all these locations, it is the “postcolonial” as a stance against Eurocentrism, as evidenced by the dominance of Western knowledge / cultural production and dissemination, that is important here. From this stance, “postcolonial” becomes the site where a variety of assumptions accepted on individual, academic and political levels are called into question in the struggle for more democratic social relations.

While this engagement of the postcolonial provides a framework for critique, “imagination,” a construct often used in recent discourses on globalization and education, is used here to help explain how people come to know, understand and experience themselves as members of a community and citizens of a nation-state (Popkewitz, 2000). Imagination, according to Popkewitz, functions to “form individuals into the seam of a collective narrative” (p. 168) and help them generate conceptions of personhood and identity. In this paper, the term is used in ways similar to Rizvi (2000) who writes:

Imagination is the attempt to provide coherence between ideas and action, to provide a basis for the content of relationships and the creation of categories with which to understand the world around us. What is imagined defines what we regard as normal. (pp. 222–223)

In Rizvi’s formulation, imagination is not an attribute possessed by a few endowed individuals but instead “denotes a collective sense of a group of people, a community that begins to imagine and feel things together” (p. 223). Thus defined, imagination serves two purposes in this paper. First, it provides a framework for understanding how curriculum has been mediated and to what effect, and second, it signifies possibilities for alternative means of curriculum construction for a more democratic future. The construct is therefore used here, on the one hand, as an analytical framework for historically examining “curriculum as cultural practice” where the cur-

riculum has been employed to neutralize difference, assimilate, and establish for the “other” a worldview and a concept of self and community (London, 2001), and on the other, for proposing reform where curriculum could be reconstructed to become more responsive to the demands of education in today’s contexts where diversities have outstripped the meaningfulness of any homogenizing models.

The Need for Cultural Inquiry in Understanding Curriculum Reform

My choice of the familiar concept “curriculum as cultural practice” as a focus for the CACS Presidential symposium was deliberate. First, it was intended to place culture at the center of curriculum analysis and reform, and second, to stress practice as an important context for these endeavours. Curriculum has been and will always remain a cultural practice, making cultural inquiry very important in contemporary understandings of educational reform, especially as reform relates to social inclusion and exclusion, and to the relation of knowledge and power. This assertion is amply supported by the literature on cultural politics and principles of reform. For example, Dirlik (1987), arguing against the notion that culture ought to be subsumed or replaced by other seemingly more radical approaches to understanding education and social lives, posits that we need culture as one, if not the, primary source for radical inquiry, for culture shapes our ways of seeing, and it is these we must question first if we are to make changes in action at either the micro or macrolevels. Diane Hoffman, among others, sufficiently recognizes the important relationship between cultural knowledge and power to argue, in a brilliant article on reconceptualizing education in the new millennium, for “a recentered discourse on culture in comparative education that recognizes the value of cultural inquiry, in particular, of cultural inquiry as a source of destabilization of taken-for-granted categories, representations and truths” (1999, p. 464). For Hoffman, one of the traditional and principal uses of culture in comparative education has been as a source of positive destabilization of the categories brought to analysis. She therefore argues that:

A form of inquiry (i.e., cultural inquiry) that encourages us to look with a critical eye at the categories that we are using is of utmost importance in the comparative analysis of education, for it is only when we do so that we can generate alternatives to what already exists. (p. 481)

Hoffman’s position on the relevance of cultural inquiry to educational reform finds support in Maseman’s (1990) suggestion that cultural inquiry emphasizes the uncovering of the particularities of lived experiences across

different groups, particularly in schools and classrooms, and hence acts as an antidote to theoretical abstractions and generalities that do not account for cross-cultural variation.

Recent developments in anthropology, especially in the domains of “practice theory” and “situated learning,” provide useful insights on the importance of practice in cultural inquiry. Given the social situatedness of learning and its implications, and the cultural assumptions that underlie practices, proponents of practice theory and situated learning posit practice as the most appropriate unit of analysis in understanding education, curriculum, and pedagogy. Thus, it is the position of this paper that an analysis of curriculum as cultural practice, past and present, along with the imagination through which it has been mediated, will provide an appropriate beginning place for curriculum reform. In the next section, therefore, I provide some historical insights into how curriculum as cultural practice, filtered through a colonial imagination, has constituted a basis for social relationships deemed to be required in defining the world for the “other,” specifically the “colonized other.”

