

Provoking a Curricular Métissage of Polyphonic Textualities

*Erika Hasebe-Ludt
University of Lethbridge*

*Carl Leggo
University of British Columbia*

With much editorial excitement, we welcome you to this special issue of the *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, entitled *Canadian Curriculum Studies: A Métissage of Polyphonic Textualities*. This collection of articles embodies the spirit and ideas present/ed at the 7th Biennial Provoking Curriculum Studies Conference held at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in February 2015. The 1st Provoking Curriculum Conference took place at UBC in 2003. That conference was dedicated to Ted T. Aoki, whose life and work continue to inspire us. Returning to UBC and Vancouver after more than a dozen years, we engaged in further conversations about the challenges of learning how to live well and wisely in the world. Acknowledging that curriculum studies are always plural and polyphonic, we invited educators to provoke curriculum studies by attending to the multiple denotations of *provoke*: to stimulate, arouse, elicit, induce, excite, kindle, generate, instigate, goad, prick, sting, prod, infuriate, madden, ruffle, stir, and inflame. Following the conference, we invited educators who presented at the conference, along with other kindred Canadian and international colleagues, to examine their convictions, commitments, and challenges with/in contemporary curriculum studies. We sought proposals that ask bold and urgent questions about the complexity, culture, and character of curriculum studies, in the spirit of Ted T. Aoki (1990/2005), Cynthia M. Chambers (1999, 2008), William E. Doll (2008), and William F. Pinar (2011). We were particularly interested in thoughtfully and aesthetically rendered exemplars of individual and collaborative curricular inquiry as arts-based, performative, and creative multimedia and diverse multimodal forms of writing (such as visual art, audio/video, photography, poetry, narrative, personal essay, dialogue, among others) which address significant questions about what it means to provoke curriculum studies.

Now that we have selected and gathered such writing and completed our in-depth editorial journey with the authors and JCACS editors, we are astonished and awed by the collaborative will and collective wisdom at work in this collection. Here are some of our reflections along this provoking and provocative journey and about the contributions we are presenting to you.

In *Negotiating With the Dead: A Writer on Writing*, Margaret Atwood (2002) notes that “the three questions most often posed to writers” are: “*Who are you writing for? Why do you do it? Where does it come from?*” (p. xix). These are the kinds of questions we as the co-editors of this special issue of JCACS anticipate many readers will ask about the writers whose work we have called together. Each article is a unique and timely performance of research in curriculum studies, but together the articles compose a polyphony of textualities that sing out in evocative and provocative ways like a jam session at a jazz club. All the articles are full of wisdom, play, courage, and heart. Together in this issue, the authors resonate with one another, open up countless new questions along rhizomatic paths, and remind us that Canadian curriculum studies is vital and vibrant like the expansive geography, the cultural and linguistic diversity, the complicated histories, and the imagined and unimagined topographies that re/present Canada.

The 12 articles by 32 authors from many locations are marked by symmetries and counterpoints which resonate with one another in a polyphony of voices that are Canadian and cosmopolitan, creative and critical, contemporary and capacious. These authors know well that curriculum studies cannot be contained in boxes or checklists or tables. Instead, curriculum studies is understood comprehensively to open up research about life and lives and living. As Mary Aswell Doll (2000) notes, the root of curriculum is *flux* (p. xi). In a related way in the preface to David Bohm’s *On Creativity* (2004), Leroy Little Bear explains: Blackfoot philosophy includes ideas of constant motion/constant flux, of all creation consisting of energy waves and imbued with spirit, of everything being animate, of all of creation being interrelated, of reality requiring renewal, and of space as a major referent. (pp. viii–ix)

This issue of JCACS is in “constant motion/constant flux”—the authors understand that curriculum is always changing. As Ted Aoki (1993a/2005) has reminded us for a long time, Canadian curriculum studies is “an open landscape of multiplicity” (p. 207), much like “Canadian multiculturalism” is “a textured landscape always in flux, a landscape of multiple possibilities in a shifting web of nomadic lines of movement” (Aoki, 1992/2005, p. 271). Aoki called for “the recovery of the fullness of language” (Aoki, 1987/1991/2005, p. 238). The authors in this issue continue to take up Aoki’s urgent call. They understand how curriculum scholars hold fast to words in their endless questioning and questing. They know, like the poet Margaret Avison (2002), that language is vital and vibrant:

