



Book Review
***Educational Experience as Lived:
Knowledge, History, Alterity:
The Selected Works of William F. Pinar***

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Abstract:

In the book *Educational Experience as Lived: Knowledge, History and Alterity*, William F. Pinar enacts his intellectual history of curriculum studies, intersecting knowledge, history, and alterity. He explores eighteen concepts of education that characterize his life works. The main argument of this volume is the centrality of subjective reconstruction through studying educational experience. What makes experience educational is one's study, informed by historical knowledge and one's engagement with others and the world. This book gives no practical strategies to solve educational problems, but instead provides us with insights to understand them, with which we might see what we experience clearly and differently. In this era of standardization, globalization, and cybertization of education, this book tells us how we have come to today, and questions *what thoughts or actions would I, and you, take*.

Keywords: Pinar; educational experience as lived; currere; identity; alterity

Book Review

William F. Pinar (2015). *Educational experience as lived: Knowledge, history, alterity: The selected works of William F. Pinar*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Educational experience as lived: Knowledge, history, alterity is a volume of the World Library of Educationalists Series by Routledge. In this volume, William Pinar enacts his intellectual history of curriculum studies intersecting knowledge, history, and alterity. Pinar compiled nineteen of his essays that he considers to be his most significant work. This volume is a celebration of William F. Pinar's lifetime of achievement that will continue to have to a profound influence on the field of curriculum studies as well as other educational fields.

The title is a striking representation of Pinar's work. It signifies not only the centrality of "educational experience as lived" to understanding curriculum, but also one's relationship with knowledge, history, and alterity and one's capacity to thread them through the educational project of subjective and social reconstruction--the argument of this volume. Pinar chose eighteen concepts—study, allegory, internalization, nationalism, technology, reform, misrepresentation, conversation, place, emergence, alterity, discipline, identity, resolve, decolonization, inwardness, individuality, and cosmopolitanism—each of which is a chapter. This volume is set up in an anthology format. While the individual chapters can be read respectively, the chapters do not necessarily need to be read in order, because together they become an art of collage, keeping alive the significance of the individual pieces. In this book review, I focus on several central concepts.

The introduction summarizes Pinar's intellectual and biological history. He first lists seven contributions he made, by his account, to the field of curriculum studies: "the concept of currere," "theorizing of the field's reconceptualization," "curriculum as gender text establishing queer theory in education," "reconfiguring anti-racist education," "reconceptualising curriculum development as an intellectual undertaking," "introducing the conception of place to the field," and an "internationalization of curriculum studies." The latter part of the introduction is a brief account of his life. It shows us not only how "intense, dramatic, and very full" (p. 7) his life was, and is, but also, more importantly, how and what he learned from it, i.e. how he practiced the argument that this book makes: understanding one's experience and reconstructing it informed by knowledge, history and alterity. In his Ph.D. dissertation research, "a humanities curriculum that cultivated self-formation," for instance, he incorporates his studies of different disciplines, such as history, philosophy, education, and psychology, and his teaching experience, especially at Paul D. Schreiber High School in Port Washington where he witnessed enthusiastic students "working from within." He also considers the legacy of his parents; how it has structured his intellectual life: from his father, that "understanding was the most important thing in life" (p. 7); from his mother; that "pleasure was paramount" (p. 7). "Understanding" is the primacy of his educational projects.

In the chapter on study, Pinar discusses three subsidiary concepts: teaching, learning and studying. He first reactivates "the lost world of study" (p. 13) through studying McClintock and Block. Pinar laments how American education has suffered "human engineering," "standards," "social

engineering," and has been preoccupied with "business and religion" (p. 12) where knowledge is substituted with information. Here, Pinar differentiates knowledge from information, stating that information "without ethical and intellectual judgment" (p. 12) is not knowledge. Thus, he concludes knowledge cannot "be programmed into a machine" (p. 12). From McClinton, Pinar recuperates the ancient notion of study that:

in contrast to learning, study is self-paced and its end unknown; it supports subjective and social reconstruction threaded through academic knowledge and everyday life, between "popular" and erudite knowledge. . . . Self-formation specifies no "standards" or "best practices," as the paths of study are numerous (p. 11).

The paths are indeed numerous. They encompass voluntary experimentation, imagination, creation, and opportunities for playfulness, which may deepen one's ethical engagement with one's life and those of others, as these intersect with our own unique biographical, historical, political, intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual journey. Education with sustained study, he argues, is "a never-ending heightening of consciousness, an unceasing cultivation of judgment" . . . "self-formation and self-possession" (p. 13).

Pinar critiques the inflated status of learning in educational research in that "it enables instructors to devise effective strategies of teaching" (p. 17), rather than enabling students to study. In terms of teaching, Pinar focuses not on teachers' victimhood, but their "culpability" (p. 18):

Perhaps persuaded by our own educational experience, egged on by politicians and parents and, perhaps, by our own megalomania, we teachers (and teacher educators) imagined we could . . . produce literate and docile workers, or self-reflective and politically engaged citizens, well, name your outcome. We have known for a long time that, in fact, if human conduct could be regulated and rendered predictable, then the costly and ongoing "scientific" research mounted in the social sciences would have by now succeeded. (p. 19)

As is evident in the quote above, Pinar rejects any form of instrumental rationality in our teaching, even progressive or liberative ones. To resist the inner and outer forces, Pinar argues that we first need to force "the teaching genie back into the bottle" (p. 20). In this chapter Pinar suggests that study, not learning and teaching, is the site of education.