Curriculum as Cultural Practice: Colonial Imagination

Like the postcolonial, colonialism has been defined in several ways (e.g., Nandy, 1983; Spivak, 1990; Willinsky, 1998), with each definition linking colonialism with notions of power, superiority and greed on the part of the West. Here, it is colonialism as a “civilizing mission” and as an ideological formation intended to establish for the “other” a view of the world and a concept of self and community, especially through the production, representation and dissemination of knowledge, that is the focus of my analysis. In that sense, the “colonized other” refers to not only the former colonies that formed the periphery at the receiving end of dispensations from metropolitan centers in Western Europe during the colonial period, but also minority populations experiencing repression and discrimination in dominant culture societies.

Historically, curriculum imagination has been mediated by the nation-state which, faced with the impossibility of incorporating its “surplus” (i.e. those who cannot fit) into the symbolic realm of national identity, appeals to “a fantasy structure or scenario through which it perceives itself as a homogeneous entity” (Salecl, 1994, p. 15) with a common history, language and culture. Cultural theorists Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall have called attention to the ambivalence of the nation in the production of national identity. For example, in the introduction to his book, *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha (1990) refers to “the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force (in spite of) the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to pro-

duce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress" (p. 2). Stuart Hall (1992) also locates the attempt to create a "sense of nation" in discourses that constitute what he calls "the myth of cultural homogeneity" within the nation-state, asserting that:

Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a discursive device which represents difference as unity or identity. They (national cultures) are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and are unified only through the exercise of cultural power. (p. 297)

A recognizable theme in the discourse of the nation as continuous narrative of national harmony and progress and the production of "unifying" national cultures is the role of the school as an "ideological state apparatus" (Aronowitz, 1992; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), that is, the school as the state's vehicle for ideological assimilation and homogenization. Schools, according to this theory, function not only to normalize those whose attitudes, norms, values and behaviours are different from what is constructed as the norm and as normal, but also to inscribe particular rationalities in the sensitivities, dispositions, and awarenesses of individuals to make them fit into a single set of imaginaries about national citizenship (Popkewitz, 2000). The contention is that school is a constitutive part of these relationships and its purpose is to create a form of consciousness that enables the inculcation of the knowledge of dominant groups as "official knowledge" for all students, and the maintenance of social control without the dominant groups necessarily resorting to overt mechanisms of domination—what Althusser (1971) calls the "repressive state apparatus." According to Apple (1993), the "politics of official knowledge" works not through coercion but through accords and compromises that favour the dominant groups. Apple elaborates:

These compromises occur at different levels: at the level of political and ideological discourse, at the level of state policies, at the level of knowledge that is taught in schools, at the level of the teachers and students in classrooms, and at the level of how we understand all of this. (p. 10)

Power and control, then, are exercised through a formal corpus of knowledge which the school distributes through curriculum, rules and regulations. Thus, schools are said to not only control people and meaning but also confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups (Giroux, 1983).

For an illustration of how curriculum as cultural practice worked to the benefit of the colonialists and the disenfranchisement of the colonized during colonial administration, I turn to Norrel London's (2001) recent analysis of how the state (in this case, Britain), as a privileged entity, contrived and mediated colonial imagination during the process of Empire building, using curriculum and pedagogy to control the mind of the colonized. London's

insights, more than any other recent scholarship, have added much to our understanding of how education and schooling can be “deliberately twisted to minister to subversive ends” (London, 2001, p. 45). The context of London’s analysis is British colonialism in Trinidad and Tobago during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, and he discusses how ideology became the primary agent for the internalization and acceptance of British and western culture, and how education and schooling were used as the medium for developing in the “colonized other” the required sense of psychological subordination. London describes the curriculum canvas during the period as drawing from the universe of educational ideologies available in the metropolitan arena (Britain), enhanced by thinking which had prevailed both in the United States and in parts of Europe—ideologies such as mental discipline, humanism, child study, and social efficiency. He writes:

In each of these traditions the choice of content and of delivery practices was subjugated to the colonial ideal. Congruence with established objectives for domination and acceptance of a defined worldview was a major requirement. (p. 55)