Words are
imparted, able to calm,
quick to wrestle—and best;
they map a long long travelling
beyond experience even. (p. 69)

The authors included in this JCACS issue perform Mary Doll’s (2000) understanding of “language as incantation, language as action” (p. 54). Atwood (2002) suggests that “what is written down is a score for voice” (p. 158). The 32 authors in this issue call out in idiosyncratic voices that are attuned to specific and local contexts and experiences while also reverberating with one another in wide-ranging theoretical, artistic, and disciplinary voices that acknowledge tensionalities and intentionalities. In this special issue of JCACS, curriculum studies is understood as “an architectonics of lines of movement” (Aoki, 1993a/2005, p. 211). But while curriculum is understood as flux, process, tension, and questing, it is also clearly indicated that curriculum seeks “the voice of play in the midst of things—a playful singing in the midst of life” (Aoki, 1993b/2005, p. 282). Curriculum is about dwelling in the earth, about humans and non-humans learning to live with wellness together. Curriculum is life. In *How Poetry Saved My Life* Amber Dawn (2013) ruminates on voice: “What does it mean to be given the rare and privileged opportunity to have a voice? To me, it means possibility and responsibility. It means nurturing my creativity and playing

with personal storytelling" (p. 13). Voice is the spirit that animates the 12 articles in this issue.

In *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber (2016) write:

Slowing down is about asserting the importance of contemplation, connectedness, fruition, and complexity. It gives meaning to letting research take the time it needs to ripen and makes it easier to resist the pressure to be faster. It gives meaning to thinking about scholarship as a community, not a competition. It gives meaning to periods of rest, an understanding that research does not run like a mechanism; there are rhythms....(p. 57)

This special issue of JCACS demonstrates and performs the kind of scholarship that Berg and Seeber call for. All 12 articles invite readers to linger with words and memories and experiences and questions, to attend to the rhythms of our living and researching so we know intimately how curriculum is flow and flux and life. In *Forgiveness & Other Acts of Love* Stephanie Dowrick (1997) reminds us that by "paying attention, we learn reverence for all forms of life because eventually we can't help but see that everything we think, say or do (or even dare to hope) is interconnected and has its reverberations" (pp. 66–67). This issue of JCACS reverberates with hopeful conviction about the value of attending to curriculum studies with creative and imaginative commitment. We are inspired by Bill Doll's (2012) lingering question: "I ask of those I am privileged to teach, 'Can you see another way to do/read/interpret what we have just done?'" (p. 27).

Like Hélène Cixous (1993) who acknowledged, "What I have learned cannot be generalized, but it can be shared" (p. 7), the 32 authors investigate curriculum studies as connected to art, care, childhood, culture, ecology, embodiment, error, family, fiction, film, genealogy, healing, holism, home, hope, identity, indigeneity, language, life, math, memory, narrative, nursing, play, poetics, science, senses, voice, walking, wilderness, and writing. bell hooks (2003) is concerned that

dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community. (p. 197)

These authors are all seeking to find what hooks (2003) calls "a new language of spirit" (p. 183). This collection is singularly marked by the authors' attention to writing in many genres, including art, arts-based research, description, dialogue, digital literacies, exposition, film, life writing, narrative inquiry, performance, photography, poetry, rumination, and story.

The issue is composed as a *métissage* with three braids: *Provoking Curriculum as Relational Ecologies*, *Provoking Curriculum as Pedagogical Imaginaries*, and *Provoking Curriculum as Inspired Topographies*. All the articles highlight Bill Pinar's (2011) understanding of curriculum as "the lived experience of curriculum—*currere*, the running of the course—wherein the curriculum is experienced, enacted, and reconstructed" (p. 1). Pinar expresses the heart of the scholarship in this issue: "Communication...is an ongoing social ceremony aspiring to shared understanding while engaging difference and protecting dissent. It contributes to the creation of community" (p. 19). Pinar wisely understands how curriculum is a "complicated conversation"...that includes dialogue and recognition, as well as incommunicability and misrecognition, each accenting ongoing subjective and social reconstruction" (p. 73). In this curricular *métissage* of polyphonic textualities, we are delighted to offer timely and timeless writing that asks the kinds of questions that can call us on creative adventures of curricular scholarship in "a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges" (Aoki, 1996/2005, p. 318). We

believe that, in the true spirit and intention of métissage, this issue provides this kind of space. With Françoise Lionnet (1989), we see métissage as a way to not only survive but also live well “in the interval between different cultures and languages” (p. 1). We trust that this polyphonic process of practicing artful pedagogical and curricular being will lead to a new rapprochement and new understandings about the world and our respective places in it.