In Chapter 2, on allegory, working through Benjamin's conception of living dialectic of past and future, Pinar encourages us to think that our future is not in front of us, but behind. Pinar invokes our commitment to reactivating the past to chart our future in the service of reconstructing our present. Historical facts may be self-evident, but Pinar argues that their meanings cannot be definitive but open to be articulated and understood. "Bringing the past into present," Pinar argues, "while rigorously refusing to conflate the two incurs that "creative tensionality" inherent in a historical sensibility" (p. 28). Pinar's allegory, an ancient concept that means to "speak publicly in an assembly" (p. 27), tells us that the present we see today and the ways that we understand it, or we are forced to do, needs to be put in a complicated conversation that keeps alterity alive. Pinar argues that allegory enables us "to understand, and engage in, subjectively situated, historically attuned curriculum development and design" (p. 27). Pinar insists that "allegory testifies to the fact that "now" is

temporal and multiply layered, that our extrication from this present moment is immanent within it, if, that is, our experience is educational" (p. 25).

In Chapter 3, Pinar's foci are internationalization and disciplinarity, which, he argues, proceed "hand-in-hand" (p. 42). Briefly introducing his internationalization project in Brazil and his intellectual engagement in Canada, Pinar urges us to strengthen, individually and collectively, disciplinarity of curriculum studies in a nation and worldwide. What structures his conception of disciplinarity are verticality and horizontality: the former is the intellectual history of the discipline; the latter is analyses of its current circumstances not only in the field but also outside the field—national history, cultural shifts, political events, even specific institutional settings—that complements our ongoing attention to the intellectual history of the field. Thinking of allegory, what is evident here is his continuous emphasis on history and subjective engagement with it.

To discuss Canadian nationalism (and identity), in Chapter 4, Pinar takes two publications published in 1974 and 2001 that, he believes, provide "glimpses of how specific Canadian curriculum studies scholars reconstructed nationalism" (p. 55). During the years, Pinar argues that the stratified role "there" (the United States) plays in the construction of "here" (Canada) seems to have only intensified. Pinar challenges "anti-Americanism," a thought to identify Canada by comparing it with the country south of the border, which is evident in the 2001 publication. Pinar calls for "the positive form of nationalism, e.g. self-confidence and openness and to a concept of the public good" (p. 53) acknowledging not only the history and cultures of Indigenous, French, and British peoples, but also those of immigrants. Pinar underscores the problem of abstract totality of the concept of identity that risks reducing the vibrant diversity of cultures in Canada to an abstracted totality of wholeness. This chapter may serve to Canadian scholars as a note for vigilance and awareness and at the same time serve as a celebration of the character of Canada and its people.

Detailing the life of George Grant, in Chapter 5, Pinar critiques the modernity's obsession with technology, principles of which are calculation, instrumentality, and oftentimes profit. What makes the status of technology idolatrous or sacred? Grant's answer is that "it is carried on by men who still identify what they are doing with the liberation of mankind" (p. 73). Can technology replace our—students, teachers, and teacher educators—face-to-face dialogical encounter with subjective presence? That is the question Pinar raises to all of us.

The concept of conversation in Chapter 8 centres on Pinar's theorization in curriculum studies, as he defines curriculum as "complicated conversation." This chapter incorporates his other central themes such as currere, orality, understanding, alterity, and allegory. Curriculum as complicated conversation encourages orality of individuals—with different upbringings, characters, hopes and historical, cultural, and political circumstances—through ethical engagement with others who live today, and who have lived. While he laments the current status of American education, his argument, as I understand it, is uplifting, as he asks us to imagine a better future than today, to activate our "ethical conviction" (p. 119), and "determination" (p. 119). Making our classroom conversation complicated, as I learn from him, is a foremost important professional and ethical obligation, and "moral obligation" (p. 123).

In Chapter 9, Pinar traces the intellectual history of Jo Kincheloe's theorization of the concept of "place" in curriculum studies. The concept incorporates social psychoanalysis of critical theory and critical pedagogy. For Kincheloe, place is the concept "wherein the particularities of history, culture, and subjectivity become entwined" (p. 128) and "a window to the Lebenswelt, a vehicle to self-knowledge, and a crack in the structure that allows the archeologist of self to discover the etymology of one's research act" (p. 127). The concept of place differs from context and land in that it requires activation of one's agency supported by "demystification that demystifies "myth," what has been, and "imagination to envision life beyond what is and what has been" (p. 129) that might remind some of Maxine Greene's (1995) "social imagination" in a way that both requires understanding the situatedness of one's world and then imagining it otherwise. But the concept of place puts emphasis on subjective reconstruction of history, culture, and politics that one embodies. Pinar's somehow autobiographical account of his relationship with Kincheloe encourages me to study—think of Pinar's concept—the place I we have been living and my relationship with it.