For example, because of its mindless characteristics such as drill and rote memorization, London points out that mental discipline became an appropriate vehicle for the colonial purpose, the essence of the doctrine being in conformity with colonial desire to throttle creativity and critical thinking in the education of the “other.” Instructive is London’s observation of how humanism, the tradition that most emphasized the promotion and maintenance of what was considered the best of Western cultural heritage and values, was put to work as the arsenal of the colonizer in Trinidad and Tobago. Because it exemplifies British colonial education almost everywhere during Empire building, the observation is worth quoting at length here:

The heroes exalted in the history books, the norms and mores presented for inculcation (the cadence of public holidays established, for example), and the standards of excellence and gallantry paraded for emulation (as depicted in the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops, for example) were contrivances for the colonial purpose. Emphasis on these, to the exclusion of all others, was an attempt to obliterate the existentialist past of the colonized and to present an alternative and preferred view of reality. A 1948 evaluation report on the work in one school encouraged teachers, for example, to teach “the songs that the world would sing”, understandably at the expense of developing local talent. The official pronouncement meant that students did not have a voice, nor were they encouraged to develop one—in singing or speaking. They were the “voiceless” objects in a socio-political sense, a position which gestures in the direction of Gayatri Spivak’s (1988) concern: “Can the subaltern speak?” (p. 68)

Elsewhere (Kanu, 1993), I have documented foreign-ness of curriculum and voicelessness in pedagogy in my analysis of colonial education in an-

other former British colony, Sierra Leone. In that piece, I wrote:

The subject-matter taught was foreign and had no relevance or bearing on students' lived experiences and it was taught in ways that stifled critical thinking and creativity. The main interest of the colonizer was to ensure that the "uncivilized natives" digested the new cultural reality that their official knowledge was imparting....Students received knowledge but were perceived as incapable of producing or changing knowledge. Teaching was a monological process that lacked any theory about students' capacity to interpret reality and bestow it with multiple meanings. (p. 2)

It appears therefore that, though recent discourses on education and administration in the former British Empire point to local variations from territory to territory (Willinsky, 1998), in general the overall intent of colonial education, as Bacchus (1994) has pointed out, was to instill in the colonized "a worldview that would develop in them a voluntary subservience to the white ruling groups and a willingness to continue occupying their positions on the lowest rung of the occupational and social ladder" (p. 308).

The same observation can be made about the state's use of education/curriculum in the process of national identity formation in other European states in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. For instance, Osborne (1995) has pointed out that the aim of formal education in Europe during this period was to create an institutionalized cultural identity by shaping curriculum, writing history, formalizing languages, establishing literatures, inventing traditions, assimilating minorities, instilling nationalism—in short, creating citizens. In the words of a nineteenth century Italian nationalist, "We have made Italy; now we must make Italians" (quoted in Osborne, 1995, p. 17).

In a recent article (Kanu, 2002b), I argued that what was true of European states in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was essentially true of the United States and Canada in their formative period. For example, American cultural historian Randolph Collins (1979), placing the legacy of homogenization and conformity in education in a historical context, has pointed out that the impetus for compulsory schooling in the United States was rooted in the need to control the socialization of the children of European immigrants and to perpetuate the values of the middle class and the knowledge base of the traditional Anglo-Protestant culture. Similarly, Canadian social historians (e.g., Axelrod, 1997, Osborne, 1995; Strange & Loo, 1997) have argued that the enthusiasm for compulsory public schooling in Canada was fueled by the desire to perpetuate Anglo-Celtic, Protestant, and French Catholic ideals. Though at the time Canada was struggling with its own identity, wavering between asserting a unique Canadian identity and remaining tied to the majesty and power of Britain and the British Empire, Canadian elites showed no uncertainty of purpose when it came to

the critical role they assigned to state institutions in shaping the identity of its citizens. For instance, Richardson (2002) points out that Vincent Massey, the first Canadian-born Governor General, explicitly laid out the responsibility of schools in the realization of an ideal-type Canadian when he said:

In a country with so scattered a population as ours and a vast frontier exposed to alien influences, the tasks of creating a truly national feeling must inevitably be arduous but this is the undertaking to which our educational systems must address themselves, for by true education alone will the problem be solved. To our schools we must look for the good Canadian. (1926, p.11)

