

Andrews University

School of Education

UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM: READING REFLECTION PAPER

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ECDI 547: Foundations of Curriculum Studies

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## **Overview**

The title *Understanding Curriculum*, a book by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2008), implies hope in the ability to comprehend the subject. However, the size of the book intimidated readers/students to the point of angst. Such angst coupled with the difficulty of the reading made the subject matter somewhat impossible to understand. There were times, when quitting seemed to have been the easiest way out. Nevertheless, being an Andrews University student for two years now, I have built up some resilience. I believe God would not have it any other way. Quitting is not an option for His Children. Therefore, instead of throwing in the towel, I have made the decision to seek God's help every step of the way.

## **Growth Through Group Presentations**

I recall my group presentation during which time I was a nervous wreck. An anxiety I am currently seeking God's assistance to help me overcome. Notwithstanding my overactive nerves, I enjoyed the process and learned a lot about curriculum. The lessons I learned from the reading and assignments will probably stay with me throughout my career as an educational leader.

Through the reading, I encountered some controversial issues such as race, gender, and politics that resonated with me on a personal level. I also learned about the theory of currere, which I thought was somewhat strange. I had a particularly difficult time deciphering the meaning of the word. For some unknown reason, my mind kept telling me it was a person's name. It is deliberating, finally, to be able to conclude that that is not its meaning. Currere is a method that encourages an autobiographical approach for educators and students to undertake in the making of curriculum whether culturally or not.

## **Race and Curriculum**

Race, as I mentioned in one of my reading reports, is a sensitive subject. I do not believe anyone like to be identified in terms of his/her racial background, but rather as a person.

However, in the making of curriculum, it is a subject educators and students cannot avoid as it is found all around us. Our schools consist of many racial groups. Therefore, it must be addressed.

The chapter on Understanding Curriculum as Racial Text, highlights theoretical and curriculum materials issues of identity and differences, which educators cannot ignore. The significance of race as referenced in the chapter is not very encouraging to those who consider themselves culturally different. Pinar, et al. (2008) state that exclusions were the basis for which the American culture operated and that politics of identity are all over our textbooks and in the general curriculum (p. 357). If anyone asks me, I just want to teach the children without worrying about all these cultural hindrances or politics of identity. I do not want to sound culturally insensitive, but my passion is to teach, minus the politics of identity that encompasses the curriculum.

I recall a phenomenon during my undergraduate studies at Stony Brook University. A Caucasian woman called out from a distance to a group of African American girls of which I was a part. She desperately needed to know the location of the nearest lavatory. One of the girls was upset and said, "She only asks us because we're black." I thought, "How foolish! The woman had an emergency. When you gotta go, you gotta go." Since that time, I have not spent time around racist people. I wonder how a group of boys would have reacted to the event, which brings me to the subject of gender.

## **Gender and Curriculum**

Gender issues have gotten society all confused lately. The question of who is male or female can sometimes be difficult to identify. However, our curriculum is not exempt from addressing issues pertaining to gender. In the chapter Understanding Curriculum as Gender Text, the authors refer to the education system as it was in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was an evolutionary time for girls as well as for female teachers in public schools. Coeducation began to take root for economic reasons. Girls and boys were educated in the same building. More female teachers were hired because it was cost-effective in contrast to hiring male teachers. Even with more females in the schools, the administration was male-centered with a curriculum that represented the values of white males (Pinar, et al., 2008, pp. 360-361).

## **A Personal Stand on Coeducation**

This whole idea of a non-coeducational system never resonated with me. I recall during my early school years, my parents were discussing putting me in an all-girls school and I objected as though this would have been the worst thing that would have ever happened to me. The intention was to protect me, a girl, from boys. I resented the idea that they thought I needed to be protected from boys. Besides, I thought I was more than capable of defending myself if there was a need. Therefore, I told my parents I was not going to all-girls school. It just so happened I befriended boys more than I did girls. I thought girls talked too much whereas I only spoke unless I absolutely must. I still do to this day. God must have been up to something, making me bold enough to stand up for coeducation. In my mind, non-coeducational sounded like a political debate, which made no sense since I could not escape being around boys anyway.

### **Politics in Curriculum**

Politics cannot be found on my list of favorite topics. In fact, I spent most of my career life avoiding it, especially, by not working directly for the public education system. Nonetheless, I came face-to-face with it during the reading. Frustration set in at times and I believe my blood pressure rose, though I did not measure it. The reason was because I could not escape it. Besides, it was my presentation chapter, *Understanding Curriculum as Political Text*. God does have a sense of humor! In this chapter, I was awed to learn that educational reformers used the curriculum to promote their own political agendas. In life, there are certain things you hear about, but deep down you wish they were not true. The reading confirmed the reality of this issue. To this I ask, where is the fairness and equity that our children deserve? I say kudos to Whitson (1988a, as cited in Pinar, et al., 2008, p. 298) who exposed the propaganda of those I called, "The double-faced educational reformers." There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed (Luke 8:17).

### **Final Thoughts**

I want to conclude by saying that, in spite of the difficulty of the reading material, I now know more about curriculum than before. This class has helped me to think about curriculum in a different light. I did not realize that subjects like gender, race, and politics were taken into account in the making of a curriculum. For instance, when I look at a cultural book in a classroom I never thought of curriculum. I have the impression now that everything I see in a classroom will have me think about curriculum. In addition, I never thought the curriculum could be used as an opportunity for abusers to get their way. I am sorry this may sound harsh, but those

who use their power to control and deceive others are abusers. In the case of the curriculum, they just do it legally. With all the talks about equity and fairness in the education system, I long for the day when honesty and fairness reign making this claim a reality. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

## References

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