

Curriculum as Renewal

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The thought of renewal can be both exhilarating and unsettling. The idea that we can take up life anew holds invigorating possibilities. There is both a generative and a restorative aspect to renewal. It means adopting a conscious and deliberate resolve to take a responsibility for that which may appear to be “broken” and perhaps even more importantly, for that which does not, and deciding the best course of action. Often, however, the sense of renewal as yielding “invigorating possibilities” is lost in the relentless *routine of renewing* marked by driver’s license *renewals*, subscription *renewals*, insurance *renewals*, passport *renewals*, library *renewals*, and so on. Let us not forget, too, those attempts at renewal that are considerably less mundane which potentially generate impacts more widely and acutely felt, such as government spending cuts aimed at *economic renewal* and the practice of acquiring and redeveloping property to increase profits in the name of *urban renewal*.

We like to think of the work of contemporary curriculum studies as an ongoing process of renewal. After all, isn’t it the reconceptualists (Pinar, 1999; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995) who once reminded us of the etymological roots of curriculum as the Latin *currere*, or running of the race. As curriculum scholars, we aren’t expected to stand still and accept renewal as a matter of course but rather to take an

active roll in critically shaping and responding to the influences that govern its direction. Renewal as curriculum work rejects the latest panacea to correct the so-called failure of schools. So too, it is far more than the process of addressing an administrative decree for “curriculum renewal” established in anticipation or in the wake of program evaluation. As curriculum scholars, we actively theorize the social, political, historical, and ideological origins, methods, artifacts, and implications of curricular orientations and in the process, may lay the groundwork for new ones.

It is in this tradition that the articles included in this issue of *JCACS* reflect the invigorating possibilities of curriculum as renewal. In “Living (Ek)statically: Education-within-place and the Ecological Imagination,” Jeanne Adele Kentel and Douglas Karrow *reimagine* the curriculum possibilities of Sartre’s notion of Ekstasis as a means of understanding what it could mean to be a teacher. Their reformulation of Sartre’s theory of consciousness, that is, an articulation of the relation between “being and nothingness” references Fox’s and Jardine’s ideas about a “movement beyond what is” to signal the importance of Temporality, Reflection, and Being-for-Others as a useful framework for thinking about teacher education. Far from standing still, the authors relate their shift in alignment with “the more broadly construed movement of place-based education” toward an a “within-place” approach which emphasizes “the continual, ongoing, intermingling and complex phenomenon between place, being, and education.” In contrast to conceptualizing place as being something to be “acted upon,” the authors draw on Aoki’s concept of a living curriculum to argue that education is occurring “within place.” This distinction is significant when we consider that “the ecological imagination is [now] considered from the perspective of becoming a teacher, moreover, an ecstatic teacher.”

Just the title “Thinking *like* Grass, *with* Deleuze *in* Education?” has us thinking about renewal. Xiao Jiu Ling opens with something that many

of us are likely to find familiar: “Any beginning is difficult.” In a philosophically rich discussion, she adopts Deleuze’s fascination with philosophers and thinkers weaving in the pre-Socratics with Hume and Bergson, Nietzsche and Sartre to illustrate the point made in Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?* that “philosophy is not in the nature of a ‘doxical’ return but a paradoxical one for it attempts to articulate something outside the order of the dominant or proposition.” For Deleuze, the aim of reading philosophy is not to come up with a single correct interpretation, but rather philosophy is produced as we think *with* others across disciplines and geographies. It entails a “deterritorialization” as we pick up in the middle the problems that philosophers have grappled with as a kind of a broken line. Like Kentel and Karrow, Ling places emphasis on thinking *within-place* where the broken line serves as a point of departure launching “a line of flight” which can lead to a whole cartography. In conclusion, Ling boldly proposes: “There is no need for education: it is necessarily produced where each activity gives rise to its line of deterritorialization.”

In the continued spirit of enacting curriculum *within place* and tracing “a line of flight,” Sara Matthews explores teacher candidates’ observations of adolescent responses to a controversial museum artifact in “Hitler’s Car as Curriculum Text: Reading Adolescents Reading History.” Matthews is particularly interested in Felman’s link between pedagogy and trauma, that is to say, “what happens to learning when conflict as it is represented in the world outside meets conflict within the individual.” Drawing on psychoanalytic perspectives on human development, Matthews considers the dynamics of teacher candidates’ readings of adolescents reading traumatic history. She explores how the project of learning to teach, as a developmental project, may influence student teachers’ readings of adolescence.

“In Placate or Provoke? A critical review of the disciplines approach to history curriculum,” Samantha Cutrara examines the possibility of re-

envisioning the teaching of history that would provoke and challenge “how we come to know ourselves and others in the world.” Through a critical review of history teaching approaches that purport to “speak to the modern experience,” Cutrara states that, traditionally, history curriculum has exemplified a one-sided, transmission orientation to curriculum, which effectively inculcates dominant values. At first glance, Miller and Seller’s move toward a transaction orientation to history teaching based on Dewey’s “scientific method,” which emphasizes interaction and problem solving, appears to provide a corrective by integrating the “everyday experiences of the world in which we live” (quoted in Miller & Seller, 1990, pp. 93-110). Nevertheless, upon closer examination, Cutrara argues that the transactional approach, which includes Seixas’s disciplinary cognitive citizenship approach, is still subject to the homogenizing effects of a neoliberal agenda. What is needed, asserts Cutrara, is history that *transforms*.

Finally, Ismel Gonzalez and Mary Clare Courtland offer us insight into the possibility of incorporating a reader response approach to teaching modern language literature. Based on previous findings from a study conducted in Taiwan, which demonstrated that a reader response approach provided the student with opportunities for engaging in a contextual meaning-making process, the authors set forth to conduct a similar study with a group of 10 adult third-year undergraduate students who read and responded to Sandra Cisneros’s *La Casa en Mango Street* during a class in Spanish Language and Culture at a Canadian university. Gonzalez and Courtland explore how both the instructor and the students experienced a shift in roles as students took greater responsibility for their learning and the instructor became another participant in the learning activity. The study provides practical suggestions for the facilitation of reader response in the Foreign Language class that emphasizes group collaboration and role-modeling.

It is our hope that the articles in this issue will provide you with inspiration to live Ekstatically and reflect upon the invigorating possibilities that come with the opportunity to take up curriculum anew.

References

- Pinar, W. (1999). *Contemporary curriculum discourses: Twenty Years of JCT*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (1995). *Understanding Curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.