Chapter 10, on alterity, is an excellent example of what a sustained study informed by the concept can reveal. On the issues of race and gender (the two intersect) in the U.S., through analyzing Genesis and the mental breakdown of the late nineteenth century German judge Naniel Paul Schreber, this chapter reveals how convoluted sexual politics are. Pinar reconceptualises whiteness not as a noun but as a verb, "an ongoing process of assemblage, of stitching in and tearing out, mutating into a multi-dimensional and heterogeneous terrain" (p. 160). Tackling with how we are caught up with the language we use, Pinar argues that when we speak language with alterity, the past can be rewritten and that language may release us from the "paralysis of being into the mobility of becoming" (p. 160). His work begs the question, can we find new language for curriculum and teacher education through sustained study?

In the chapter on identity, Pinar critiques the totalizing forces of identity politics that privileges the collective over the individual. He explains how "Indians," "Negros," and "Queer," have been stereotyped, and even demonized by the totalizing generalizations that European descendants used. How to deal with or live with this convoluted issues? It is autobiography, Pinar argues, that provides a conduit for "recognition of self-difference to which an autobiography of alterity testifies" (p. 178). Recognition obtained—of course it is not a onetime event—by autobiography to reconstruct one's experience is for Pinar "prerequisite to the representation of the multivariate complexity of experience and identity" (p. 178). The issue is not only political and cultural, but it is also subjective in that individuals embody the forces, as Pinar explains through his study on Frantz Fanon in the chapter on decolonization, which argues how crucial subjective reconstruction is for subjective and social change. Resisting against identity politics and decolonization is not, Pinar argues "one time event . . . is rather the shattering of that history and the opening to an otherwise that cannot be given in advance" (p. 194).

Positioning together the chapters on inwardness and individuality after the identity politics chapter is brilliant. Inwardness, in Chapter 16, demonstrates the significance of working from within; in doing so, one cultivates individuality that is a lived sense of a person with "character" (p. 6), not

identity that privileges collective over individual forms of identity, inadvertently reinscribing the totalizing generalizations" (p. 174). Neither is individuality a friend of self-enclosedness nor is it exclusive to what one shares with others as Pinar argues that it is "not only a function of openness to the world, but, as well, openness to the world of one's interiority" (p. 217). The example of such individuality Pinar provides in this volume is Jane Addams whose public service is perhaps marked by her private study and experience in the world (pp. 219-220; also see Pinar, 2009). Such individuality characterizes one's distinctiveness that is "individuated sense of dependence on and independence from others, on the biosphere, enmeshed in History, facing one's fate" (p. 6). Cultivating distinctiveness, Pinar submits, is one's "obligation" (p. 220), unraveling from what ties or constrains the "subjective and social reconstruction" (p. 30). Simultaneously seeking one's inwardness and being attuned to the world, Pinar counsels that one pursue one's own life path, which cannot be predetermined or programmed, but instead always retrospectively understood. My notion of "self-care" (Jung, 2016) shares such an attitude one should have toward one's life. Individuality as an educational project can be an antidote to "the culture of objectification" (Phelan, 2015, p. 13) in teacher education and teachers' professional development (see Phelan, 2015; Jung, 2017).

In terms of the structure of this volume, one of the distinctive aspects is the simplicity of the chapter titles: he uses only one word, a concept, for a chapter. This may be seen too vague for some readers but the title is well supplemented by the summaries positioned at the beginning of the chapters. While the chapters may be read separately, they together achieve a wholeness. The way Pinar weaves together all the chapters is the art of collage in this scholarly research that smoothly connects the chapters one by one while keeping the central ideas alive across each individually, making the big image of the volume the title represents. Would he have imagined the collage of concepts ten years ago or before? As he tells us in the introduction, learning from experience is the key to his research. How his efforts turned out as an unexpected mosaic of knowledge, study, and experience makes his work distinctive, which was a big lesson I took from this volume.

Enacting his theory of curriculum that acknowledges the relations among knowledge, history, and alterity, Pinar provides us with rich, theoretically as well as empirically, analyses of the past and present so that we may find our future. Studying the past opens up opportunities for us to understand, in an otherwise that is alterity. Because educators, teachers and teacher educators are professionally committed to the struggles of the present such as employment or test scores, they are often caught in the political and intellectual trap strengthened by the too forceful standardization of education that we witness in the U.S. and other countries around the world. This volume provides us with robust language that we can study to argue against the forces and to resolve our professional commitment for ethical, democratic, and just education.

I can only express my appreciation to Pinar for the work he has produced that has had such a tremendous influence on the field of curriculum studies. I recommend this volume to be used not only in teacher education programs, and graduate curriculum studies programs, but also other areas of education. "Not only is this an important book," as Terrance Carson judges, "but it is necessary book" (p. i) to all who think about education.

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