As guest editors, we first and foremost extend our gratitude to JCACS editors Pauline Sameshima and Anita Sinner for their support and expertise throughout our work with this issue, along with Managing Editor Holly Tsun Haggarty and Book Review Editor Joanie Crandall. At UBC, Margaret McKeon was an invaluable graduate editorial assistant with this issue. We are also delighted to have Darlene St. Georges’ art and poetry woven in between the three section themes to both pause and provoke aesthetic curricular sensibilities and sensitivities. The financial and in-kind support from the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (CACS) and CSSE (Canadian Society for the Study of Education) helped a great deal with the publication of this issue. Last but not least we thank the contributors to this publication who answered our call for proposals and worked with us patiently and with an open mind throughout this intricate and complex process of bringing the spirit of provoking curriculum into this venue.

As we draw our introduction to a close that is really an opening, an invitational in/conclusion, we offer the table of contents rendered as a found poem of titles in order to highlight and perform the imaginative and intriguing conception of curriculum studies as always in process, singing with hopeful voices, committed to creativity, eager to embrace complexity in conversations that are constantly spirited and inspiring.

Provoking Curriculum as Relational Ecologies

Life Lines

kistikwânihk êsko kitêhk: Storying Holistic Understandings in Education
The Live(d) Curriculum: Life Feeling Itself
Provoking Curricula of Care: Weaving Stories of Rupture Towards Repair
Memories, Crossings, and Station Stops: Teaching Language and Art

Provoking Curriculum as Pedagogical Imaginaries

Cradle of Consciousness

Taking the Quantum Leap: Arts-Based Learning as a Gateway
Into Exploring Transition for Senior Nursing Students
When Is the Teacher? Reflections on Life Writing, Social Fiction, and Film
A Glitch Pedagogy: Exquisite Error and the Appeal of the Accidental
A Sensory Experiment Into Languages as (R)evolution

Provoking Curriculum as Inspired Topographies

Root

Towards a Walking-Based Pedagogy
Poetic Ponderings of Being at Home/Not at Home: (Em)bodiment in the Spaces In-Between
(Re)searching (Trans-Multi)culturally Responsive Curricular Conversations
Wilderness, the Body, Poetics, and the Crane: Curriculum in Four Parts

References

- Aoki, T. T. (1987/1991/2005). The dialectic of mother tongue and second language: A curriculum exploration. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 235–245). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aoki, T. T. (1990/2005). Inspiring the curriculum. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 357–365). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aoki, T. T. (1992/2005). In the midst of slippery theme-words: Living as designers of Japanese Canadian curriculum. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 263–277). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aoki, T. T. (1993a/2005). Legitimizing lived curriculum: Toward a curricular landscape of multiplicity. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 199–215). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aoki, T. T. (1993b/2005). The child-centered curriculum: Where is the social in pedocentricism? In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 279–289). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aoki, T. T. (1996/2006). Imaginaries of “east and west”: Slippery curricular signifiers in education. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 313–319). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Atwood, M. (2000). *Negotiating with the dead: A writer on writing*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Avison, M. (2002). *Concrete and wild carrot*. London, ON: Brick Books.
- Berg, M., & Seeber, B. K. (2016). *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Chambers, C. (1999). A topography for Canadian curriculum theory. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(2), 137–150.
- Chambers, C. (2008). Where are we? Finding common ground in a curriculum of place. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 6(2), 113–128.
- Cixous, H. (1993). *Three steps on the ladder of writing* (S. Cornell & S. Sellers, Trans). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Dawn, A. (2013). *How poetry saved my life*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Doll, M. A. (2000). *Like letters in running water: A mythopoetics of curriculum*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Doll, W. E. (2008). Complexity and the culture of curriculum. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 40(1), 190–212. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00404.x
- Dowrick, S. (1997). *Forgiveness & other acts of love*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lionnet, F. (1989). *Autobiographical voices: Race, gender and self-portraiture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Little Bear, L. (2004). Preface to the Routledge Classics edition. In D. Bohm, *On creativity* (L. Nichol, Ed.) (pp. vii–xiv). London, England: Routledge.
- Pinar, W. F. (2011). *The character of curriculum studies: Bildung, currere, and the recurring question of the subject*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.