Thus the state proceeded to build the Canadian nation by regulating the education (and the moral behaviours) of those not considered ideal types. After Confederation, for example, through the introduction of the Indian Act (1879) and the establishment of the Department of Indian Affairs (1880), the state became unabashedly involved in transforming the character of all aboriginals, "protecting" them on reserves, and civilizing and assimilating the "savages" into Anglo-Saxon norms (Strange & Loo, 1997). Believing that the best chances for lasting results would be achieved with First Nations children, the federal government decided, in 1879, to take a more direct role in their education by setting up their own residential schools where children could be assimilated from the allegedly corrupting environments of their homes and families. The curriculum offered in these schools was intended to break First Nations students of their "nomadic habits" and prepare them for employment befitting their status, and make them "good Christians." Thus, the curriculum consisted of religion and trades (apprenticeships) in carpentry, tin-smithing, boot-making, and tailoring for boys, and sewing, laundering, cleaning, and cooking for girls to prepare them for employment as domestics. When Indian chiefs attempted to resist an education that offered children only a slim possibility of economic advancement, yet was based on alien languages, faith and culture, and completely out of step with Indian traditional forms of learning, the federal government reacted by appointing truancy officers in 1930, who were empowered to impose penalties to compel all Indian children between the ages of seven and sixteen to attend school (Strange & Loo, 1997).

Compulsory schooling of children was also an indirect route to regulating non-Native parents and families, with non-English immigrants especially being made the objects of assimilation. According to Strange and Loo (1997), the Doukhobors, a radical Christian sect which rejected all forms of state intervention in civil life, were the group that suffered the most coercive attempt to impose state education during the inter-war period. Maclaren (1995) informs us that Doukhobors, like professional educators, believed children should be taught how best to regulate themselves: "To us, education means being a good Doukhobor. That is, to love all living things and do no evil, not

to shoot, not to eat meat, not to smoke, not to drink liquor” (p. 6). The only problem was that Doukhobors (like the Indian chiefs who did not want schools, Christianity or the law on their reserves) thought that traditional communities, not the state, knew best how to carry out this mission. However, according to Strange and Loo (1997), Doukhorbor parents were frequently fined, even jailed, and goods belonging to entire Doukhorbor communities were seized by the police for violation of school attendance laws.

In the Canadian West where a massive influx of non-British/French immigrants arrived between 1901 and 1921 to settle the “Last Best West,” the choice between cultural accommodation and cultural change was decided in favour of aggressive assimilationist policies. For instance, Axelrod (1997) states that in response to the question of how the diverse cultures of the new-comers were to be accommodated, Northwest Territory School Superintendent, Arthur Groggin, sought to address what he saw as “the pressing educational problem posed by a foreign and relatively ignorant population” this way:

To gather the children of different races, creeds, and customs into the common school and ‘Canadianize’ them.... Though they may enter as Galicians, Doukhobors, or Icelanders, they will come out as Canadians.... A common school and a common language will produce that homogeneous citizenship so necessary in the development of that greater Canada lying west of the Lakes. (quoted in Axelrod, 1997, p. 85)

Thus, mass schooling and the curriculum were the vehicles through which the accomplishment of the cultural and psychological colonization of the “other” was imagined. Despite successive post 1945 immigrations, first from war-torn Europe and, since 1960, from non-traditional sites of immigration such as South Asia, the Caribbean, and, more recently, Africa, and the subsequent introduction of multiculturalism since the early 1970s, this “common imagining” of the Canadian nation is still alive in the curriculum of schools across Canada, as documented in recent analyses of homogenizing nationalist discourses in the K-12 Social Studies curriculum in the provinces of British Columbia (McDonald, 2002) and Alberta (Richardson, 2002). It is also evident in continued calls for a coherent national history for all immigrant children to learn in school (Bliss, 2001; Granatstein, 1998), and in the recent (2000) warning by the Dominion Institute (a history organization that periodically sponsors questionnaires that test the historical literacy of Canadians aged 18-24 years) that the lack of knowledge of Canada’s history means that Canada’s youth lack the “cultural currency” that is critical to the development of a national identity. To remedy this “crisis”, the Institute recommends a mandatory history course in each province that includes a minimal list of people and events critical to Canadian history (Richardson, 2002).

As the foregoing historical analysis of “curriculum as cultural practice” shows, curricular encounter with the “other” has been unequal, unethical, and anchored in racism and violence. McCarthy and Dimitriades (2000) have categorized these practices as “resentment” which they describe as “the specific practice of identity displacement in which the social actor consolidates his identity by a complete disavowal of the merits and existence of his social other” (p. 193). Thus, a sense of self is only possible through an annihilation or “emptying out” of the other, whether discursively or materially. These practices have not always met with anticipated success as values deemed good by the colonizer/nation state have been constantly repudiated by those on whom they have been imposed. In the former European colonies, for example, repudiation took the form of nationalist movements that eventually led to independence for these countries. Independence, however, has been followed by the march of neocolonialism in the guise of modernization and development in an age of globalization and transnationalism. This reinvention of imperialism implies that schools and school curriculum cannot separate themselves from the task of neocolonization.

In Canada and the United States, the new waves of non-traditional immigrants and the refusal of these immigrants to become “carbon copies” of the dominant groups within their countries have meant that the tropes by which the elites construct and maintain a single set of national identity are no longer sustainable. Given these developments, how can democratic, ethical curricular relationships be formed? In the rest of this paper I once again engage the metaphor “curriculum as cultural practice”—the intent, this time, is to re-imagine its function in a postcolonial context, and theorize curricular intentions and practices that are inclusive and, therefore, ethical and democratic. In doing so, I appeal particularly to “hybridity,” a construct used by postcolonial theorists Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall to describe the ambiguity that characterizes the postcolonial.

Curriculum as Cultural Practice: Postcolonial Imagination

The recent addition of curriculum internationalization to the educational discourses of reform and research should be thought of not only as exhortations of change but also constructions of imaginaries that potentially embody “a deep reshaping of the images of social action and consciousness through which individuals are to participate” (Popkewitz, 2000, p. 172). Underlying the new discourse of internationalization is curriculum imagination that, as was quoted earlier, “denotes a collective sense of a group of people, a community that begins to imagine and feel things together” (Rizvi, 2000, p. 223). This imagining of ourselves as a community participating, interpreting ourselves, and creating knowledge together is critical to cur-

riculum reform in a postcolonial context. “Hybridity” becomes crucial in the formulation of the agenda of reform, for its politics embody fluid, pragmatic and multiple power relations, unlike the relations of domination documented in the foregoing section of this paper.

Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha has argued that one of the consequences of imperialism has meant that, in an intellectual sense, the colonizer and the colonized have been brought together in identity formation that is continually in a process of hybridity. Bhabha (in an interview published in Rutherford, 1990) describes hybridity as the “third space” where the meaning of cultural and political authority is negotiated without eliding or normalizing the differential structures in conflict. Elsewhere, I have referred to Bhabha’s “third space” as the place for the construction of identities that are neither one nor the other (Kanu, 2002b). I have argued that because of centuries of Western European impact on Africa (from missionary and trade activities to outright colonization), for example, it is no longer possible to postulate a unitary Africa over/against a monolithic West—a binarism between a distinct self (as African) and “other” (as European). That is, there is no longer a single set of discourse about progress and change; rather, there is a hybrid—a third space—where local and global images meet in a weaving that has its own configurations and implications. This overlay is best highlighted in Spivak’s (1990) response to critics who fault her on not seeking possibilities of discovering/promoting “indigenous theory.” She writes:

I cannot understand what indigenous theory there might be that can ignore the reality of nineteenth century history.... To construct indigenous theories, one must ignore the last few centuries of historical involvement. I would rather use what history has written for me. (p. 69)

Indeed, education itself in the former colonies occurs within an overlay of discourses that move in the interstices of the colonial and the colonized. The rapid movements and collision of peoples and media images across the world have further disrupted the traditional isomorphism between self, place, and culture. The Eurocentric (e.g., Bennett, 1994) and Afrocentric (e.g., Asante, 1993) debates that have emerged in discourses about curriculum reform are themselves driven by nostalgia for a past in which Europe and Africa are imagined without what McCarthy and Dimitriades (2000) call “the noise of their modern tensions, contradictions and conflicts” (p. 195). These debates refuse the radical hybridity that is the reality of today’s major metropolitan societies everywhere.

Curriculum reform as postcolonial imagination, grounded in the reality of hybridization, would allow the influences of history and global migration to inform new responses to teaching, and invite curriculum workers to

re-think the production, representation, and circulation of knowledge so that these do not remain the monopoly and privilege of one group. This way, the subjugated memories and histories of those hitherto marginalized can become part of the curriculum conversation. Thus imagined, curriculum reform does not involve opposing Western culture against the cultures of the non-west, but is instead founded on the principle of the heterogeneous basis of all knowledge and the need to find abiding links that connect groups across ethnic affiliations, geographical origins, and locations. Cameron McCarthy (1998) would refer to the knowledge that results from such interaction as “an alloy of racial, cultural and ethnic metals.” Bacchus (2002) has pointed out that this emerging approach to knowledge production is already being recognized in the field of medicine where greater efforts are being made to explore the value of multiple sources of knowledge. For example, Bacchus argues, traditional health practices such as acupuncture and chiropractic remedies (now known as alternative medicine) are increasingly being utilized in Western societies while pharmacologists, in the development of new drugs, are seeking traditional cures that have been used in different societies. It is my fervent hope that more of this “alloyed” approach to knowledge production and dissemination would be engaged in curriculum work.

The space from which I theorize curriculum construction based on hybridity can be explained by my history as a postcolonial subject who was born and raised in Sierra Leone, a former colony of Great Britain, but who has studied and lived extensively in the West. Growing up in Sierra Leone in the 1960s and 1970s, I existed in a constant state of negotiation between the cultural form of England and that of my emerging postcolonial country. This first-hand experience of cultural ambiguity was what triggered and maintains my interest in postcolonial theory compatible with postmodern formulations of hybridity, intertextuality, third space, in-between-ness and native re-articulation. Using “what history has written for me,” I draw on these formulations to theorize postcolonial curriculum and education based on a new kind of intercultural hermeneutic whereby the diverse traditions, ways of knowing, and knowledge production of different peoples are brought to a new conversational interface, for, as McCarthy (1998) has argued, any single narrative or identity at the core of the curriculum—whether African, Asian, or European—is in fact a dangerous confinement.

My effort in this hybrid or alloyed approach to curriculum reform has, therefore, focused on finding out what knowledge, understanding and cultural capital others have that can be brought to the curriculum conversation. My most recent work in this search has focused on culture and Aboriginal students’ learning in Canada’s formal school system. More precisely, my work focuses on the investigation of specific aspects of First Na-

tions (Ojibway, Cree, and Métis) culture that could be integrated (infused) into the planning and teaching of the school curriculum to enhance and enrich learning for not only First Nations students but for non-Native students as well (Kanun, 2002a).

Coming to this work with the experience of colonization, I have been encouraged by Kierkegaard's argument (in Caputo, 1987) that no matter how much is subtracted from the individual there is always a "remainder" that could embrace the task of constituting the self as a self. This constituting process involves what Kierkegaard refers to as "repetition" which, for him, is a forward rather than a backward movement. Through the process of repetition, the individual is able to press forward,

... not toward a sheer novelty which is wholly discontinuous with the past, but into the being which he himself is.... Repetition is that by which the existing individual circles back on the being which he has been all along, that by which he returns to himself. (quoted in Caputo, 1987, p. 12)

The experience of colonization has taken a lot away from the colonized, and different forms of neocolonialism continue to influence and affect decisions and practices in the former colonies. In multicultural societies with minority populations, the struggles over identity have produced new exclusions as monolithic notions of identity clash with convictions of identity that are heterogeneous. In the midst of such incessant dispersal of the self, there is need for people to define themselves in terms of new memories by which they come to know, understand, and experience themselves—memories dissociated from the old collective identities, and re-imagined with another collective narrative (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). As Wald (in Popkewitz, 2000) points out, "Older identities are estranged and one's 'home' (identity) is no longer located where one thought it was" (p. 170). If, indeed, we are serious about the construction of another narrative, then curriculum reform needs to be grounded in "imagined communities" where relations are no longer unidirectional or univocal, flowing from the colonialist to the colonized. The challenges we face in the 21st century transcend national boundaries and single sets of discourses. We could call them "supranational or transnational challenges," as Parker et al (1999) have suggested. Addressing these challenges requires hybrid/multinational curriculum thinking and acting consisting of overlays of multiple discourses, and plural assumptions and strategies.

References

- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
Apple, M. (1993). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. New York: Routledge.

- Apple, M. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York: Routledge.
- Aronowitz, S. (1992). *The politics of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Asante, M. (1993). *Malcolm X as cultural hero and other Afrocentric essays*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.
- Axelrod, P. (1997). *The promise of schooling: Education in Canada, 1800–1914*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Bacchus, M. K. (1994). *Education as and for legitimacy: Development in West Indian education between 1846 and 1895*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Bacchus, M. K. (2002, March). Curriculum, education and globalization, with special reference to the developing countries. Keynote address at the Conference on Problems and Prospects of Educational Development in Developing Countries, University of the West Indies, Barbados.
- Balibar, E., & Wallerstein, I. (1991). *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities* (Chris Turner, Trans.). New York: Verso.
- Bennett, W. (1994). *The book of virtues*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1990). Introduction: Narrating the nation. In *Nation and narration* (pp. 1–7). London: Routledge.
- Bliss, M. (2001, October). Teaching Canadian national history. Address at “Giving the Future a Past” Conference, Association for Canadian Studies, Winnipeg.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication.
- Caputo, J. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics: Deconstruction and the hermeneutic project*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Dirlik, A. (1987). Culturalism as hegemonic ideology and liberating practice. *Cultural Critique*, 6 (Spring), 13–50.
- Dominion Institute Releases. (2000, June 20).
- Giroux, H. (1983). Theories of reproduction and resistance in the new sociology of education: A critical analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 53, 257–293.
- Granatstein, J. L. (1998). *Who killed Canadian history?* Toronto, ON: HarperPerennial: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
- Hall, S. (1992). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 292–297). Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Hoffman, D. M. (1999). Culture and comparative education: Toward decentering and recentering the discourse. *Comparative Education Review*, 43(4), 464–488.
- Kanu, Y. (1993). *Exploring critical reflection for postcolonial teacher education: Sierra Leone*. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Kanu, Y. (2002a). In their own voices: First Nations students identify some cultural mediators of their learning in the formal school system. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 48(2), 98–121.
- Kanu, Y. (2002b). Understanding curriculum and pedagogy as attunement to difference: Teacher preparation for the 21st century. *Journal of Professional Studies*, 9(2), 50–60.
- London, N. A. (2001). Curriculum and pedagogy in the development of colonial imagination: A subversive agenda. *Canadian and International Education*, 30 (1), 41–76.
- Maclaren, J. (1995). Creating “slaves of Satan” or “new Canadians”? The law, education and the socialization of Doukhobor children, 1911–1935. In J. Maclaren (Ed.), *Essays in the history of Canadian law: British Columbia and the Yukon*. Toronto: Hamar Fisher and John Maclaren.

- Maseman, V. (1990). Ways of knowing. *Comparative Education Review*, 34(4), 465.
- Massey, V. (1926). "Introduction." In C.N. Cochrane & W. S. Wallace, *This Canada of ours*. National Council of Education (Canada).
- McCarthy, C. (1998). *The uses of culture: Education and the limits of ethnic affiliation*. New York &: Routledge.
- McCarthy, C., & Dimitriades, G. (2000). Globalizing pedagogies: Power, resentment, and the re-narration of difference. In N. C. Burbules and C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives* (pp. 187–204). New York: Routledge.
- McDonald, K. (2002). Post-national considerations for curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 18 (1), 95–110.
- Nandy, A. (1983). *The intimate enemy: Loss and recovery of self under colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Osborne K. (1995). *In defense of history: Teaching the past and the meaning of democratic citizenship*. Toronto, ON: Our School/Ourselves Education Foundation.
- Parker, W. C., Ninomiya, A., & Cogan, J. (1999). Educating world citizens: Toward multinational curriculum development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(2), 117–145.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (2000). Reform as the social administration of the child: Globalization of knowledge and power. In N. C. Burbules & C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives* (pp. 157–186). New York: Routledge.
- Richardson, G. H. (2002). *The death of the good Canadian: Teachers, national identities and the social studies curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Rizvi, F. (2000). International education and the production of global imagination. In N. C. Burbules & C. A. Torres (Eds.). *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives* (pp. 205–225). New York: Routledge.
- Rutherford, J. (Ed.) (1990). The third space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity, community, culture and difference*, (pp. 301–307). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Salecl, R. (1994). *The spoils of freedom: Psychoanalysis and feminism after the fall of socialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Spivak, G. (1990). The postcolonial critique. In S. Harasym (Ed.), *The postcolonial critique: Interviews, strategies, dialogues* (pp. 67–74). New York: Routledge.
- Strange C., & Loo, T. (1997). *Making good: Law and moral regulation in Canada, 1867–1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Willinsky, J. (1998). *Learning to divide the world: Education at Empire's end*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.